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Postmortem Preaching and Primopetrine Polemics

by

Anselm Asaph Wooden

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of

Covenant Theological Seminary

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Exegetical Theology

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Abstract

Even Christians can find it hard to believe that a just God could sentence the nescient (those who have never even heard the Gospel) to eternal punishment. Various theological proposals have been made to avoid this difficulty. Here, the specific theological proposal of postmortem evangelism is considered. According to the proponents of postmortem evangelism (or PME), at least those who have not had an opportunity to hear the Gospel before they die will have an opportunity to hear it after they die. Often, a PME doctrine will assume that at least some of those who hear the Gospel in this manner will repent and trust in Christ for salvation. This idea has had many able proponents throughout Church history, including several influential Church Fathers of the Alexandrian school (Clement, Origen, Athanasius, and Cyril) and noteworthy scholars from much more recent times (Charles Augustus Briggs, John Sanders, and Clark Pinnock, to name a few). Is such a doctrine Scriptural?

Those who teach a PME doctrine appeal to several passages for Scriptural support. Some have suggested that Jesus' words in John 5 ("the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God") teach some sort of PME. Nebulous appeals could be attempted on

the basis of the baptism for the dead in 1 Corinthians 15. The matter of Christ's descent in Ephesians 4 is frequently mentioned in the literature, as well. However, if a PME doctrine were taught anywhere in Scripture, then surely the most likely location would be in 1 Peter.

Thus, a close examination of 1 Peter is undertaken here in order to determine not only (1) whether or not some sort of PME doctrine can be legitimately supported from Scripture but also (2) whether or not the particular sort of PME doctrine which Scripture could conceivably support would be of any practical use in thinking through the difficult pastoral question of the nescient today. More specifically, does 1 Peter 3:19 teach that Christ, between His death and resurrection, descended into the realm of the dead and preached the Gospel to disembodied spirits imprisoned in that realm, as PME proponents suggest? Failing that, does 1 Peter 4:6 teach that Christ has preached the Gospel to physically dead people at some point? It is argued at length herein that both of these questions must be answered in the negative. It is further suggested that even if some sort of PME doctrine were taught by either of these verses, it would offer little pastoral help in dealing with the nescient today since, even according to the PME proponents themselves, the preaching of these verses would have occurred at one point in the past rather than being an ongoing mission in the realm of the dead.

To all who died in and have suffered as a result of
Japan's 2011 Earthquake, Tsunami, and Nuclear Disaster
without saving knowledge of Jesus Christ

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I would like to thank Mr. Jaebok “Jacob” Cha for providing much of the initial impetus of this paper. About twelve years ago as I write this, Mr. Cha pressed me quite hard about the fate of the many Koreans who had died before the Gospel was preached (so far as history records) on the Korean peninsula. “They believed in God,” he told me. “They would have wanted to hear about Jesus.” I was not persuaded that they would have, given not only Scriptural testimony on the depravity of mankind apart from the regenerating work of Holy Spirit but also the historical reality of the persecution faced by Christians in Korea for many years. I tried to answer his questions as best I could, but in time I would come to see that the questions were weightier than my answers could carry-- not, I hope, because my answers were wholly inaccurate but because they were incomplete.

It is true that God is under no obligation to show mercy to anyone, but it is also true that God shows mercy to whomever He wills. There was one passage that bothered me in this connection because I had always been taught and was now teaching others that those who die never having heard of Jesus are essentially without hope, but if Peter taught that Christ descended into Hell to preach the Gospel between His death

and resurrection, then perhaps there might very well be hope for the many who have died without ever hearing of Jesus. Was I clinging to the traditions of men and ignoring the teaching of God's Word? Mr. Cha did not know to ask about this passage, and I did not volunteer it to him because I did not know quite what to do with it.

I also need to thank Mr. Jeff Edwards for his encouragement to take up the study of this passage in earnest. When he initially told to me that he was studying this passage himself, I immediately became uncomfortable, especially when he mentioned the possible connection with 1 Enoch, which raised concerns about canonicity and inerrancy in my mind at the time. If it had not been for Mr. Edwards' suggestion to write on this issue for my thesis, I might never have sorted out these gnawing doubts about Scripture and about my own proper use of it.

I must also thank my parents, Vern and Liz Wooden, for their support while I took over three years to write this, as well as the many people who have prayed for me to be able to finish this work. Finally, I want to thank both Dr. David Chapman and Dr. C. John "Jack" Collins, as well as the Buswell Library staff (especially Steve Jamieson), for their patience, assistance, and encouragement throughout this process.

Anselm Wooden

March, 2019

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Other, unmarked English translations of Scripture in this text are my own.

Abbreviations

ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
BAGD	Bauer, W., W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 2 nd ed. Chicago, 1979
BDAG	Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3 rd ed. Chicago, 1999
BDF	Blass, F., A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago, 1961
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> , 2 nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 291.
EDNT	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by H. Balz, G. Schneider. ET. Grand Rapids, 1990-1993
Ⲑ	Septuagint
GCS	Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte.
LXX	Septuagint
ⲙ	Masoretic Text

- NIDNTTE *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Edited by Moisés Silva. Grand Rapids, 2014
- NPNF¹ *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1*
- NPNF² *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2*
- PG *Patrologia graeca* [= *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca*]. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857-1886
- PL *Patrologia latina* [= *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina*]. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1844-1864
- PME *Postmortem Evangelism*
- TDNT *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964-1976

Chapter One

Introduction and History of Postmortem Evangelism

No one in their right mind or heart takes joy in telling someone that their departed, unrepentant loved one will spend eternity in hell. Likewise, no one relishes teaching that the many millions of people who have died apart from Christ are doomed to eternal torment. Nevertheless, these sorts of tasks, while undesirable, have long been thought by most Christians to be unfortunately necessary since there is no salvation apart from repentance and faith in Christ. There may well be times when it is pastorally wise to postpone such pronouncements, but there have also been those who suggest in one way or another that such proclamations are actually contrary to sound biblical teaching in the first place. Some attempt this sort of move by advocating either universalism or annihilationalism.¹ However, while some strands of universalism even

1 A recent shift in Evangelicalism can be detected by comparing the 1996 and 2016 editions of Zondervan's *Four Views on Hell*. In the first edition, John Walvoord argued for a hell with literal fire. William Crockett suggested that, although the imagery in Scripture indicates conscious torment, there might not be literal fire. Zachary Hayes was tasked with writing on the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory. All three of these authors agreed that hell was forever and involved eternal conscious torment, but Clark Pinnock's chapter argued for conditional immortality. William Crockett, ed., *Four Views on Hell* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996). When one turns to the second edition, however, only Denny Burk's chapter advocates eternal conscious torment. John Stackhouse argues for conditionalism. Robin Parry argues for universalism. Jerry Walls puts forward a Protestant spin on purgatory, but in the process, he also questions, "Why is repentance at the very last moment

go so far as to deny the necessity of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ,² both universalism and annihilationalism fly in the face of the clear biblical teaching that hell will be an eternal reality for at least some.³ It is understandable to feel a tension between the justice and the love of God when confronted with the prospect of eternal torment for unbelievers (particularly when those unbelievers have never heard of the salvation in Christ that is freely offered to sinners⁴), but in the final analysis, neither universalism nor annihilationalism do much to relieve that tension, even if Scripture did teach such ideas. At least with reference to the nescient (those who have had no access to the Gospel in this life), however, the idea of postmortem evangelism (often

of death always accepted, but repentance a moment after death too late? Indeed, what is objectionable about the idea of a 'second chance,' especially since many people have countless chances in this life? By contrast, many other people have few if any chances to hear the gospel and respond to it. Now if God truly loves all persons and desires the salvation of all, would he not make certain that all persons have ample opportunity to receive his grace, even if that entails chances to receive the gospel after death?" Jerry Walls, "Hell and Purgatory," in *Four Views on Hell*, ed. Preston M. Sprinkle, 2nd ed., Counterpoints: Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 170.

- 2 See, for example, the pluralistic universalism of John Hick, "A Pluralist View," in *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 27-59.
- 3 For Scriptural arguments for the eternity of hell that are here being assumed, see Denny Burk, "Eternal Conscious Torment," in Sprinkle, 20-41.
- 4 "The African Christian cannot suppress the question: are our ancestors altogether cut off from the blessings of the gospel? ...It was against such a background that I chanced some years ago on an observation in my reading... about 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6..." Harry R. Boer, "Perplexing Texts," *The Reformed Journal* 29 (Nov. 1979): 6. Some have turned to the study of 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 specifically to address this question. "The impetus for this project began in Cameroon, West Africa, where... questions arose about... the eternal state of those Africans who had died without ever being exposed to the message of salvation." Martin Williams, *The Doctrine of Salvation in the First Letter of Peter*, Society for New Testament Studies 149 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), xi.

abbreviated as PME⁵) both does a great deal to resolve this tension and has at least a better claim to both Scriptural and (thus) theological support than either universalism or annihilationalism.

The primary Scriptural support proposed for PME is in 1 Peter. In 3:19, Peter writes that Christ ἐκήρυξεν τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν. If the πνεύματα to which Peter refers here are the departed spirits of human beings, if the φυλακή of these departed spirits of human beings is either a place of holding until God's judgment be rendered or a reference to the place of final judgment itself, and if Christ's preaching (ἐκήρυξεν in 3:19) was a proclamation of the Gospel to these departed spirits made between His death and resurrection, then there was at least one occasion on which the Gospel was proclaimed to people after they had died. If it can be established that this happened on one occasion, then it will not do to assume in principle that it never happens; by the same token, establishing that it happened on one occasion does not justify the assumption that it regularly happens. However, 1 Peter 4:6 mentions preaching to the dead (this time with the verb εὐαγγελίζομαι) without obviously specifying who these dead people are. If it can be established that 1 Peter 3:19 is talking about one particular

5 "Divine perseverance" and the idea of future probation (after death) are essentially the same concept as PME.

instance of PME and that 4:6 is talking about another instance or perhaps even multiple instances of PME, then the case for PME as something that regularly occurs is at least strengthened.

The preceding observations lead to the question to which an answer shall be sought in what follows: Does Peter teach in 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 that repentance unto initial salvation in Jesus Christ is possible after death for the nescient today? Almost every word of this question is significant for the argument that shall be laid out in answer to it. First, the question is “Does Peter **teach...**?”⁶ The question is not whether Peter himself **believes** in some form of PME. It is logically possible that Peter held to some form of PME without teaching it in his writings, but even if it were possible to read his mind so long after his passing, it is the teaching of Scripture that carries Divine imprimatur and not the personal beliefs of the Apostles. Moreover, although the question of Scripture’s teaching for or against the possibility of PME in other passages shall not be ignored, the focus of inquiry here is 1 Peter. Likewise, whether or how PME can be squared with any particular system of theology or ethics is an important question, but the focus here is on the exegesis of 1 Peter. It is actually even narrower than that. For example, the phrase “baptism now saves you” in 1 Peter 3:21 will be

6 Petrine authorship for this letter will be assumed, but neutral language will often be employed.

completely ignored. Even in 3:19 and 4:6, no dogmatic answer shall be given concerning what Peter is teaching. Some interpretations have greater claims to legitimacy than others, and specific recommendations will be given. However, the focus is on answering one particular theological question: “Does Peter teach PME in these verses?”

Second, the question is actually more specific than “Does Peter teach some form of PME?” The question is “Does Peter teach that repentance unto salvation is possible after death?” It is one thing to say that Jesus preached. It is another thing to say that people repented and were saved. Repentance unto salvation is neither a necessary nor a universal outcome of evangelism. Indeed, there is no salvation without repentance, and “repentance unto salvation” means more than the confession that every tongue shall make concerning Jesus.⁷ If greater knowledge of the truth means greater

7 Philipians 2:10-11 has been used as a proof-text for universalism or for some “wider hope.” At the popular level, see Philip Gully and James Mulholland, *If Grace Is True: Why God Will Save Every Person* (New York: HarperOne, 2004), 209. However, Gully and Mulholland merely list it among “Universalist Themes and Verses in Scripture.” In a somewhat similar vein, Fackre puts this verse in a category of passages that speak of Christ’s “presence, freedom and regency... in the place of death.” Gabriel Fackre, “Divine Perseverance,” in *What About Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized*, ed. John Sanders (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 85. For an actual argument in favor of a universalistic reading of Philipians 2, see Robin Parry, under the pseudonym Gregory MacDonald, *The Evangelical Universalist*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), 97-100. See also John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3.29 (PG 94:1101A), who cites Philipians 2:10 while discussing Christ’s descent into Hades and even makes tantalizing use of the word ἀπειθήσασιν, which Peter uses to describe the imprisoned spirits in 1 Peter 3:20. For discussion, see William Joseph Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation to the Spirits: A Study of 1 Peter 3:18-4:6*, 2nd ed., *Analecta Biblica* 23 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1989), 31; and Bo Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits and Christian Baptism: A Study of 1 Peter 3:19 and Its Context* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 33. However, note that both of these sources incorrectly cite this passage as occurring in *De Fide Orthodoxa* 4.29 instead of in 3.29.

culpability for rejecting it, then PME without at least the possibility of repentance unto salvation does little to resolve the felt tension between the justice and the love of God because a proclamation to those already lost would only increase their guilt if they do not repent. On this point, it is worth noting that 1 Peter 3 does not explicitly teach that the κηρύξαντος resulted in repentance unto salvation, so the inquiry could almost stop right here. However, assuming some sort of conceptual link between 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6, Peter teaches in 4:6 that Christ εὐηγγελίσθη νεκροῖς ἵνα κριθῶσι μὲν ζῶσι δὲ. If this ἵνα clause in 4:6 is taken more specifically as a result clause, or even if it is taken as a purpose clause with success as a possible result, then, assuming that 4:6 is about PME, it is at least in some sense conceivable that this evangelism would result in “life in the spirit”, which surely entails repentance unto salvation.

Third, the question concerns “initial salvation in Jesus Christ.” Let there be no mistake or slander on this point: God’s Word is quite clear that there is no salvation apart from the imputed righteousness of Christ. Perhaps there exist some people who advocate some form of PME who deny the necessity of Christ’s work, but that is not a necessary concomitant of PME. Even if such advocates represented the majority, they would not be the concern here. The concern here is to address those who hold to the necessity of Christ’s work but seek to resolve the tension between the love and justice

of God by at least allowing for equal access to the proclamation of the Gospel, even if many still ultimately reject the Gospel.⁸ A careful consideration of that possibility should not be mistaken as a concession to universalism. Also, the word “initial” is significant, for in some very significant senses it would be true to say that all salvation occurs after death.

Fourth, the question is whether or not salvation is “possible” after death. The question is not “How often does it happen?” or, still less, “Does it always happen?” Even if Peter teaches a doctrine of PME in these passages, no success ratios are given in this passage, and none shall be sought. It is the possibility of salvation that makes PME viable as a means to reduce the tension between the love and justice of God. No more than the possibility shall be sought.

Fifth, note that “after death” covers a wider time frame than “from hell.” The suggestion that people could spend time burning in the lake of fire as punishment for their sins but then later repent and be saved creates the very serious problem of double

8 Assumptions along these lines can be detected in Sanders when he argues for “eschatological evangelization.” John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 178ff. It comes up much more explicitly in Donald Bloesch’s writing on this topic. “May we then hope for the curing of the incurable, for the deliverance of the wretched of the earth? ... We should not seek to know more than is revealed, but we do know this: that outside of Christ and faith in his atonement there is no salvation either in this life or in the life to come.” Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), 2:230.

payment.⁹ That is, if Christ was already punished for their sins, then it would seem that those who have been punished by burning in the lake of fire have been punished unjustly since their sins were actually already punished in Christ. If Christ had in fact already paid for their sins, then why were they being punished in the first place? However, if there is any period of consciousness between death and judgment, it is possible to avoid this problem of double payment by positing that both the preaching and the repentance occur in this period. For the sake of argument, some such period of consciousness will simply be assumed for the purposes of this examination of PME, but the primary Scriptural arguments against such a period will be considered.

Sixth, the question concerns “the nescient today.” Unless it is an ongoing phenomena, PME is of little value in attempting to resolve the felt tension between God’s love and justice for those inculpably ignorant of the gospel. PME for one particular group in the past on one particular occasion or even on a few separate occasions does nothing to help those who die today without access to the gospel. On this point, the proposed thematic link between 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 becomes crucial to establish since the πνεύματα of 3:19 are delimited by the reference to the ἡμέραις Νῶε

⁹ Ostensibly, none of the PME advocates mentioned here have specifically conceived of salvation after death in such stark terms. In fact, as can be seen in note 65 on page 33 below, many of them explicitly argue for a distinction between “Hades” as the realm of all of the dead, on the one hand, and “Hell” as the place of eternal punishment, on the other hand. See also note 126 on page 78.

in 3:20 and thus cannot refer to “every human who dies without access to the gospel.” However, 4:6 could theoretically refer to all of the dead, generally, including the nescient today.

Does Peter teach in 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 that repentance unto initial salvation in Jesus Christ is possible after death for the nescient today? Now that the question has been clarified, the answer proposed in the following argumentation can be stated quite simply: “No.” Naturally, that simple binary answer belies a lot of complexity. The remainder of this chapter and some of the next chapter shall be dedicated to establishing that this is even a question worth asking and answering since repentance unto salvation after death is so often assumed to be impossible by Christians who uphold, as shall the argument of this paper, the authority of God’s Word in Scripture.

First, a review of some of the most significant PME advocates will demonstrate that such a position is not without able and influential champions, whether in the earliest days of the Church or in more recent memory. More to the point, it shall be seen that 1 Peter 3 and 4 are central to any case that has been made for Scriptural support of PME. Other passages are frequently brought in to bolster such arguments, but PME advocates almost universally suggest or assume (1) that Peter’s imprisoned spirits are humans who have died and who are being kept in holding until the final

judgment and (2) that Jesus preached the gospel to these imprisoned spirits in the hope that they might be saved.

The second chapter will give attention to some of the other passages which are enlisted to support or to refute a doctrine of PME. It shall be argued that Scripture says relatively little that can be used to answer this question either way. Whatever they are actually teaching, the other passages which might seem to offer some sort of hope for salvation after death certainly do not teach a PME doctrine. Rather, 1 Peter is the only passage that comes close to explicitly suggesting any form of PME, even in a rather limited sense. Nor can this interpretive possibility be swept under the rug merely by invoking Hebrews 9:27 or Luke 16, for it is also doubtful whether these passages offer any testimony on the subject of PME, particularly in connection with the nescient in the case of Luke 16.

It then remains in the third and fourth chapters to examine 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6, respectively, so as to determine as a matter of exegesis whether these passages positively teach such a possibility. After reviewing some of the positions that commentators have taken on these passages, it shall be argued that 3:19 and 4:6 should not be taken together to teach the possibility of repentance unto salvation after death. Much of the PME case depends on taking these two verses together to talk about

Christ's descent into the realm of the dead, but the context, syntax, and vocabulary of 3:19 are all so different from that of 4:6 that this is a dubious proposition at best. It shall further be argued that, taken separately, neither 3:19 nor 4:6 should be taken to teach such a possibility on their own.

The fifth and final chapter shall return to the implications for systematic and pastoral theology, where it shall be argued that, while it might just be possible to hold for oneself to a PME view within certain limitations, such a view should not be taught in the Church since it has no clear support in Scripture. What Stephen Jonathan terms "pessimistic agnosticism"¹⁰ shall be commended as the best approach. God has not indicated clearly by His Word whether repentance unto initial salvation is possible after death or not. The fact that God has not given us clear teaching in His Word in favor of PME should be sufficient indication that, regardless of whether or not some such doctrine be true, God does not want us to believe or teach it.

10 Stephen Jonathan, *Grace beyond the Grave: Is Salvation Possible in the Afterlife? A Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Evaluation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 25. Jonathan does not advocate this approach himself, but he puts Geivett and Phillips in this camp. R. Douglas Geivett and W. Gary Phillips, "A Particularist View: An Evidentialist Approach," in Okholm and Phillips, 211-270.

Alexandrian Advocates for PME

Why does PME warrant serious consideration or even thorough refutation? Quite apart from the power of its appeal to those struggling to resolve the tension between God's love and justice in His treatment of those who have not even heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this life, there have been voices even from some of the earliest days of the Church who have held to something like a PME doctrine, citing 1 Peter as Scriptural support for this idea.¹¹ Foremost among these voices would be that of Clement of Alexandria, whose thinking appears to be echoed in the writings of Origen, Athanasius, and Cyril of Alexandria. After demonstrating that each of these four not only suggest some kind of PME doctrine but also that they appeal to 1 Peter as support for this, the viewpoint of Augustine shall be presented since his systematic considerations were sufficient to marginalize PME for a long time. Over the last 200 years, however, many theologians have stepped out of Augustine's shadow, and several of these shall be considered. Finally, a brief summary of the findings will be presented.

11 Others have dedicated far more space to discussing the history of interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 than shall be possible here. For thorough treatments, see Reicke, 7-51; Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 25-66. For more recent treatments, see John H. Elliott, *1 Peter*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000) 648-651, 706-710; Chad T. Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ: 1 Peter 3:18-22 in Light of Sin and Punishment Traditions in Early Jewish Christian Literature*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2nd series, 305 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 2-20.

Clement of Alexandria clearly believed that Jesus preached the Gospel to those in Hades. In the sixth book of Clement’s *Στροματεῖς*, he writes that ὁ κύριος εὐαγγελίσσατο καὶ τοῖς ἐν Ἅιδου.¹² Curiously, he supports this assertion with what at first appears to be an allusion to Job 28:22. However, Clement’s allusion is radically different from the LXX of Job 28:22, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1

Job 28:22 Ⲫ	Clement of Alexandria	Deuteronomy 4:12 Ⲫ
ἡ ἀπώλεια καὶ ὁ θάνατος εἶπαν	λέγει ὁ Ἅιδης τῇ ἀπωλείᾳ	ἐλάλησεν κύριος πρὸς ὑμᾶς
–	εἶδος μὲν αὐτοῦ οὐκ εἶδομεν	ἐκ μέσου τοῦ πυρός·
Ἀκηκόαμεν δὲ αὐτῆς τὸ κλέος.	φωνὴν δὲ αὐτοῦ ἠκούσαμεν	φωνὴν ῥημάτων ὑμεῖς ἠκούσατε
–	–	καὶ ὁμοίωμα οὐκ εἶδετε

Clement has Hades speaking (Clement wrote λέγει) to Destruction where Job has Destruction making a joint declaration (using εἶπαν, an aorist of λέγειν) together with Death. Clement adds a phrase about not seeing εἶδος αὐτοῦ (“his appearance”) that is absent from Job. Clement’s masculine genitive αὐτοῦ is a departure from the feminine genitive αὐτῆς in Job, which matches the gender of its antecedent σοφία in v. 20.

Finally, what is heard (both the LXX and Clement use a form of ἀκούειν) in the LXX is

12 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 6.6 (PG 9:265B). The capitalization of Hades in the text above comes from Otto Stählin, ed., *Stromata Buch I-VI*, vol. 2 of *Clemens Alexandrinus*, GCS 15 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906), 454. Clement held that the Lord preached to them because “the righteous according to philosophy” (τοῖς δὲ κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν δίκαιοις) needed “not only faith in the Lord” (οὐκ ἡ πίστις μόνον ἢ εἰς τὸν κύριον) “but also to desert idolatry” (ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἀποστῆναι τῆς εἰδωλολατρίας), which they would do “forthwith at the revelation of the truth” (αὐτίκα ἀποκαλυφθείσης τῆς ἀληθείας).

the glory (τὸ κλέος) of wisdom, but in Clement, it is the voice (φωνήν) of “him”, referring apparently to the Lord.¹³ The differences can be partially accounted for by putting Clement’s text alongside that of Deuteronomy 4:12. Here, it is the Lord who spoke (using λαλεῖν instead of λέγειν) to Israel from the midst of the fire at Mount Horeb, the fire possibly a conceptual parallel with Hades conceived of as a place of fire. Israel heard the sound (φωνήν) of words but did not see God’s form (ὁμοίωμα οὐκ εἶδετε might parallel εἶδος μὲν αὐτοῦ οὐκ εἶδομεν). Perhaps Clement, intentionally or not, conflated Job 28:22 and Deuteronomy 4:12 when he sought Scriptural support for the idea that the Lord preached the Gospel to those in Hades.

Whatever the referent of his allusion, Clement proceeds to suggest that it is the people in Hades who speak of hearing the Lord’s voice rather than Hades the place (οὐχ ὁ τόπος) doing the speaking. He even specifies that these are those who “have abandoned themselves to destruction, as persons who have thrown themselves voluntarily from a ship into the sea.”¹⁴ Thus, when Clement speaks of “those that hear the divine power and voice” (οὗτοι τοίνυν εἰσὶν οἱ ἐπακούσαντες τῆς θείας δυνάμεως τε καὶ φωνῆς), it is clear that they are in Hades.

13 Κλέος could perhaps be construed as parallel to φωνή in some sense and, thus, construed as allusory, but in any case, it is not a quotation.

14 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 6.6 (ANF 2:490B).

However convincing or otherwise Clement’s reasoning has been up to this point, it is here that Clement makes apparent reference to both 1 Peter 3:19 and 1 Peter 4:6 with another rhetorical question. “Do not [the Scriptures] show that the Lord preached the Gospel to those that perished in the flood, or rather had been chained, and to those kept ‘in ward and guard’?”¹⁵ An analysis of Clement’s Greek at this point is revealing. Οὐχὶ δηλοῦσιν εὐηγγελίσθαι τὸν κύριον τοῖς τε ἀπολωλόσιν ἐν τῷ κατακλυσμῷ, μᾶλλον δὲ πεπεδημένοις, καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ τε καὶ φρουρᾶ συνεχόμενοις;¹⁶ It is worth noting the parallels between Clement’s wording and New Testament usage in Table 2:

Table 2

Clement	1 Peter 3:18ff	1 Peter 4:5f
Οὐχὶ δηλοῦσιν	-	-
εὐηγγελίσθαι	ἐκήρυξεν (3:19)	εὐηγγελίσθη (4:6)
τὸν κύριον	Χριστὸς (3:18)	τῷ ἐτοίμως ἔχοντι κρῖναι (4:5)
τοῖς τε ἀπολωλόσιν	πνεύμασιν (3:19)	νεκροῖς (4:5, 6)
ἐν τῷ κατακλυσμῷ	ἐν ἡμέραις Νῶε (3:20) ³³⁷	-
μᾶλλον δὲ πεπεδημένοις	-	-
καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ	καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν (3:19)	νεκροῖς (4:5, 6)
τε καὶ φρουρᾶ συνεχόμενοις	-	-

15 Ibid. 6.6 (ANF 2:490B).

16 Ibid. 6.6 (PG 9:268A). See also Stählin, GCS 15, 454.

On the one hand, Clement uses the perfect middle/passive infinitive εὐηγγελίσθαι, which ANF renders with an active verb in English since εὐαγγελίζω is often deponent. This same verb occurs in 1 Peter 4:6, where the aorist passive indicative εὐηγγελίσθη is quite distinct from the middle voice and is not deponent, a point which shall be discussed at greater length later. In 1 Peter 3:19, the aorist active indicative ἐκήρυξεν is used, not the verb εὐαγγελίζω. Thus, Clement's phrasing appears to blur 3:19 and 4:6. The **verb** εὐαγγελίζω comes from 4:6. The middle/passive **form** in which Clement uses it also comes from 4:6. However, the active **sense** of this middle/passive **form** of the verb εὐαγγελίζω does not match the purely passive **form and sense** of the verb εὐαγγελίζω in 4:6; instead, the active sense parallels that of the verb κηρύσσω from 3:19. On the other hand, Clement specifies that these are those who died ἐν τῷ κατακλυσμῷ, which surely parallels ἐν ἡμέραις Νῶε from 1 Peter 3:20,¹⁷ and his use of τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ replicates the same phrase in 1 Peter 3:19. The apparent use of elements from both 1 Peter 4:6 and 3:19f makes it likely either that Clement sees the two passages as having the same referent (or at least a similar referent) or that Clement has inadvertently conflated the two passages in his memory of them. The latter explanation is made more likely if one holds that Clement has already just conflated Job

17 See also the textual variant which adds κατακεκλεισμενοις in v. 19.

28:22 and Deuteronomy 4:12, particularly since the overlap of the semantic ranges of κηρύσσω and εὐαγγελίζω make them easier to conflate than those Old Testament passages.¹⁸ However, a third explanation of this supposed conflation is also made possible by this overlap of semantic ranges. In many cases, κηρύσσω and εὐαγγελίζω could be used interchangeably. Regardless, Clement clearly held to some form of PME, and he clearly makes some kind of appeal to 1 Peter as support for this position. Space does not permit close examination of exactly how Clement conceptualized PME,¹⁹ but at

18 Dalton suggests that Clement, in a fragment of his commentary on 1 Peter 4:6 preserved only in Latin, “takes for granted that the ‘preaching’ is the normal preaching of the gospel on earth.” Thus, Dalton has Clement himself undermining the supposed link between 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 that is often used to support a more universal PME view: “Clement, as we have seen, had no scruples in allowing conversion in the world of the dead. Thus he cannot be accused of evading the obvious meaning of 4:6 because of dogmatic prejudice.” Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 56. Dalton does not specify exactly how he arrived at the conclusion that Clement took Peter to mean “the normal preaching of the gospel on earth” in 4:6, but this conclusion seems to have been drawn from Clement’s use of the first person plural dative *nobis*: »Propter hoc enim et mortuis evangelizatum est«, *nobis videlicet, qui quondam exstabamus infideles*. Clement of Alexandria, “Adumbrationes in epistolam Petri primam catholica,” in Otto Stählin, ed., *Stromata Buch VII und VIII - Excerpta ex theodoto - Eclogae propheticae - Quis dives salvetur - Fragmente*, vol. 3 of *Clemens Alexandrinus*, GCS 17 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1909), 205. Loosely translated from the Latin, the text reads: “For this reason the gospel was preached also to the dead,’ to us, namely, who once were unfaithful.” This is not an unreasonable conclusion on Dalton’s part, but it might be avoided by holding that, by *nobis* (“to us”), Clement is referring inclusively to all who were once spiritually dead but have now been made spiritually alive rather than referring exclusively to only those who once were spiritually dead but now have been made spiritually alive and are also still physically alive. To put it another way, the preaching Clement has in mind certainly must include Dalton’s “normal preaching of the gospel on earth” since Clement includes himself and presumably his readers as recipients of this preaching, but it could be reaching to use Clement’s phrasing to exclude PME since the use of the first person plural does not explicitly exclude those who had died before Christ came.

19 It is at least worth noting that Clement cites the Shepherd of Hermas favorably regarding not only the preaching of Christ to the dead but also, afterward, the preaching of the apostles to the dead, as well. *Stromata* 2.9. Also referenced later in *Stromata* 6.6. Hermas, however, does not appeal to 1 Peter and thus will not be discussed here.

least it is clear that he had some such concept and that he drew support for it from 1 Peter.

Either Clement's view was passed on to Origen or Origen came to the same conclusions independently after Clement. In the fifth chapter of the second book of *De Principiis*, Origen replied to the suggestion that the New Testament God and the Old Testament God are actually two different gods. The heretics (for so Origen refers to them) apparently claimed that, in the New Testament, God is good but not just, citing His compassion, whereas, in the Old Testament, God is just but not good, citing His acts of judgment such as the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah. Part of Origen's reply is that God's acts of judgment in the Old Testament are good because they are remedial rather than purely punitive. Origen held that Peter records "the hope of those who were destroyed in the deluge," and proceeded to quote 1 Peter 3:18-21.²⁰ In his writing against Celsus, who mocked the idea of Jesus preaching to those in Hades because it seemed to indicate a failure to persuade them while living, Origen insisted that Christ did indeed preach to the dead:

[W]hen He became a soul, without the covering of the body, He dwelt among those souls which were without bodily covering, converting such of them as

²⁰ Origen, *De Principiis* 2.5 (ANF 4:279B).

were willing to Himself, or those whom He saw, for reasons known to Him alone, to be better adapted to such a course.²¹

The Greek text is helpful: γυμνῆ σώματος γενόμενος ψυχῆ, ταῖς γυμναῖς σωμάτων ὠμίλει ψυχαῖς ἐπιστρέφων κάκεινων τὰς βουλομένας πρὸς αὐτὸν, ἢ ἄς ἑώρα δι' οὓς ἦδει αὐτὸς λόγους ἐπιτηδειοτέρας.²² Dalton notes the possibility that Origen's double use of ψυχή in this context might even be intended to parallel the double use of πνεῦμα in 1 Peter 3:18-19.²³ In Origen's commentary on Matthew, he quotes 1 Peter 3:18ff at length in connection with Christ's *descendens ad inferos* and specifies that Christ revealed Himself to those believing in Him.²⁴ Additional passages in Origen's writings are discussed in the literature,²⁵ but Origen's use of 1 Peter in support of PME should already be clear enough.

21 Origen, *Contra Celsus* 2.43 (ANF 4:448A).

22 Origen, *Contra Celsus* 2.43 (PG 11:864C-865A).

23 Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 30. He also suggests that Origen is here employing Greek, dualistic categories of thought concerning human nature where the Bible affirms the essential unity of human nature. The Bible certainly does seem to do so, and it is fair to point out, as Dalton does, that Greek dualism regarding human nature may very well have unduly influenced both Clement and Origen in their interpretation of 1 Peter. However, even for those who hold to psychosomatic union, death marks an unnatural separation between body and soul, a separation which is surely mentioned in 1 Peter 3:18.

24 On Matthew 27:40, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross," Origen comments, *Ipse autem Filium Dei se deridentibus quidem non ostendebat, ostendit autem credentibus sibi, postquam dispensavit quæ oportebat eum dispensare in tribus illis diebus, postquam descendens ad inferos »mortificatus corpore, vivificatus autem in spiritu, spiritibus qui erant in carcere prædicavit quod non crediderant aliquando quando exspectabatur patientia Dei in diebus Noe, cum fabricarcitur arca in qua pauci, id est octo animæ, sunt salvati per aquam.« Et non est derelictus illic, sicut ipse dicebat: »Quoniam non derelinques animam meam in inferno.« Origen, *Commentarium series in evangelium Matthæi* (PG 13:1780D).*

25 For example, Reicke, 31. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 30.

While it is less clear whether Athanasius held out hope for those to whom Christ preached, it is clear that he understood 1 Peter 3:19 to refer to a descent of Christ into Hades. In his letter to Epictetus, Athanasius addressed several Christological heresies which Epictetus brought to his attention, summarized in §2 of the letter. Among them was the idea that “the Body is of one Essence with the Godhead of the Word.”²⁶ Athanasius stressed that, although “the impassable and incorporeal Word of God” was “in the Body which was circumcised,” it was not “the very Essence of the Word that... was circumcised.”²⁷ This body was ἐν μνημείῳ... ὅτε αὐτὸς ἐπορεύθη... κηρῦξαι καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεῦμασιν, ὡς εἶπεν ὁ Πέτρος.²⁸ If the Word had been “changed into bones and flesh... there were no need of a tomb. For the Body would have gone by itself to preach to the spirits in Hades.”²⁹ Clearly, ἐπορεύθη... κηρῦξαι τοῖς ἐν τῷ ἄδη πνεύμασι in §6³⁰ is referring back to the clear reference to 1 Peter 3:19 in §5, just a few lines before it. It is thus clear that Athanasius understood 1 Peter 3:19 to be about a descent into Hades. It is worth noting that, while Peter wrote πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν, Athanasius

26 Athanasius, *Letters of Athanasius* 59.4 (NPNF² 4:571B).

27 *Ibid.* 59.5 (NPNF² 4:572A).

28 *Ibid.* 59.5 (PG 26:1060A).

29 *Ibid.* 59.6 (NPNF² 4:572B).

30 *Ibid.* 59.6 (PG 26:1060B).

wrote ἐπορεύθη κηρῦξαι. If the infinitive indicates purpose, this would certainly be consistent with a hopeful mission to those in Hades, though it does not require such.³¹

Cyril of Alexandria, much like Clement and Origen, was far more explicitly hopeful than Athanasius. In his commentary on John 16:16, Cyril wrote of Christ “having despoiled Hades (σκυλεύσας τὸν ᾅδην) and having opened to those there the gates of darkness (ἀναπετάσας τοῖς ἐκεῖσε τὰς τοῦ σκούτου πύλας).”³² A few lines later, Cyril continued on the topic of the *Triduum Mortis*: “For in three days He rose from the dead, having preached also to the spirits in prison (κηρῦξας καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασι). For thus was the fullest display of love for man, not only to save, I say, those still living on the earth, but also to preach forgiveness to those already departed and sitting in darkness in the depths of the abyss, as it has been written.”³³ In his

commentary on Luke 4:18, Cyril also seems to have linked 1 Peter 3:19 and Isaiah 42:7,

31 Dalton’s observation that Athanasius “is interested only in showing the relationship which existed between the Word and the body of Christ” is fair, but he goes too far in claiming that Athanasius “does not discuss the nature of Christ’s activity in the world of the dead.” Athanasius clearly believed that Christ preached there. By way of ellipsis, Dalton curiously omits κηρῦξαι from his quotation of Athanasius, leaving only ἐπορεύθη... καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν, ὡς εἶπεν ὁ Πέτρος. Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 2nd ed., 31.

32 Εἶσω γὰρ ἦδη θυρῶν ὁ τοῦ θανάτου γέγονε καιρὸς, ἀποπτον τοῖς μαθηταῖς τιθεὶς τὸν Κύριον, εἰς ὀλίγον κομιδῇ τὸν καιρὸν, ἄχρις ἂν σκυλεύσας τὸν ᾅδην, καὶ ἀναπετάσας τοῖς ἐκεῖσε τὰς τοῦ σκούτου πύλας, τὸν ἴδιον πάλιν ἀναστήσῃ ναόν. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 11.2 (PG 74:453D). The English translation above is my own.

33 Τριήμερος γὰρ ἀνεβίω, κηρῦξας καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασι. Πληρεστάτη γὰρ οὕτως ἡ τῆς φιλανθρωπίας ἐπίδειξις ἦν, τῷ μὴ μόνον ἀνασῶσαι φημι τοὺς ἔτι ζῶντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἦδη κατοιχομένοις καὶ ἐν τοῖς τῆς ἀβύσσου μύχοις καθημένοις ἐν σκούτῳ κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον διακηρῦξαι τὴν ἄφρασιν. Ibid. 11.2 (PG 74:456A). The English translation above is my own.

reminding his readers that Christ was given ἔξαγαγεῖν ἐκ δεσμῶν δεδεμένους, καὶ ἐξ οἴκου φυλακῆς καθημένους ἐν σκότει³⁴ before elaborating that Christ, τὸ θεῖόν τε καὶ οὐράνιον φῶς, καὶ τοῖς ἐν ἄδου πνεύμασι πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξε, καὶ τοῖς καθειργμένοις ἐν οἴκῳ φυλακῆς ἐπεφάνη, καὶ πάντας ἀνήκε δεσμῶν καὶ ἀνάγκης.³⁵ Cyril was thus quite explicit not only in teaching some form of PME but also in specifying that this evangelism had positive results, and he also quite explicitly tied this understanding to 1 Peter 3:19.

A Modest Augustinian Proposal

With such as these having advocated such an understanding of Christ's descent into hell and having appealed to 1 Peter as support, it should come as no surprise that Evodius, Bishop of Uzalis, wrote to inquire what Augustine thought of the matter. Did Peter mean for us to believe "that they were in hell, and that Christ descending into hell, preached the gospel to them all, and by grace delivered them all from darkness and punishment, so that from the time of the resurrection of the Lord judgment is expected, hell having then been completely emptied"?³⁶

34 Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarium in Lucam* (PG 72:537C).

35 Ibid. (PG 72:537D).

36 Evodius, Letter 163 in *Letters of St. Augustin* (NPNF¹ 1:515A). Note that Evodius is thus in part questioning a universalistic reading of the passage. Whether or not the Alexandrians, on the whole, were really so universalistic as their reputation has suggested is a matter for debate. At any rate,

Augustine's uncertainty is evident in his reply. "The question which you have proposed to me... is wont to perplex me most seriously...."³⁷ Augustine's awareness of the use of the passage by others in support of PME is also evident:

[T]hose who attempt to give an explanation of this matter... say that all those who were found in hell when Christ descended thither had never heard the gospel, and that that place of punishment or imprisonment was emptied of all these, because ... they had sufficient excuse for not believing that which had never been proclaimed to them. ... Those who hold this opinion do not consider that the same excuse is available for all those who have, even after Christ's resurrection, departed this life before the gospel came to them.³⁸

Augustine, playing devil's advocate, initially proposed to resolve his own objection himself before finding what he believed to be fatal flaws with the whole theory:

This objection may perhaps be met by saying that those also who since the Lord's resurrection have died or are now dying without the gospel having been proclaimed to them, may have heard it or may now hear it where they are, in hell.... But if we accept this opinion, ... who can bear the contradictions both of reason and faith which must follow? In the first place, if this were true, we

¹ Peter 3:19 certainly is not explicitly universalistic in its scope, limited as it is by the modifiers in 3:20, even if 4:6 is a fuller elaboration of the same theme.

³⁷ Augustine goes on in this manner: "I therefore refer this question back to yourself, that if either you yourself be able, or can find any other person who is able to do so, you may remove and terminate my perplexities on the subject. ...I will communicate to you the things in the passage which occasion difficulty to me...." Augustine, *Letters of St. Augustin* 164.1.1 (NPNF¹ 1:515A). Later, he reiterates, "Who can be otherwise than perplexed by words so profound as these?" Ibid. 164.4.11 (NPNF¹ 1:518A). Even in his conclusion, he writes, "...[I]f [anyone] succeed in solving my difficulties which I have mentioned above, so as to remove the perplexity which they occasion, let him communicate his interpretation to me...." Ibid. 164.7.22 (NPNF¹ 1:521B).

³⁸ Ibid. 164.4.12 (NPNF¹ 1:518B). Augustine even shows a certain amount of sympathy for this position earlier in the letter, asking, "For if we say that all who were found there [in Hell at Christ's descent] were then delivered without exception, who will not rejoice if we can prove this?" Ibid. 164.2.4 (NPNF¹ 1:516A).

should seem to have no reason for mourning over those who have departed from the body without that grace.... [A]nother still more absurd consequence is involved, namely, that forasmuch as all men shall certainly die, and ought to come to hell wholly free from the guilt of having despised the gospel; since otherwise it can be of no use to them to believe it when they come there, the gospel ought not to be preached on earth, a sentiment not less foolish than profane.³⁹

These passages are quoted at length because they demonstrate that the difficulties surrounding this issue which are confronted by Christians today are by no means new. As on so many other issues, much of what has come after Augustine can be considered naught but extensive footnotes to him.

It was precisely this monumental influence of Augustine that led his somewhat tentative suggestion to Evodius to dominate later Western understanding of 1 Peter 3:19 well through the Reformation.⁴⁰ Augustine's suggestion was that Peter might have written "without any reference to hell,"⁴¹ for Christ, even "before He came in the flesh to die for us,"⁴² "was wont to come and preach to whom He would,"⁴³ including those sinners from Noah's time. Although Peter referred to those sinners as "spirits," Augustine held that "the term... could... be applied to designate souls which were at

39 Ibid. 164.4.13 (NPNF¹ 1:519A).

40 Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 44n95.

41 Augustine, *Letters* 164.5.15 (NPNF¹ 1:519B).

42 Ibid. 164.6.18 (NPNF¹ 1:520B).

43 Ibid. 164.7.20 (NPNF¹ 1:521A).

that time still in the bodies of men, and which, being shut up in the darkness of ignorance, were, so to speak, 'in prison.'"⁴⁴

More Recent PME Advocates

Setting aside the question of the merits of Augustine's exegesis, his pairing of it with more systematic theological concerns effectively drove the Alexandrian way of thinking well out of the mainstream of Western theology for quite some time. One point at which we see PME make a bit of a comeback is in the writings of Philip Schaff, who, in his assessment of Zwingli's views, wrote that:

...only those who hear the Gospel and reject it in unbelief are foreordained to eternal punishment. Of those without the reach of Christian doctrine we can not judge, as we know not their relation to election. There may be and are elect persons among the heathen; and the fate of Socrates and Seneca is no doubt better than that of many popes.⁴⁵

Technically, Schaff was here summarizing Zwingli's own view. However, Schaff's own opinion appears to have been more or less the same as what he saw as Zwingli's, though Schaff thought Zwingli ought to have been more guarded:

Zwingli... retained... a great admiration for... the ancient Greeks and Romans, and was somewhat unguarded in his mode of expression. But he had no idea of sending any one to heaven without the atonement, although he does not state

44 Ibid. 164.5.16 (NPNF¹ 1:519B).

45 Philip Schaff, *A History of the Creeds of Christendom* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1878), 1:370.

when and how it was applied to those who died before the incarnation. In his mind the eternal election was inseparably connected with the plan of the Christian redemption. He probably assumed an unconscious Christianity among the better heathen, and a secret work of grace in their hearts, which enabled them to exercise a general faith in God and to strive after good works....⁴⁶

Schaff admits that, in Zwingli's own time, when "the Romanists excluded the Protestants, the Lutherans the Calvinists, the Calvinists the Arminians, from the kingdom of heaven," "Zwingli's view could not be appreciated, and appeared as a dangerous heresy."⁴⁷ Indeed, "Luther was horrified at the idea ... and thought that it falsified the whole gospel."⁴⁸ However, Schaff appears to have suggested that this idea was worthy of further consideration:

[I]n modern times Zwingli's view has been revived and applauded as a noble testimony of his liberality, especially among evangelical divines in Germany, and partly in connection with a new theory of Hades and the middle state. ... The future state of the heathen is wisely involved in mystery, and it is unsafe and useless to speculate without the light of revelation about matters which lie beyond the reach of our observation and experience. But the Bible consigns no one to final damnation except for rejecting Christ in unbelief, and gives us at least a ray of hope by significant examples of faith from Melchizedek and Job down to the wise men from the East, and by a number of passages concerning the working of the Logos among the Gentiles (John i. 5, 10; Rom. i. 19; ii. 14, 15, 18, 19; Acts xvii 23, 28; 1 Pet. iii. 19; iv. 6). We certainly have no right to confine God's election and saving grace to the limits of the visible Church. We are indeed bound to his ordinances and must submit to his terms of salvation; but

46 Ibid., 1:382.

47 Ibid., 1:384.

48 Ibid., 1:382.

God himself is free, and can save whomsoever and howsoever he pleases, and he is infinitely more anxious and ready to save than we can conceive.⁴⁹

Of particular importance for our purposes here, note that Schaff here suggests both (1) that there is “at least a ray of hope” for those who have not explicitly rejected Christ in this life and (2) that 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 can be used to support this idea.

Schaff was hardly alone in this way of thinking. Indeed, PME was at the center of more than one controversy near the end of the nineteenth century under the name of “future probation.” At Andover Theological Seminary, Newman Smyth was denied appointment to the chair of theology owing partly to his adherence to this idea, and his brother, Egbert Smyth, was dismissed as president of the seminary by the Board of Visitors in a shakedown that followed,⁵⁰ with belief in “probation after death” as one of the charges.⁵¹ Egbert Smyth and several other contributing editors to the *Andover*

49 Ibid., 1:384.

50 L. G. Whitlock Jr., “Andover Controversy,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 59.

51 Although the original 1886 document containing the charges made against Smyth is now difficult to acquire, many documents can be found in defense of Smyth against these charges, from all of which the eleventh charge is evident: “...that the respondent holds, maintains, and inculcates that there is, and will be, probation after death for all men who do not decisively reject Christ during the earthly life....” Theodore W. Dwight, *Before the Board of Visitors of Andover Theological Seminary [...] Argument For Professor Egbert C. Smyth* (Boston: Franklin Press, 1887), 72. Dwight proceeds just a short space later to write, “The other charges appear to be in the nature of an after-thought. They are rather raised as dust to conceal a retreat upon this eleventh or main specification.” Ibid.

Review had clearly advocated for such a position in their book, *Progressive Orthodoxy*, which also made explicit appeal to 1 Peter 3:19⁵² and 4:6.⁵³

Around the same time, after a rather lengthy and controversial trial process, Charles Augustus Briggs, of Brown-Driver-Briggs fame, was defrocked and excommunicated from the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America over a basket of issues,⁵⁴ the idea of the possibility of salvation after death being one of them.⁵⁵ When considering several of the more speculative and very specific proposals on the mechanics of the matter, Briggs did not mince words. “All such theories of redemption of lost souls after death are castles in the air.”⁵⁶ However, when considering that “the great mass of the adult population of Asia and Africa—yes, of Europe and America also—

52 “What, now, are the passages which are thought to give encouragement to hope for the heathen? One of these passages is Peter’s allusion in the third chapter of his epistle to Christ’s preaching to the spirits in prison. The preponderating conclusion of scholarship is that Christ appeared in the abode of the dead between his crucifixion and resurrection.” Egbert C. Smyth, et al., *Progressive Orthodoxy: A Contribution to the Christian Interpretation of Christian Doctrines* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1885), 98.

53 “Here it is expressly taught that, in order to make judgment universal, the gospel was preached to all the dead as well as to the living.” Ibid, 99.

54 After a controversial appeal, the decision to excommunicate Briggs was ultimately made by the General Assembly rather than the Presbytery of New York. See *The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America Against the Rev. Charles A Briggs, DD.* (New York: John C. Rankin Co.), 1893.

55 “Charge VII. The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America charges the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D.D., ...with teaching that the processes of redemption extend to the world to come in the case of many who die in sin; which is contrary to the essential doctrine of the Holy Scripture and the Standards of the said Church, that the processes of redemption are limited to this world.” Ibid., 66.

56 Charles A. Briggs, “Redemption after Death,” *The Magazine of Christian Literature* v. 1 n. 3 (December, 1889), 109.

are doomed to hell-fire according to popular theology,” Briggs was clearly unsatisfied with the status quo:

The ministers preach it, and the people listen to this doctrine as they do to many others, but they are not moved by it. They accept it as orthodox doctrine without understanding it; but they do not really believe it in their hearts. If they did they would be more worthy of damnation than the heathen themselves. If a single man were in peril of physical death, the whole community would be aroused to save him. ... But here, according to the average missionary sermon, are untold millions of heathen perishing without the gospel, and at death going into everlasting fire. Vast multitudes of unevangelized persons in our cities and towns and villages are confronting the same cruel destiny. ... The difficulty is to construct the doctrine of the salvation of infants and the heathen in harmony with established doctrines.⁵⁷

Thus, Briggs went in search of a way to get around the traditional denial of PME without leaving the confines of Scripture or of the Westminster Standards. Briggs’ proposal was complex,⁵⁸ but given the results of his trial, it is clear that many believed that Briggs’ search had been a failure. However, Briggs clearly understood 1 Peter 3:19

⁵⁷ Ibid., 110.

⁵⁸ For example, Briggs still believed in the doctrine of election, so he posited that “the Divine Spirit may regenerate all the elect in this world, and plant within them the seeds of faith and repentance, so that redemption may have its beginning here for infants and incapables. We may also see this faith and repentance germinate and spring up under the light of nature, and feel after God and His Christ in many among the heathen; but the redemption thus begun must in some way bring them to Christ in order that they may have the possession and enjoyment of salvation. ... Calvinism ought to have no hesitation in advancing into the doctrine of the Middle State. The salvation which is begun here by regeneration is carried on there. For the vast majority of our race who die in infancy or have lived beyond the range of the means of grace, their salvation begun in this life by regeneration is carried on in the Intermediate State with the exercise of personal faith in Christ, whom they know there for the first. ... The Intermediate State is, therefore, for a considerable portion of our race a state for the consummation of *their justification*.” Ibid., 111. Emphasis original.

to refer to an evangelistic preaching to disembodied humans in the realm of the dead. In “Redemption after Death,” he alludes to 1 Peter 3:19 three times,⁵⁹ demonstrating his understanding of Christ’s preaching to be redemptive for those who had already died:

The prophetic office of Christ continues to those who are in the Middle State. After his own death he went to the abode of the departed spirits, and preached unto them his gospel. He ascended into heaven, taking his redeemed with him. ... If we could find evidence in the Scriptures that there was any possibility of the extension of the benefits of regeneration and the efficacy of the means of grace into the abode of the lost, we should be glad to follow it. ... The preaching of Jesus to the spirits in prison is not decisive for the present dispensation, and therefore does not open the door for a larger hope. Jesus by his resurrection made a change in the abode of the dead, by taking some of them at least with him from Hades to Heaven. We do not know what changes have been made in Hades in other respects.⁶⁰

Note, however, that Briggs does not use 1 Peter 3:19 to prove that an evangelistic ministry to unrepentant departed spirits continues to this day. He shows the same reticence in *The Fundamental Christian Faith*, a treatment of the Apostle’s Creed, when discussing the clause about Christ’s descent into hell:

Many moderns recognize, on the basis of 1 Peter, that Christ preached to the wicked dead, and saved at least some of them; and agree with that opinion which prevailed in the early Church. ... Hermas, in the early Church, and Clement of Alexandria ... held that the Apostles and Christian teachers continued the work of Christ in preaching to the dead. Few have followed them in this opinion, whether ancient or modern. There is no Biblical evidence on the

59 Ibid., 108, 115, 116.

60 Ibid., 115, 116.

subject. It is a question of probability, or improbability, depending on deductions from other doctrines and facts of the Christian religion.⁶¹

These passages amount to Briggs' admission of Scriptural silence on the specific theological question at issue for our purposes. As noted earlier, even if Christ preached to a particular group of people in the realm of the dead on one occasion, this does not establish that He continues to do so today. Nevertheless, it is clear that Briggs believed, on the basis of 1 Peter 3:19, that Christ preached to departed human spirits in the realm of the dead and that He even "saved at least some of them."

The idea of future probation had proponents in the 20th century, as well. J. H. Leckie, for example, was very optimistic in this regard. He believed that 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 settled the matter, and he was critical of other interpretations of these verses:

But all these interpretations, however ingenious or theologically convenient, have the fatal defect of finding no support whatever in the words of St. Peter, who declares that Jesus descended into Hades and preached good news. Whatever difficulty, then, may beset the detailed exegesis of these admittedly difficult passages, their general import seems plain. St. Peter almost certainly meant to teach that Jesus in the interval between death and resurrection went down into the lower world and there proclaimed good tidings.⁶²

61 Charles Briggs, *The Fundamental Christian Faith* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 134-135. On Hermas, see note 19 on page 17.

62 J. H. Leckie, *The World to Come and Final Destiny: The Kerr Lectures, Delivered in the United Free Church College, Glasgow During Session 1917-1918* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1918), 91.

Of course, when one looks closely at 3:19, it quickly becomes apparent that Peter actually did not so clearly “declare” that “Jesus descended into Hades and preached good news” as Leckie here would have it. Peter wrote that Jesus “went”, which is not necessarily the same as saying that Jesus “descended”; that Jesus “proclaimed”, using κηρύσσω, which is not necessarily the same as saying that Jesus “preached good news”; and that Jesus did so to “spirits in prison”, which is not necessarily the same as saying the Jesus did so to disembodied humans in Hades. Nevertheless, Leckie was not alone in understanding Peter in precisely the terms Leckie used. Leckie, writing in 1918, even reported that “the majority of evangelical teachers at the present day hold some form of the doctrine that is commonly called ‘Future Probation.’”⁶³

Sixty years later, Donald Bloesch wrote with more caution and reserve but advocated a very similar position to that of Leckie, again with appeal to 1 Peter:

We can affirm salvation on the other side of the grave, since this has Scriptural warrant (cf. Isa. 26:19; John 5:25-29; Eph. 4:8, 9; 1 Pet. 3:19, 20; 4:6); yet we cannot preach that any of those who are banished to hell will finally be saved. Quite the opposite seems to be the case if we take Scripture seriously. We can rest assured that those in hell are in the hands of a God who is both righteous and merciful, and we can trust that his mercy as well as his justice will be manifest among them, though this does not mean final universal salvation.⁶⁴

⁶³ Ibid., 94.

⁶⁴ Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), 2:227. This work was originally published in 1978. Bloesch’s lead-in to the above quotation should be provided for further demonstration of his carefulness: “Many universalists reject the idea that God’s justice is

Note especially the apparent distinction made by Bloesch between “salvation on the other side of the grave” on the one hand, which he clearly believed had Scriptural support, and salvation for those “banished to hell” on the other hand. As touched upon briefly earlier in this chapter, salvation “after death” is not necessarily the same thing as salvation “from hell.” Many of those who have suggested the possibility of repentance unto salvation after death argue at some length for this very distinction.⁶⁵

Around the same time as Bloesch, Gabriel Fackre wrote his own approval of what he would later call “Divine Perseverance”:

retributive, and this is why the doctrine of hell makes no sense to them. They speak of God’s justice only in terms of his love. But what does this do to the concept of justice and to meaningful obedience? Love then becomes sentimentality. We affirm that the punishment in hell is both punitive and remedial, though the latter must be understood in terms of preservation rather than purification.... We do not wish to build fences around God’s grace, however, and we do not preclude the possibility that some in hell might finally be translated into heaven. The gates of the holy city are depicted as being open day and night (Isa. 60:11; Rev. 21:25), and this means that access to the throne of grace is possible continuously. The gates of hell are locked, but they are locked only from within. C. S. Lewis has suggested in *The Great Divorce* that where there is a supposed transition from hell to heaven the person was never really in hell but only in purgatory. This, of course, is interesting speculation, and may be close to the truth. Yet we must maintain a reverent agnosticism concerning the workings of God’s grace which are not revealed in Holy Scripture.” *Ibid.*, 2:226-227.

⁶⁵ Typically, this has been done by arguing that “Hades” is a term used to refer to a realm for all of the dead, both the righteous and the unrighteous, whereas “Hell” or “the lake of fire” as the place for final judgment is quite different from Hades. Revelation 20:14 even seems to distinguish between Hades and the “lake of fire” when it says that Death and Hades first give up their dead. Those dead are judged, but Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire first, prior to the dead who have been judged and who are then thrown into the lake of fire subsequently. See Leckie, 88-89, or Briggs, “Redemption after Death,” 106-107.

Early in the history of Christian thought, attention was given to the saving work of Christ that continues beyond the doors of death, an accent that found its way into the Apostles' Creed in the phrase "He descended into Hades," the place of the dead. This view is based on 1 Peter 3:19-20, 1 Peter 4:6, and a cluster of related passages (Eph. 4:8-9; John 5:25-29; Matt. 8:11; 12:40; Lk. 13:28-30; Heb. 9:15; Rom. 10:7; Rev. 21:25). Some early church fathers, as well as some nineteenth- and twentieth-century theologians working out of a missionary tradition sensitive to other cultures and religions (for example, the 'Andover theory'), laid the groundwork for an eschatological perspective on the destiny of those who have not heard the Good News. ... They believed that the wideness and length of God's mercy would deny no one the hearing of the Gospel, a word of invitation extended even by the glorified Christ to those who have not been reached by the earthly Body of Christ. That offer is made by the same vulnerable Love that does not force its will and way upon anyone, and thus in the eschatological encounter grants the right to respond with a No as well as a Yes. ... Those who respond in faith to Christ's eschatological word may indeed be the "other sheep of mine, not belonging to this fold" (John 10:16).⁶⁶

Of course, 1 Peter shall receive extended treatment later, and Ephesians 4 and John 5 will be discussed in more detail in our next chapter. However, the other Scriptures Fackre enlists here can only serve his cause by first having Fackre's own position on the possibility of salvation after death foisted upon them. It is far from clear how any of these other passages could be understood to teach such a possibility on their own or even cumulatively,⁶⁷ and Fackre himself unfortunately offers no argument. Still, it

66 Gabriel Fackre, *The Christian Story: A Narrative Interpretation of Basic Christian Doctrine*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 233f.

67 Regarding Jesus' statement that "many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11; compare Luke 13:29 and context, also cited here by Fackre), nothing about it necessarily implies even PME, let alone a repentance unto initial salvation after death. On the contrary, the import seems to be that those who

really is 1 Peter that carries the weight of his argument, which Fackre would give in more detail seventeen years later:

Those who have believed deeply in God's unlimited power and love to reach the unreached have returned again and again to 1 Peter 3:19-20 and 4:6. ... [T]he verses under study.... also speak of the death and resurrection of Christ, of "the living and the dead," of Christ's dealings with the dead. Could these verses be addressed to the same question posed to the Hawaiian missionaries?^[68] In the third chapter, Peter urges believers to stick to their convictions in spite of persecutions. After all, "Christ also suffered" (v. 18), going all the way for us. As an example of this divine perseverance, the writer then cites Christ's determination to breach the very walls of death to make a "proclamation to the

have already been saved will enjoy community with the saints of old, not that those who have not yet been saved will have a chance to hear the gospel from the Patriarchs. In Matthew 12:40, Jesus stated that He would be "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Jesus stated that He would be there, but He is silent on the question of what He would do while there. While it is not a logical impossibility that Jesus was referring to people who would be saved after death when He spoke of "other sheep" in John 10:16, there is no indication within the context that this is what Jesus had in mind, and the referent has a far more likely candidate in the Gentiles who were not of the "fold" of the people of Israel. Where it says in Hebrews 9 that Jesus "is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant," it is altogether unclear how Fackre believed that this supports PME. Where it says in Romans 10 that Jesus was in "the abyss," absolutely nothing is said concerning whether Jesus preached to anyone there or saved anyone there. As for the idea in Revelation 21:25 that the gates of the New Jerusalem "will never be shut by day—and there will be no night," even if it is conceded that it might literally "leave the door open" for salvation after death, it certainly cannot be used to teach that salvation after death definitely occurs. The point here rather seems to be the confident peace of the city such that it never needs to close its gates against any enemy, all enemies having already been defeated. Indeed, given what the text goes on to say in v. 27, that "nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life," the passage itself seems to preclude the very possibility Fackre (and others) have sought to prove from it.

68 "In the nineteenth century the gospel was carried from Boston to the mid-Pacific Sandwich Islands, and thousands of Hawaiians were converted. After a while, however, a troubling question arose among the new Christians: 'What will happen to our ancestors of blessed memory? They never heard the good news.'" Gabriel Fackre, "Divine Perseverance," 71.

spirits in prison” (v. 19). Christ’s implacable power and love will persist to and through the final barrier of death. Even this last enemy is not strong enough to prevent the declaration of the Word. ... On the basis of divine patience and its subsequent Noahic covenant, “Gentiles... living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry... will have to give an accounting to him who stands ready to judge the living and the dead” (1 Pet 4:3, 5). But the graciousness of God is such that *even these*, failing to live up to the rainbow light they are given (sinners “judged in the flesh as everyone is judged”), will not be denied the good news proclaimed to all sinners—“for this is the reason the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead” (1 Pet 4:6). Sinners who die outside the knowledge of the gospel will not be denied the hearing of the Word.⁶⁹

Though slightly abbreviated here, Fackre’s argument from 1 Peter, at roughly three pages, is to be commended for actually paying attention to the text itself and its context. Many PME advocates have simply taken it for granted that Peter meant what they thought he meant, with little to no evident self-reflection on how they had drawn this conclusion.

The most recent of the PME advocates to be considered here will be Clark Pinnock. His decision to use the phrase “postmortem encounter” instead of “postmortem evangelism” makes his position slightly more sophisticated and harder to gainsay:

...[D]oes the idea of a postmortem encounter have scriptural support? It seems to have some in Peter’s word about the Gospel being preached to the dead,

⁶⁹ Italics original. Ibid., 81-84.

where the text sounds as if the dead are given an opportunity to respond to Christ (1 Pe 3:19-20; 4:6). ... Could the meaning of the descent into hell be that the people who never encountered the Gospel in their lifetimes can choose to receive it in the postmortem situation? Such a possibility would make good the universality of grace and God's willingness that all should know it. It would make clear that the most wicked of sinners are not beyond the scope of God's mercy, and that God is patient even with them. But it would not mean universal salvation, because the choice to be made is genuinely open. Not only is a postmortem encounter possible, it would seem that it is inescapable. ... God does not cease to be gracious to sinners just because they are no longer living. ... All humanity will stand before the only God there is, the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ. That means that they stand in the presence of God's grace and can ask for God's mercy. The issue is not whether all will stand there (of course they will), or whether God is loving (of course he is), or whether they can ask for mercy (why not?). The question is whether sinners would respond to God on that occasion any differently than they have already responded in life on earth. There is no reason to think they would.⁷⁰

Notice how, in this final sentence, Pinnock essentially concurred with one of the points mentioned earlier. Evangelism *per se* does not save people; even evangelism by Christ Himself does not necessarily save, and repentance is a requirement of salvation. Pinnock appears here to be somewhat pessimistic about repentance after death in the case of those who have not responded well to whatever revelation was available to them, but he did still hold that 1 Peter supports the idea that additional revelation will be supplied after death in a postmortem encounter.

⁷⁰ Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 169-170.

Many others could be cited in support of PME,⁷¹ but this should suffice to show that 1 Peter is quite central to the case that is made for the idea that those who have not had access to the gospel in this life will have opportunity to hear and respond to it in the next life. Thus far, attention has focused on those who are approaching 1 Peter

71 John Sanders, for example, who supports this idea himself under the name “eschatological evangelization,” gives a rather extensive list of supporters since the Reformation, including Franz Delitzsch. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 211-214. Donald Bloesch even provides an interesting quotation from Luther: “God forbid that I should limit the time of acquiring faith to the present life. In the depth of the Divine mercy there may be opportunity to win it in the future.” Bloesch quickly concedes that this statement from Luther “was more of a passing hope, however, than an integral part of Luther’s creed.” Donald G. Bloesch, *The Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 146. However, Bloesch took this quotation not directly from Luther but from Harry Buis, *The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1957), 74. Buis, for his part, cited thus: “In a letter to Hansen von Rechenberg in 1522.” This same letter is cited by Rob Bell, *Love Wins* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 106. Bell’s brief quotation of Luther out of context belies the substance of Luther’s real position. However, at least the wording of Bell’s quotation of Luther followed the verifiable wording of standard translations of Luther’s letter. The legitimacy of the wording in Buis’ quotation, which Bloesch duplicated, appears to be unverifiable, at best. The question posed to Luther in this letter was whether those who die without faith can be saved. In his lengthy response, two of Luther’s observations seem particularly relevant here. First, Luther held that God’s own self-revelation was inconsistent with the possibility of salvation apart from faith: “It is as impossible for God to save without faith as it is impossible for the divine truth to lie.” Martin Luther, “A Letter to Hans von Rechenberg,” in *Luther’s Works*, ed. Gustav K. Wiencke (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1968), 43:53f. Second, Luther appears to have allowed at least for the possibility that dying without faith need not entail facing the final judgment without faith. In contrast to the question of God saving without faith, he suggested, “It would be quite a different question whether God can impart faith to some in the hour of death or after death so that these people could be saved through faith. Who would doubt God’s ability to do that? No one, however, can prove that he does do this.” *Ibid.*, 43:54. See also Yoshihara, who discusses a couple of recent prominent Japanese advocates for this idea. Hirokatsu Yoshihara, “A Study of 1 Peter 3:18b-20a and 4:6: A Response to the Notion of Christ’s Postmortem Evangelism to the Un-evangelized, a View Recently Advocated in Japan, Part 1,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 20, no. 2 (2017): 185-190. To include C. S. Lewis among PME advocates is a somewhat dubious proposition. On the one hand, in his preface to *The Great Divorce*, he wrote, “I beg readers to remember that this is a fantasy. ... [T]he transmortal conditions are solely an imaginative supposal: they are not even a guess or a speculation at what may actually await us.” C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, HarperCollins paperback ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2001), x. In the same

more from the angle of systematic theology than from that of exegetical theology, but in chapters three and four, the perspectives of those who are doing what can be more rightly called “exegesis” (in the technical sense of that term today) will be considered. Before entering that discussion, however, a bit more work needs to be done to demonstrate the centrality of 1 Peter for this question. Thus, chapter two will survey the most significant passages that have been called upon by PME advocates and detractors to answer the question, “What do the Scriptures teach about the general possibility of repentance unto initial salvation in Jesus Christ after death?”

vein, Lewis put this admonition on the lips of George MacDonald in the final chapter: “Ye are only dreaming. And if ye come to tell of what ye have seen, make it plain that it was but a dream. ... Give no poor fool the pretext to think ye are claiming knowledge of what no mortal knows.” Ibid., 144. On the other hand, the MacDonald character speaks of Christ’s descent near the end of the book provocatively: “Only the Greatest of all can make Himself small enough to enter Hell. ... Only One has descended into Hell. ... It was not once long ago that He did it. Time does not work that way when once ye have left the Earth. All moments that have been or shall be were, or are, present in the moment of His descending. There is no spirit in prison to Whom [sic] He did not preach.” Ibid., 140. Given Lewis’ repeated cautions, however, it would certainly be ill-advised to say that *The Great Divorce* represents Lewis’ considered position on the matter.

Chapter Two

Postmortem Evangelism and Particular Judgment

By now it is clear that 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 come up frequently in discussions of PME, but by no means are they the only passages that PME advocates claim in their favor. The list can become quite extensive, depending on who is providing it.⁷² Not all of the passages have equal merit.⁷³ In the interest of demonstrating how vitally important 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 are to the question of PME, the most promising of these other passages shall be considered in canonical order: John 5:24-25, where Jesus says “the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God”; 1 Corinthians 15:29, which speaks of “those baptizing themselves for the dead”; and Ephesians 4:8-10, which asks, “What is ‘he ascended’ if not that he also descended?” It shall be argued that none of these passages offer such support for PME as might be found in 1 Peter.

72 See, for example, Fackre’s list of citations, dealt with in note 67 on page 34 in chapter one.

73 For example, Matthew 12:40, Acts 2:27, and Romans 10:6-7 could all be legitimately used to teach concerning Christ’s so-called “descent into hell,” provided that “hell” is here understood to be a gloss for Hades or Sheol (as the realm of the dead) rather than to be a gloss for Gehenna or the lake of fire (as the place of eternal punishment). Those three passages all clearly indicate that Jesus spent (or would spend) time in that realm of the dead. However, it is quite another matter to claim these in support of PME when the texts themselves say nothing of the sort. “Christ spent time in the grave” is not the same as “Christ preached the gospel to those who were in the grave.” On the distinction between hell and Hades, see note 9 on page 8 and note 65 on page 33.

There are also passages which have been adduced to show that Scripture actually answers the question of whether PME is possible quite clearly in the negative because it teaches the contrary doctrine of particular judgment, whereby every individual enters into a state of blessedness or accursedness immediately upon death. Luke 16 is the *locus classicus* for this doctrine, and it also has other lines of evidence that might undermine PME. There is also the terse statement in Hebrews 9:27, “It is reserved to men once to die, and after this is judgment,” which could indicate that, once one has died, there is only judgment. Scriptural arguments against PME have hung primarily on just these two passages.⁷⁴ That is not to say that two passages are not sufficient to capture a Christian’s conscience. If God clearly speaks to an issue on only one occasion in Scripture, no more than that is required to settle the matter. However, upon close examination of these passages, it is not hard to see legitimate reasons why PME advocates will come away from them without being dissuaded.

74 For example, Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 230, where he suggests that “the idea of a chance of salvation after death is difficult to reconcile with other parts of the New Testament (*cf.* Lk. 16:26; Heb. 9:27).”

Passages Employed by PME Advocates

John 5:25

...οἱ νεκροὶ ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀκούσαντες ζήσουσιν.

At true first glance, it is not hard to see why or how PME advocates would seek support in this verse. Jesus clearly says “the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and the hearing ones will live.” Taken on its face (especially without any context), this phrase might actually be hard to read as anything other than a clear indication from the lips of Jesus Himself that He would speak to those who had died and were dwelling in the realm of the dead and that those who listened to Him would be saved. Indeed, even Selwyn, who does not take 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 to indicate PME,⁷⁵ argues at some length that such a hope might find encouragement in these words of Jesus, “[f]or they affirm the universal range of Christ’s message of salvation, extending even to the dead.”⁷⁶

75 In his closing summary on “the range of the Christian hope in the New Testament,” Selwyn raises several questions to which Christians have sought answers, including only “whether salvation was open to those who had never heard the Gospel,” a question which in the early Church was usually framed with Old Testament saints in mind. His remark on 1 Peter in relation to these questions is helpful: “What we cannot say, however, if the conclusions hitherto reached are sound, is that to these questions the author of 1 Peter ‘gives the most charitable answer’. It is not a question of doubting the charity of the Epistle, which indeed stands out on every page, but of whether or not it alludes to these questions at all. And on that issue we feel bound to render a negative verdict.” Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 357-358.

76 *Ibid.*, 347. His extended argumentation runs from pp. 346-353.

It does not bode well for this line of interpretation that, of the commentaries on John's Gospel consulted, not a one could be found in support of it,⁷⁷ though that is not to say that Selwyn is alone in holding this position.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, there are many good reasons for taking οἱ νεκροί metaphorically here, at least in part. The first reason is found in the verse itself. In v. 25, Jesus did not only say that “an hour comes” (ἔρχεται ὥρα) in which the dead will hear; Jesus said that the hour “also now is” (καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν). At the very least, Jesus somehow included His contemporary bodily, earthly ministry within the purview of His statement concerning the dead hearing His voice, even if there was some sense in which His words were not yet completely fulfilled at that time. This is all the more so when contrasted with Jesus' unqualified use of the same phrase (ἔρχεται ὥρα) in v. 28, where πάντες οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ (“all those in the graves will hear the voice of him”) can clearly only refer to those who

77 Nearly a dozen commentaries are cited below in note 80 on page 44.

78 Briggs, for example, also took John 5:25 this way, connecting it with Ephesians 4, discussed below. “These captives... can be no other than those whom Christ delivered from the bondage of death, and brought with Him in His ascent from Hades; those referred to in John 5²⁵ and Mt. 27^{52, 53}.” Briggs, *Fundamental Christian Faith*, 128. Of the exegetical commentators, however, although Borchert does not believe that νεκροί refers to “merely some form of spiritual death,” he also does not inject Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 3, or any idea of a descent into hell into his discussion of the text. Gerald R. Borchert, *John 1-11*, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 240. Bruner mentions a somewhat vague passage from Schlatter in his own overview of the options, but even here, Schlatter himself seems to explicitly deny that John 5:25 refers to a descent into hell, and Bruner, for his part, does not endorse anything like Selwyn's view. Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 328-329.

have physically died. Moreover, Jesus' words in the immediately preceding verse indicate that, at least conceptually if not verbally,⁷⁹ death can be a metaphor. In v. 24, Jesus says that "the one hearing the voice of me and believing the one sending me has life eternal and is not coming into judgment, but he has departed out of the death (ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου) and into the life." Death can also be seen used metaphorically elsewhere in Scripture, especially in Ephesians, which uses the same adjective νεκρός as in John 5. Ephesians 2:1 has ὑμᾶς ὄντας νεκρούς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἀμαρτίαις ὑμῶν, 2:5 has ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκρούς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν, and 5:14 has ἔγειρε, ὁ καθεύδων, καὶ ἀνάστα ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ ἐπιφάσει σοι ὁ Χριστός. These are essentially the lines of argument that one will find in the majority of the scholarly commentaries,⁸⁰ with little

79 In other words, Jesus appears to be using θάνατος and νεκρός synonymously here.

80 "The far greater Resurrection, the 'passing' of the soul 'from death unto life,' seems to be intended..." James Ford, *The Gospel of S. John* (London: Joseph Masters, 1852), 174. "Of the quickening of the *physically* dead at the Last Judgment, it is said in v. 28 ἔρχεται ὥρα, but of the *spiritually* dead in the present, ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστίν..." J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 1:242. "The reader will observe that, whereas in 5^{24,25} eternal life is mentioned not only as a future, but also as a present possibility ('an hour cometh, and now is'), in 5^{28,29} the reference is only to a future resurrection; in 5^{28,29} physical death is presupposed." R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, ed. C. F. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 145. "The reference is primarily to the spiritually dead," Brown submits, citing Ephesians 2. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2nd ed., The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 1:215. "That the dead referred to in this verse are not the physically dead is confirmed by the fact that they are not (like those of v. 28) said to be in tombs; the aorist participle ἀκούσαντες suggests those who at the time of writing have been vivified by the word of Christ." Charles K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1978), 262. "For those who put their faith in the word which Christ speaks, a veritable day of resurrection dawns. ...[W]hen he comes and speaks his life-giving word, those who hear it are raised from spiritual death." FF Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B.

or no attention given to the possibility that this could have reference to Christ's descent into the realm of the dead.

Selwyn, however, suggests that the Ephesians passages cannot legitimately be pressed into service as parallels to John's use here. His reasoning appears to be that, in John, οἱ νεκροί is used without a modifier or any other sufficient signal of the metaphor. In Ephesians 2, νεκροὺς is modified ("qualified") by τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις in v. 1 and by τοῖς παραπτώμασιν in v. 5. In Ephesians 5, "the whole sentence there is metaphorical and taken almost certainly from a primitive baptismal hymn."⁸¹ One cannot help but wonder how frequently the Bible cooperates with such

Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 131. "By v. 28, where the eschatology is orientated entirely toward the future, the 'time' or 'hour' is coming; John does not say it 'now is'. Here, however, the coming hour already is: the resurrection life for the physically dead in the end time is already being manifest as life for the spiritually dead." D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 256. "We might understand it of the raising of the dead at the last day were it not for the 'has now come.' This shows that what is primarily in mind is the present giving of life that characterizes the ministry of the Son. ... Those who are spiritually dead hear his voice, and those who have heard it live." Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 281-282. "The 'hour' that is coming is that of the eschatological future, to which the resurrection of the dead belongs; but it has already entered the present, since the Christ who raises the dead is here. His voice sounds out... that the 'dead' (the mass of humankind, who exist in a condition of spiritual death) may live." George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 76-77. "[O]ne already abides in death until believing in the one who sent Jesus.... Numerous ancient texts employ 'death' figuratively or spiritually..." Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 1:652. "[J]ust as sleep is a metaphor for physical death, so death itself can be a metaphor for spiritual sleep, 'darkness,' or alienation from God..." J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010) 317.

81 Selwyn, 349. He could have similarly dismissed Colossians 2:13, though he did not explicitly do so.

an insistence on metaphor being so explicit, but this is a much larger question than can be taken up here. Conceptually, though, as has been seen in John 5:24, death certainly can be metaphorical, and in that case, ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου has no qualifier to make the metaphor explicit. What of the father’s words concerning the prodigal son in Luke 15:24? Surely, when he says ὁ υἱός μου νεκρὸς ἦν καὶ ἀνέζησε, he did not mean that his son had physically risen from the dead. Jesus’ words in Revelation 3:1 to the Church at Sardis come to mind, as well: οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα ὅτι ὄνομα ἔχεις ὅτι ζῆς, καὶ νεκρὸς εἶ.⁸² Even if it is valid to demand examples where νεκρὸς is “used alone” (i.e., without modifiers) in order to establish that “the dead” in John 5:25 might refer to the “spiritually dead” rather than the “physically dead” (and it is far from clear that this is a reasonable demand), that demand would seem to be met at least twice.⁸³

Regardless, Selwyn concedes that it is still possible to take Christ’s words in John 5:25 to refer “to those raisings of the dead which He mentioned in His reply to the disciples of John the Baptist (Matt. xi. 2 ff.), and of which the raising of Lazarus was to

82 Consider also the usage in Matthew 8:22 and Luke 9:60. Dead people cannot bury each other.

83 It should be noted, however, that the same cannot be said of the use of οἱ νεκροί, taken as a set phrase or perhaps as a technical term, but the fact that Selwyn addresses Ephesians 2 without pointing out that οἱ νεκροί is not used there reveals that this is not quite what Selwyn was arguing. Rather, he appears to be engaging in the same somewhat questionable practice here that he does in 1 Peter when he denies that πνεύματι (3:18) could serve as the antecedent to the relative pronoun (3:19) on dubiously specific grammatical grounds. Selwyn, 197. On this questionable practice, see Grudem’s reply in note 183 on page 102, but also see note 242 below on page 129, where Grudem himself appears to engage in it.

be the most conspicuous example.” He even concedes that this is “the simplest interpretation.” Still, he suggests the possibility “that our Lord was referring to His death and what should follow it, thus providing the basis for the second-century teaching about the *Descensus*.” He follows this suggestion with the following musings, ostensibly meant to persuade the reader not to resist PME teaching:

That Christ “brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel” (2 Tim. i. 10) was the settled belief of the Apostolic Church. Need we suppose that the extension of His life-giving Word to the dead was not present to His mind, as well as its extension to other generations on earth, as He saw His life-giving works of Messianic power? May not a similar implication lie, indeed, in the words which St. Matthew records as addressed by our Lord to St. Peter (Matt. xvi. 18): “On this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”? ... I think we are justified in concluding, then, ... that our Lord did without doubt regard His message of salvation as one that would reach the dead and secure entrance for such as believed it into eternal life; that He connected this with His miracles of healing the sick and raising the dead; and that He regarded it as an event involving a judgment—that is to say, rejection as well as in-gathering.⁸⁴

Note in particular Selwyn’s two seemingly rhetorical questions. On the one hand, it must be conceded on both counts that (1) it is not necessary to “suppose” that such was not present to His mind when He spoke the words recorded in John 5, nor is it impossible that (2) such an implication might lie in Christ’s words to Peter. On the other hand, the subtext must be challenged. What business do Christians have to

84 Selwyn, 350.

“suppose” one way or the other? Ought not believers rather stay true to what is clear than presumptuously make judgments on questionable matters? To put all of this another way, it is one thing to hold that Scripture does not explicitly deny PME. It is quite another to teach (or even to “suppose”) a PME doctrine without supporting testimony from Scripture.

A full and close examination of Jesus words in John 5 is not possible here. However, Selwyn’s argumentation does not seem sufficient to overcome the argumentation behind the overwhelming scholarly consensus that v. 25 does not *definitely* refer to Christ’s descent into realm of the dead. Note that this is not to say that John 5:25 definitely *does not refer* to Christ’s descent into realm of the dead, for a definitive statement along these lines goes beyond the evidence considered here. Rather it is to say that, given the current state of scholarship (to say nothing of the history of interpretation), there does not seem to be sufficient reason to believe that John 5:25 definitely does refer to Jesus preaching the gospel to those who have physically died. Thus, unless and until better evidence presents itself in support of such an idea being taught in John 5, this passage is at best an inferior support for PME and might even be an illegitimate support for it. Support had better be sought elsewhere.

1 Corinthians 15:29

Ἐπεὶ τί ποιήσουσιν οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν;

The interpretations of this verse, like Abraham’s descendants, are as numerous as the sand on the seashore.⁸⁵ In the space allotted here, it would not even be possible to review all of the options that have been proposed. Paul’s question and its function within the context of his argument for the resurrection of the dead is relatively straightforward. “Otherwise, what will they do who baptize themselves on behalf of the dead?” Impressive exegetical acrobatics have been attempted to avoid anything other than the somewhat obvious reading according to which Paul here envisioned a group of people who were being baptized vicariously on behalf of people who had already died, whether Paul condoned this behavior or not.⁸⁶

85 “By 1887 Godet had counted ‘about thirty explanations’ for **baptized for the the dead**, while B. M. Foschini and R. Schnackenburg allude to ‘more than forty.’ Wolff’s commentary includes seventeen subcategories with seven issue-centered general approaches. The literature beyond 1962 is also vast, and still continues.” Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1240. “Ernest Evans says there are more than 200 interpretations.... K. C. Thompson agrees with this estimate.” Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 2nd ed, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 210.

86 This is not to say that none of the other interpretive options have any merit, but none of the others can as easily claim legitimacy as this one on the basis of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. “The normal reading of the text is that some Corinthians are being baptized, apparently vicariously, in behalf of some people who have already died. It would be fair to add that this reading is such a plain understanding of the Greek text that no one would ever have imagined the various alternatives were it not for the difficulties involved.” Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 764-765. “The most common view is that Paul is referring to some kind of vicarious baptism, in which a Christian received baptism on behalf of someone, perhaps a friend or relative, who had died without being

That is not to say that this passage teaches PME, though. One must reach far beyond the text to suppose that there is any indication here of Christ preaching to these dead people after they had died, let alone that they repented after they had died. The text simply does not say either of these things. Besides, simpler explanations have been presented. Perhaps Paul knew of some Christians being baptized in place of other Christians who had, for one reason or another, not been baptized before they died.⁸⁷

baptized.” Charles K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: A & C Black, 1968), 363. “The most natural way to understand the words is to see a reference to vicarious baptism. ...That Paul is quite capable of reasoning from a practice of which he disapproves is shown by the way he refers to sitting at a meal in an idol’s temple without saying anything about this being wrong...” Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 209. Blomberg also holds that Paul does envision but does not condone this sort of baptism, and neither the form of Paul’s question nor the function of it within the argument necessarily require that he condones it. Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 305.

87 This view was apparently first advocated by Rissi, but has been taken up by many since, such as Fee, 767. This also seems to be the position of Morris, though he demurs somewhat. Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 210. According to Barrett, “[Paul] did not himself give close attention to baptism (i. 14-17 [1 Corinthians 1:14-17]), and though it is quite probable that most of the members of his churches were baptized it is quite possible that some of the Corinthian Christians had not been baptized, and by no means impossible (even if we do not, with Rissi, think of an epidemic or accident) that a number of them may have died in this condition. There was no question of making these persons Christians; they were Christians, even though unbaptized. But baptism was a powerful proclamation of death and resurrection, and in this setting, it is not impossible to conceive of a rite—practiced, it may be, only once—which Paul, though he evidently took no steps to establish it as normal Christian usage, need not actively have disapproved.” Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 364. A far more speculative option that does not appear to be represented in the literature may be proposed. Assuming that infant baptism was common practice and knowing that the infant mortality rate was relatively high in those days, it would not be surprising to find that mothers were baptized on behalf of their deceased children. Paul would almost certainly have voiced objections to people being baptized on behalf of just any unrepentant unbeliever who had perished, but given Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 7:14, it is at least more plausible that he would not explicitly object to the vicarious baptism of the children of believers. The questions of both the salvation of infants and the salvation of “elect persons who are incapable” (as they are referred to in the Westminster Confession of Faith 10.3) is such a closely related issue to that of the salvation of those who have never heard the Gospel that, in

Indeed, even Trumbower, who is explicitly looking for whatever Scriptural support he can find for posthumous salvation, does not believe 1 Corinthians 15:29 provides it, but instead concedes that the most likely interpretation is what has just been proposed, that, “Baptism for the dead was performed at Corinth for those who happened to die while preparing for baptism (i.e., those who in later times would be called catechumens).”⁸⁸

Even if this were an instance in which some Christians were being vicariously baptized for a group of those who had already died, had an encounter with Christ in the realm of the dead, and, on the basis of that encounter, had repented and been saved, there is no apparent reason to believe that this was anything but a limited group being baptized for another limited group. In other words, it is dubious whether this passage could provide hope for the nescient today. Part of the difficulty that interpreters have with the idea of vicarious baptism for the dead is that there is no documentation of such a practice within the Church outside of this letter, which would seem to indicate

some cases, they might be considered as subsets of those who have never heard the Gospel. Briggs even began his discussion of salvation after death by pointing out how “the general acceptance of the new doctrine of the universal salvation of infants” had already pulled “Calvinistic Churches... a long distance from the Creeds of the Reformation and the Confession and Catechisms of Westminster.” Briggs, “Redemption After Death,” 105. Unfortunately, there is no space to give either of these questions ample consideration here.

88 Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead: The Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 36.

that the practice was a somehow limited one rather than one which should be or even could be continued to the present day. To put this another way, even if this verse could be used as indirect evidence for PME, it is already a stretch to use it to support the idea that Christ preached to one particular group of people who had died. The lack of any evidence for vicarious baptism for the dead continuing as a practice beyond Paul's day in Christian churches⁸⁹ is problematic if one proposes to take this practice as some sort of indication that Christ continually preaches the Gospel to all who die, up to the present day, giving them a chance to repent and be saved. If that had been the meaning of the practice, why was it ever discontinued?

Obviously, much more could be said on this difficult verse, and much already has been elsewhere. The present concern, however, is not to finally resolve this matter here but only to demonstrate that this verse is not sufficient grounds for believing or teaching that initial repentance unto salvation in Jesus Christ is possible after death for the nescient today. On this score, Paul has little to say here, especially when compared with what might be found elsewhere.

⁸⁹ Trumbower, 36, and many others discuss a Marcionite practice mentioned by John Chrysostom.

Ephesians 4:8-9

...ἄβαβὰς εἰς ὕψος ἤχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν...

...κατέβη εἰς τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς...

Paul wrote that Christ “descended into the lower regions of the earth” and that, “ascending on high, He led captivity captive.” Supposing for the moment that the descent refers to a descent into the realm of the dead, the passage would then be indicating that (in His ascension from the realm of the dead to the highest place) Christ brought captives with Him, and it is possible to imagine these captives being a certain number of those who inhabited that realm at that time. It is possible, further still, to imagine that included among this number were not only the saints of the Old Testament who had trusted in God for salvation without knowing Christ⁹⁰ but also

90 Many of the early Church Fathers made reference to Christ’s descent into Hades explicitly and exclusively for this reason, but that is not to say that they were explicitly exclusive. In other words, they addressed a concern in the early Church for the Patriarchs and the faithful of Israel whose knowledge of the Messiah Who was to come was so limited as to appear problematic for their salvation. Many early Church Fathers only referred to the descent of Christ in this connection. That is not to say that they excluded the possibility that Christ’s descent might have had other purposes or results, but it is important to distinguish between those fathers, on the one hand, who only discuss the descent to address the situation of these Old Testament saints and those fathers, on the other hand, who discuss the descent to address the situation of others, such as those whom Clement called “the righteous according to philosophy.” See note 12 above on page 13 for reference and discussion. The list of those in the former category is robust and lengthy. The list of those in the latter category has been practically exhausted in chapter one with the Alexandrians. Some PME advocates cite from both lists in support of their claims when they can only legitimately cite the shorter list. For example, Briggs briefly discusses the writings of Polycarp, Ignatius, and Hermas, of whom only Hermas supports the sweeping summary that Briggs proceeds to make: “Thus the Apostles and teachers carried on the work of Christ in Hades, just as they did here upon the earth. These three of the Apostolic Fathers give their testimony; and there is no one against their doctrine.” Briggs, *Fundamental Christian Faith*, 131. MacCullough gives an extended overview of “patristic

many who had perhaps never heard of the God of Israel. It is certainly *possible* to *imagine* such things. Is it *responsible*, however, on the basis of this passage, to *teach* them?

At best, that is debatable. For one thing, it is far from certain that this passage has anything whatsoever to say about Christ descending into hell.⁹¹ The traditional view, which has many respectable proponents, is that this text does refer to Christ's descent into the realm of the dead,⁹² but it is not the only possibility or the majority view today. Indeed, as Lincoln points out, "it is quite difficult to see how such a descent

references to the descent." J.A. MacCullough, *The Harrowing of Hell: A Comparative Study of an Early Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1930), 83-130.

91 Space does not allow for a discussion of the phrase from the Apostle's Creed. For such discussion, see Wayne A. Grudem, "He Did Not Descend into Hell: A Plea for Following Scripture instead of the Apostles' Creed," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34 (March 1991): 103-113. Michael Williams, "He Descended into Hell? An Issue of Confessional Integrity," *Presbyterion* 25 (1999:2): 80-90. Daniel R. Hyde, "In Defense of the *Descendit*: A Confessional Response to Contemporary Critics of Christ's Descent into Hell," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 3 (2007): 104-117. Grudem and Williams seem to stand on firmer ground here, and it is worth noting that the phrase is often omitted already in recitations of the Apostle's Creed in Korean, at least among Presbyterians. In a similar vein, Millard Erickson shares an anecdote about how, when a series on the Apostle's Creed was taught at Wheaton in 1960, not a single faculty member in the Bible department could be found to teach on the descent clause "because no one believed in it." Millard J. Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved? The Destiny of Those Who Do Not Hear of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 172.

92 A brief overview of those who have taken the traditional view can be found in W. Hall Harris III, *The Descent of Christ: Ephesians 4:7-11 and Traditional Hebrew Imagery*, *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums* 32 (New York: Brill, 1996), 4-12. Markus Barth provides a short note that reveals how strong the tradition is: "Among the commentators who understand this verse to proclaim the descent into hell are Tertullian; Irenaeus *epideixis* 83; Chrysostom; Theodoret; Oecumenius; Victorinus; Ambrosiaster; Jerome; Pelagius; Thomas Aquinas..." The list goes on to include more modern commentators and does not pretend to be exhaustive. Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 433.

into Hades could be logically deduced from Christ's ascent, which, after all, appears to be the force of the argument here."⁹³ For his part, Lincoln is among those who have suggested that the descent which Paul had in mind in this passage was actually the descent of the Spirit of Christ from heaven to earth at Pentecost, and although there are difficulties with this view, it does have some strengths.⁹⁴ The main competitor with the traditional view, however, sees the descent in this passage as Christ's descent to earth in the incarnation. Rather than a descent from earth into the realm of the dead, this would then be a descent from heaven to the realm of mortals. This interpretation goes back at least to Calvin and squares nicely with how Jesus speaks of such things in John 3:13; 6:33, 38, 62.⁹⁵ It can be taken more broadly to refer not only to Christ's incarnation proper but also to His entire estate of humiliation, which would include the

93 Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 245.

94 Lincoln, 246-248. For the history of this interpretation, see W. Hall Harris III, *Descent of Christ*, 23-30.

95 "Some foolishly twist this to either limbo or hell, whereas Paul is only dealing with the condition of the present life. The argument that they take from the comparative degree is too weak. A comparison is drawn, not between one part of the earth and another, but between the whole earth and heaven; as if he had said, 'From that lofty habitation He descended into our deep gulf.'" John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, trans. T. H. L. Parker, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 176. Markus Barth specifically pointed out the parallel to John 3:13 and also mentions 17:5. Barth, 434. Harris questioned the legitimacy of this move: "Barth (and others) who argued for a reference to the incarnation by rejecting a 'two-stage' descent appeared to assume that the author of Ephesians shared a concept of the pre-incarnate Christ similar to the Johannine concept of the pre-incarnate Λόγος found in John 1:1-18. Whether Ephesians was written by Paul or not, it is far from clear that such a concept of a pre-incarnate Christ is reflected here." W. Hall Harris III, *The Descent of Christ*, 21n88.

cursed death of the cross, His being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.⁹⁶

However, even if the passage referred specifically and exclusively to a descent into hell, it says nothing about Jesus preaching anything to anyone there. The only way that this passage could be taken to offer hope for salvation after death for those who have perished without the Gospel is if ἡχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν refers to a particular group of human beings. In order to find in this passage the kind of hope that PME offers, these human beings (whom Jesus freed from captivity in the underworld and took up with Him from there in His ascension) would have to be such as had not previously trusted in Jesus for salvation. This interpretation is neither impossible nor without adherents.⁹⁷ That being said, it almost certainly would not have been the most

96 This is the approach taken by Barth, 433-434, who lists six objections to the traditional view. Foulkes also seems to take the broader incarnational view when he suggests, “it may denote the fact that he suffered the greatest humiliation when he endured death itself.” Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 124. Hoehner specifically emphasizes that the incarnation includes the crucifixion and death, but he also brings up seven problems with the traditional *descensus* view. Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 534-536. None of the problems brought up by Hoehner invoke the terminology of Westminster as has been done in the main text above, but the same mode of thought certainly seems to be active in at least these three.

97 This, at least, was clearly the interpretation of Briggs. “These captives, according to the fundamental passages (Psalm 68¹⁸, Judges 5¹²), are not captive enemies, but captives rescued from the enemy. These, therefore, can be no other than those whom Christ delivered from the bondage of death, and brought with Him in His ascent from Hades; those referred to in John 5²⁵ and Mt. 27^{52, 53}.” Briggs, *Fundamental Christian Faith*, 128. Elsewhere, Briggs makes comments that also seem to have this passage in mind: “The prophetic office of Christ continues to those who are in the Middle State. After his own death he went to the abode of the departed spirits, and preached unto them his gospel. He

natural understanding to anyone in the ancient world familiar either with Roman triumphs⁹⁸ or with the cultural backdrop of Psalm 68:18,⁹⁹ whether the Psalm was filtered down into Paul's use of it here directly or indirectly.¹⁰⁰ Ἀιχμαλωσίαν is thus understood to refer to evil powers by the overwhelming majority of recent

ascended into heaven, taking his redeemed with him. ... Jesus by his resurrection made a change in the abode of the dead, by taking some of them at least with him from Hades to Heaven. We do not know what changes have been made in Hades in other respects." Briggs, "Redemption after Death," 115, 116. MacCullough, after admitting that the captives in the Psalm were God's enemies and thus, "[i]f this sense were kept, the captives would mean Satan and his hosts," proceeds to ask "in what sense were they led captive by Christ when He ascended? Are the captives not those held in bondage in the lower parts of the earth, whom He released and led on high? The captives would thus be equivalent to the 'spirits in prison' of 1 S. Pet. iii. 19." MacCullough was still forced to concede that "[t]his interpretation... is problematical, and must not be pressed. S. Paul may be merely quoting the whole verse of the Psalm because of its reference to an Ascension and to gifts, without thinking of the force of the words 'led captivity captive.'" MacCullough, *Harrowing of Hell*, 47-48.

98 See Colossians 2:15, which has been seen as a parallel to this passage. For example, Lincoln, 242.

99 Anderson takes the captives in Psalm 68 as "the Canaanite kings who threatened the existence of Yahweh's people, or, perhaps, in a wider sense, all the forces that have opposed the rule of God..." A.A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 1:492. Mays is less clear: "The arrival is portrayed as a victory procession accompanied by thousands of heavenly chariots and the captives and booty won in the battle." James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 226. Kidner points to "battle imagery" and "echoes of the Song of Deborah" as evidence that these are "enemy prisoners." Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 260. Delitzsch suggested that שְׁבִיתָ שָׁבְרֵי refers to "the subjugation of the enemy." Franz Delitzsch, *Psalms*, trans. Francis Bolton, 2nd ed., Commentary on the Old Testament (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2006), 5:453. Discussing Paul's take on the Psalm in Ephesians, Delitzsch also submitted that Paul "interprets in the light and in the sense of the history that realizes it. For the ascension of Elohim in its historical fulfilment is none other than the ascension of Christ. This latter was, however, as the Psalm describes it, a triumphal procession (Col 2:15); and what the Victor has gained over the powers of darkness and death, He has gained not for His own aggrandisement, but for the interests of men." *Ibid.*, 5:454.

100 Whether Paul in this passage quoted from the Psalms, quoted a Targum, or perhaps drew from some other, earlier source upon which that Targum would also later draw has been the topic of much discussion in the literature, but it shall not be taken up here.

commentators,¹⁰¹ including those who believe the descent is from from earth into either Hades or Sheol rather than from heaven to earth.¹⁰² Perhaps the most likely interpretation of the “captivity” phrase, however, is that Paul had no interest in who the captives were for the point that he was trying to make. Paul certainly “does not develop explicitly the concept of leading captive a host of prisoners,”¹⁰³ and it is questionable to use such an oblique reference as the basis for people to hold out hope

101 “[S]uch a concept certainly fits the earlier depiction of Christ’s exaltation over the powers in 1:21, 22, which these words from the psalm may well have conjured up again (cf. also Col 2:15).” Lincoln, 242. “[Αιχμάλωτος] is consistently used of military captives who are captured. Certainly this is the case in Ps 68. God has had victory over the foe.” Hoehner, 529. “Irenaeus’ interpretation makes the best sense: Paul has in mind those principalities and powers that are hostile to God and man and seek to divide them.” Barth, 477.

102 “Some interpreters, especially in the early history of interpretation of this passage, explained the purpose of the *descensus ad infernos* as a time when Christ proclaimed to the departed Old Testament saints that their salvation was now secure by his work on the cross and that they were now freed from their captivity. Yet the language of the psalm cited here—‘he captured a host of captives’—is more naturally interpreted as a reference to hostile forces who are conquered.... This passage thus has significant lines of correspondence with 1 Pet 3:19, where Peter says that Christ ‘went and preached to the spirits in prison’ following his death and resurrection. Although the meaning of this passage is highly debated, I would follow Selwyn in affirming that the text speaks of Christ’s descending to the underworld and proclaiming a message of victory over the rebellious demonic powers.” Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 254. “After his resurrection, Christ both descended into the regions of the dead and ascended to a position above all the heavens. As with Ps. 139:8, the reference to a descent below the earth and an ascent above the heavens is a way of emphasizing the reach of God to every corner of the universe (cf. Jer. 23:24; Jon. 2:2-9; Rom. 10:6-7). In this case, the reach is that of Christ, and its purpose is the defeat and captivity of all the malevolent powers of the universe (v. 8).” Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 271-272.

103 Lincoln, 242. See also MacCullough, 47-48, quoted above in note 97 on page 56.

for those who, as far as can be known through the historical record, have had no access to the gospel.

For such a hope, none of the three passages thus far considered here have offered the sort of solid ground one would hope to find for such an important idea. If 1 Peter offers solid ground, then these other passages might more legitimately offer secondary support. However, it remains to be considered whether Scripture might speak clearly against such a hope elsewhere. If it clearly denies such a hope elsewhere, then the rule of faith would require that 1 Peter be interpreted accordingly. The clearest indications of such a denial seem to be in Hebrews 9 and Luke 16,¹⁰⁴ considered here in order of the increasing clarity of their testimony.

104 Time and space limitations have prevented full consideration of 2 Corinthians 5:10, where Paul states that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” (ESV) However, Stephen Jonathan’s assessment seems appropriate to mention: “Since this text is quite patently referring to a believers’ judgment of works, those who claim that it disproves posthumous salvation by providing evidence that one’s conduct or decisions in life, not in the afterlife, are what really matters, are claiming far more than this verse permits. This verse has no bearing to those who have not heard the gospel during their lives.” Jonathan, 91. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ. It would be a grave theological error to imply that good deeds, whether in the body or out, are the basis for anyone’s justification. Neither repentance nor faith in Christ are good deeds for which salvation is “due.” Thus, repentance and faith in Christ, even if this verse did refer to the final judgment of believers and unbelievers alike, would have to be placed in a different category altogether. Also, Grudem has suggested that the parable of the ten virgins might deny any possibility of postmortem salvation. Grudem, *1 Peter*, 172. However, while Matthew 25:10-13 clearly entails some sort of cutoff point, it would need to be argued that physical death is the cutoff point that Christ had in mind, to say nothing of the debates about Preterism and its possible interpretation of the meaning of the parable as a whole.

Passages Employed by PME Opponents

Hebrews 9:27

Καὶ καθ' ὅσον ἀπόκειται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαξ ἀποθανεῖν, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο κρίσις...

Whoever wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews and whatever its provenance, the purpose of this clause within both the immediate and the overall context seems straightforward. The overall purpose is to demonstrate and defend the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant, and the argument at hand concerns the superiority of Christ's priesthood over the Aaronic priesthood. Those earlier priests had offered sacrifices repeatedly, but Christ "has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."¹⁰⁵ The purpose of the argument in Hebrews 9, in other words, is not to address the fate of those who have never heard the gospel. In fact, the emphasis is not on the contents of v. 27.¹⁰⁶ That does not necessarily mean that the

¹⁰⁵ Hebrews 9:26-28, ESV.

¹⁰⁶ "‘Everybody dies once, and then comes the judgment.’ When the Preacher says this, the first reaction of the congregation is probably no reaction. The concept of death followed by judgment was so conventional and universally held that the congregation would barely notice it, much less challenge it. ... In fact, when the Preacher said it, it seemed as though he was using it matter-of-factly as an analogy. He seemed to be making the obvious point that, just as ordinary humans die only once, just so Jesus died only once, too. He did not have to repeat his sacrifice but died on the cross one time." Thomas G. Long, *Hebrews, Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1997), 100. "[T]he central

passage has nothing to say about the fate of those who have never heard the gospel, but it certainly is not the point of the passage. If the passage addresses that issue at all, it must be admitted that it does so only obliquely by the possible suggestion in v. 27 that judgment **immediately** follows death, with no intervening period during which some might repent of their sins, trust in Jesus Christ, and be saved from eternal punishment. Indeed, of all of the commentaries on Hebrews consulted, only one was found that made use of this verse “against the doctrine of probation after death.”¹⁰⁷

It is entirely possible to read the passage that way, but is it necessary? Failing that, is it the most likely interpretation of the passage? It seems that the answer to both of these questions is “No.” All that is required by the wording is that one thing follows

point is not our death and judgment; these serve as analogies to underscore the emphasis on the once-for-all nature of Christ’s high priestly ministry.” Fred B Craddock, et al., *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck, et al. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998): 12:113. “The subsequent ‘judgment’ appears to be introduced rather for a practical effect, than as having any direct bearing on the general train of thought...” Samuel H. Turner, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Stanford and Swords, 1852), 136.

107 Yet notice how even Edwards seems to subtly concede that the passage does **not** insist upon a judgment that comes immediately after death with no intervening period: “After their one death comes, **sooner or later**, judgment. ...[I]t is difficult to conceive how any words can be more decisive against the doctrine of probation after death. For, **however long judgment may tarry**, our author acknowledges no possibility of changing any man’s state or character between death and the final award.” Emphasis mine. Thomas Charles Edwards, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, *The Expositor’s Bible* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1888), 167. Pink’s comment here seems to indicate at least that he has no problem with the use of this passage against PME: “As death leaves men, so shall judgment find them.” However, Pink also seems to indicate that there is an intervening period: “It is the judgment of the wicked at the last great day.” Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1954), 2:29.

after another (i.e. that judgment comes after death). The wording simply does not explicitly teach that nothing happens in between death and judgment. That is a possible but not a necessary inference from what is clearly stated. Even those who would use this passage against PME seem to acknowledge that the passage does not deny the existence of the intervening period necessary in order for preaching and repentance to occur.¹⁰⁸ That the judgment here is eschatological rather than chronologically immediate is all but universally acknowledged by others.¹⁰⁹ This is not

108 See previous note.

109 “This κρίσις, moreover, is not a judgment passed upon the soul at death... but the final judgment of the last day.” Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. Thomas L. Kingsbury, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1887), 2:134. Westcott states that the judgment comes “not in immediate sequence of time, but in the development of personal being. The writer appears to connect the Judgment with the Return of Christ on ‘the Day’...” Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3rd ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903), 278-279. “The words *and after that comes judgment* are not intended to imply that judgment follows immediately after death, but rather that judgment is to be expected subsequent to death. Furthermore this does not mean that no act of judgment ever happens before death. The *judgment (krisis)* alluded to is the final assessment.” Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 201-202. “One need not see Hebrews advocating a particular judgment, which is rare in the NT (see Luke 16:22-23). Rather, judgment takes place at the end of the ages...” Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 195. Ellingworth hedges: “Μετὰ... τοῦτο leaves entirely open the question of whether or not the judgment immediately follows death. The parallel with ὀφθήσεται in v. 28 suggests a link between the judgment and the return of Christ, but v. 26 suggests that the author believed himself and his readers to be living already in the last times.” Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 486. Similarly, Witherington is initially somewhat evasive, offering that “our author does not state whether this [judgment] happens immediately,” but he goes on both to note how “Craig Koester points out that the emphasis in Hebrews... is on judgment falling at the end of time rather than immediately upon death” and to cite favorably deSilva’s suggestion, contra Attridge, that the context of v. 28 (in which Christ’s return is mentioned) favors an eschatological judgment rather than a postmortem judgment. Ben Witherington III, *Letter and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James, and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 275. Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews*, Anchor

to say that either preaching or repentance occur during the intervening period between death and the final judgment. It is simply to say that the passage does not necessarily deny the existence of such an intervening period and, further, that the passage most likely assumes that there is such a period. Since the only possible use of Hebrews 9:27 against PME seems to be as an authoritative denial of such a period, the fact that, on closer examination, the verse seems rather to assume such a period than to deny it effectively nullifies any attempt to use this verse against PME. Thus, clear Biblical teaching against PME, if it is to be found anywhere, must be sought elsewhere.

Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 423. David Arthur deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 315. Attridge appears to stand alone in interpreting the judgment here as postmortem: “The reference to the judgment (κρίσις) that follows death is not specifically to the eschatological judgment of apocalyptic tradition, but to the immediate post-mortem judgment that was, in traditional Greek mythology, the fate of the soul.” In support of this interpretation, however, Attridge only offers that “philosophical myths of post-mortem judgment” exist in the writings of Plato and Plutarch. Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1989), 265. Attridge specifically eschews Moffatt, who held that “The Greek mind was exempt from such a dread [of judgment after death]; for them death ended the anxieties of life...” For his part, Moffatt went on in that context to discuss how the use of κρίσις in 1 Enoch is eschatological and “parallels” Hebrews 9:28. James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), 133-134. Perhaps the most compelling witness on this point is John Owen: “**It is not a particular judgment** on every individual person immediately on his death, **although such a judgment there be**, for in and by death there is a declaration made concerning the eternal condition of the deceased; but ‘judgment’ here is opposed unto the second appearance of Christ unto the salvation of believers, which is the great or general judgment of all at the last day.” Emphasis mine. Significantly, then, although Owen held that there is an immediate, particular, postmortem judgment, he did not believe that such is taught in this context for precisely the same connection with Christ’s return in v. 28 cited by Moffatt, deSilva, Westcott, and Ellingworth. John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. W. H. Goold (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 6:410.

Luke 16:19-31

...καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν τούτοις μεταξύ ἡμῶν καὶ ὑμῶν χάσμα μέγα ἐστήρικται...

There are at least three main points at which the story¹¹⁰ Jesus told of Lazarus and the rich man could conceivably be used against any idea of salvation after death.

110 Although the scholarly literature puts so much weight on the questions of whether or not this is a parable and what the origins of this parable might be, space does not permit us to enter fully into that discussion. Sanders, for example, believes that this is a parable and that therefore it is improper to use it “as evidence that our destinies are fixed at death.” He suggests that “so literalistic an interpretation is by no means generally accepted in the scholarly community, especially in light of the fact that the point of all three parables in Luke 16 is to instruct us about the use of wealth, not about eschatology.” Sanders, *No Other Name*, 191. As Hoekema points out, however, “the parable would be utterly pointless if there is not in actual fact a difference between the lot of the godly and that of the ungodly after death. The point of the parable turns on the future misery of the rich man and the future comfort of Lazarus.” Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 101. Wright makes a telling comment: “The parable is not, as often supposed, a description of the afterlife, warning people to be sure of their ultimate destination. If that were its point, it would not be a parable: a story about someone getting lost in London would not be a *parable* if addressed to people attempting to find their way through that city without a map.” N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, Vol. 2 (Minneapolis, MN Fortress Press, 1996), 255. Wright has here assumed that this is a parable, but his argument could actually indicate otherwise since the argument only demonstrates that, **if** the story is in fact about “ultimate destinations,” **then** the story would not be a parable. In order to avoid getting bogged down in that whole debate, however, the argument here will simply assume either (1) that Jesus’ story here is not a parable in the first place or (2) that, even if it is a parable, this in no way precludes drawing conclusions from it about the afterlife. This not only allows the argument to proceed apace but also provides an opportunity to craft a more sophisticated (a term used advisedly, as sophistry is by no means a virtue) argument. To put this another way, if it can be shown that, even granted that systematic theology can legitimately draw dogma concerning the intermediate state from Jesus’ teaching in Luke 16, it is still possible for the PME advocate to find a legitimate “way of escape” from the doctrine of particular judgment in the particular case of the nescient, then that would actually be a stronger defense of PME than one which depends on understanding this passage to be a parable from which no such systematic teaching could legitimately be drawn. One of the major drawbacks of this approach is that, by essentially ignoring the major topic of discussion in the scholarly literature on this passage, there is decidedly less of that literature from which to draw. Along these lines, it is also worth noting that Peterson, in his brief consideration and rejection of PME as if it were necessarily linked with universalism, does not so much as mention Luke 16. Robert

First, the transitions of Lazarus and the rich man from death to the next life in vv. 22-23 seem to give fair indication that there was no intervening period between death and judgment for either of them. Second, the point of v. 31 could be that a failure to respond positively to whatever revelation one has already received in this life seals one's fate. Third, Abraham explicitly states in v. 26 that "a great chasm has been fixed" such that those in torment cannot escape from that torment to reach Abraham's bosom; neither can those in Abraham's bosom do anything to help those in torment.

The contention here is that these three lines of evidence are not so compelling as to warrant a *dogmatic* dismissal of the possibility that PME for the nescient might be taught in 1 Peter. It would be one thing if there were abundantly clear and consistent

A. Peterson, *Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1995), 150-152. Elsewhere, however, Peterson insists that Luke 16 "points to the intermediate rather than the final state." Robert Peterson, "Systematic Theology: Three Vantage Points of Hell," in *Hell under Fire*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 167. See note 112 on page 68. For his part, Fudge appears only too ready to grant that Luke 16 "teaches something of punishment after death," and he insists that this takes place in the intermediate state "before the final judgment." He concedes this without any argument for or against it since his focus is on maintaining annihilationism, and on that score, he is able to conclude, "There is no clear exegetical basis in Luke 16 for any conclusions concerning the *final* end of the wicked." Edward William Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of Final Punishment*, 3rd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 152-153. Emphasis added. Elsewhere, Fudge states his case even more forcefully: "Even if this story were historical narrative rather than a parable, and even if Jesus told it in answer to a question about the afterlife (which, of course, he did not), and even if we ought to understand all of its details literally (which no one says we should), the parable of the rich man and Lazarus still would tell us absolutely nothing about the *final* destiny of the damned." Edward William Fudge and Robert A. Peterson, *Two Views of Hell: A Biblical & Theological Dialogue* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 41. Italics original.

teaching throughout the New Testament to support the doctrine of particular judgment, which essentially holds that all who die without faith in Jesus enter immediately upon their deaths into a state of agony and torment. Then, indeed, on the basis of (1) the inerrancy and perspicuity of Scripture and (2) the rule of faith, one could be forgiven for brushing aside all arguments for PME in 1 Peter and opt for whatever interpretive possibility remains, however unlikely it might seem. Instead, much of the argument for the doctrine of particular judgment seems to depend solely on the exegesis of Luke 16. Moreover, there appear to be just enough significant gaps between Luke 16 and the doctrine of particular judgment that *dogmatic* dismissal of PME for the nescient is unjustified in the exegesis of 1 Peter. To be clear, this is not to deny the doctrine of particular judgment. On the contrary, the author of this work believes that doctrine to be true and at least assumed by Jesus if not taught by Him in this passage. Rather, it is to suggest that the testimony of Luke 16 to particular judgment is just limited enough that the only way to find out whether 1 Peter teaches PME for the nescient is through an exegesis of 1 Peter itself. This is because, on the one hand, Luke 16 does not explicitly say anything about the nescient and, on the other hand, Jesus might exclusively have had in mind just those who had access to special revelation.

Did Jesus teach a doctrine of particular judgment? His words to the penitent thief on the cross (Luke 23:43) certainly seem to indicate that believers transition immediately into a blessed state: Σήμερον μετ' ἐμοῦ ἔσῃ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ. Paul is clear enough that to be “away from the body” is to be “at home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8, ESV) and that he even desires “to depart and be with Christ” (Philippians 1:23, ESV). It is not difficult to see how Paul’s statements parallel with what Jesus says here about being “in Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22, εἰς τὸν κόλπον Ἀβραάμ; 16:23, ἐν τοῖς κόλποις αὐτοῦ). There appears to be ample basis, therefore, for believing that believers transition immediately after death into some sort of blessed state.

It seems like special pleading to suggest that a corresponding immediate transition into torment has not also been taught here in Luke 16 by Jesus. Scripture might have little to say outside of this very passage concerning the particular judgment of unbelievers,¹¹¹ but here in Luke 16:22-23, there is good reason to believe that the rich

¹¹¹ Ecclesiastes 12:7 is often cited. When humans die, “the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.” (ESV) To press this into service for particular judgment, however, seems to involve a certain special pleading of its own, for the body does not immediately “return to the earth as it was.” Decomposition takes time. If the parallel be kept, then surely the spirit does not immediately return to God, either. Acts 1:25 says that “Judas turned aside to go to his own place” (ESV), which could refer to a place of eternal punishment but need not necessarily do so. Besides, whether the phrasing πορευθῆναι εἰς τὸν τόπον τὸν ἴδιον implies purpose or result, this would still give no indication of immediacy of timing. Nor, indeed, could it do so, given the sequence of events in the Gospel narratives, for after Judas betrayed Jesus, he did not immediately enter into eternal punishment. Jude 7 comes closer in provocatively ascribing eternity to the fire with which God had already punished Sodom and Gomorrah. The physical fire with which the physical cities were burnt,

man's agony and torment ἐν τῷ ἄδῃ occur prior to the final judgment. Specifically, the rich man believed that his brothers were still alive and could still benefit from a warning even at that very moment while he spoke with Abraham. What good would a warning have been to them if the final judgment had already taken place?¹¹²

In fairness, however, the wording does not explicitly require a strictly immediate transition into condemnation. It could be that the text is simply stating an order of events, as with Hebrews 9, and not denying that time passed in between them. First, he died. Second, he was buried. Third, being in Hades, he lifted up his eyes.¹¹³ Nothing in the wording precludes the possibility of some time passing between these

so far as we know, stopped burning, so if they were burnt with πῦρ ἀιώνιον, this seems to imply that these cities were burnt with more than the physical fire. Perhaps the clearest testimony on this matter (outside of Luke 16) comes from 2 Peter 2:9, where we are told that “the Lord knows how... to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.” (ESV) If the unrighteous are kept “under punishment until the day of judgment,” then there must be some sort of judgment that precedes the final judgment. However, whether this is a fair rendering of εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως κολαζομένους τηρεῖν is a matter of some debate. Hoekema, for example, avers that “[t]he present tense of the participle conveys the thought that this punishment is a continuing one,” but he acknowledges that no less than John Calvin, in spite of the present tense, took it “as referring to a future punishment to be administered at the last judgment.” Hoekema, 102. See also Peterson, who concurs that, outside of Luke 16, “The only other text that possibly teaches the conscious suffering of the wicked in the intermediate state is 2 Peter 2:9.” He concludes, however, with the observation that “the majority translate the participle *kolazomenous* as ‘to be punished’ and interpret 2:9 as referring to the Judgment Day.” Robert Peterson, “Systematic Theology,” 168.

112 “In verses 27-28 the rich man refers to his five brothers who are still living on the earth—this situation would be impossible if the resurrection had already occurred (cf. also v. 31).” Hoekema, 101. So also Robert Peterson, “Systematic Theology,” 167.

113 Some witnesses remove καί at the beginning of v. 23, which might yield “He was buried in Hades” as the second event. Hades here could stand for Sheol in the sense of “the grave,” in which case it might mean only that “He was buried in the grave.” Textual support for this variant is slim, however.

events; rather, at least some brief period must have passed between his passing and his burial. Nevertheless, Jesus most likely assumed an immediate transition from the world of the living to the realm of the dead.¹¹⁴

Regardless of how immediately the rich man entered into torment, the story itself, parable or otherwise, does not require the rich man to be a pattern for unbelievers in general such that his experience should be projected unto every other unbeliever, although it is possible to read it that way.¹¹⁵ Abraham's final statement in v. 31 certainly makes clear that people who do not listen to Moses and the prophets will

114 That Jesus assumed an immediate transition rather than explicitly specifying that it was immediate makes this immediacy more evasive the more one scrutinizes the text. Of the commentaries consulted, Marshall is the only one who explicitly states anything about the immediacy of the rich man's transition: "Since the reference is to the state of the man immediately after his death, it is most likely that the intermediate abode of the dead before the final judgment is meant...." I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 636. Marshall's observation that "only the rich man appears to be in Hades" seems to run contrary to Abraham's statement in v. 26. *Ibid.*, 637. See note 115 below. More typical are the observations of Green: "Although this text probably assumes an intermediate state..., (1) it does so largely in order to make use of the common motif of the 'messenger to the living from the dead'..., only to deny the sending of a messenger; (2) the notion of the disembodied existence of a soul must be read into the story since the characters in Hades act as human agents with a corporeal existence; (3) *T. Abr.* 20:14—where the bosom of Abraham and his descendants are already in paradise, yet Abraham is to be taken to paradise—bears witness to the lack of precision in statements about the afterlife; and (4) neither Luke nor other Christian writers (like Paul) seem to think that discussion of the fate of an individual negates a more thoroughgoing apocalyptic (corporate, future) eschatology." Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 607f.

115 The plural second person pronoun in v. 26 (οἱ θέλοντες διαβῆναι ἔνθεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς μὴ δύνωνται) is certainly consistent with the idea that the rich man is somehow paradigmatic, but it does not require that he be so. It does require that more than one person faces a particular judgment prior to the final judgment. That is, Jesus does not portray the rich man as *sui generis*. Rather, he has company.

not repent¹¹⁶ even if someone rises from the dead. This verse also strongly implies that the rich man himself had access to Moses and the prophets, which could in turn imply that those who have not had such access might not be subject to exactly the same penalties as the rich man.¹¹⁷ Jesus does teach elsewhere that greater revelation entails greater judgment for rejection; the reverse of this also seems to be true: less revelation entails less punishment (Matthew 11:20-24; cf. 12:38-42). Although it is not positively taught or even implied in Luke 16:31, the verse is not inconsistent with the idea that some leniency might be shown to those who do not have access to special revelation. However, it is also possible to detect here a more general principle that those who do not respond positively to whatever revelation they do have will have no hope in the hereafter. Paul appears to assume at least that much in Romans 1:18ff. In fact, as there is no apparent contradiction between these two ideas, both could be true. In other words, it is possible (1) that the rich man's nearly instantaneous entrance into torment was a direct result of his refusal to heed special revelation, such that there might be a

116 In some witnesses, πιστευσουσιν replaces πεισθήσονται. The difference is negligible for our purposes.

117 Stephen Jonathan has made the same argument: "[E]ven if the parable is taken to mean that eternal destiny is fixed at death, would it apply to the unevangelized, for the message to the rich man's brothers was that they are without excuse because they already have Moses and the Prophets. Such a statement assumes that they were Jews who had God's revelation by way of the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore, would this be relevant to the unevangelized who do not have Moses and the Prophets?" Jonathan, 86f.

probationary period *for the nescient* after death, and (2) that even those who have only had access to general revelation will nevertheless enter torment immediately upon their death if they have died “suppressing the truth of God in unrighteousness.”

Once again, though, it must be observed that neither of these ideas are explicitly required by the text. Strictly speaking, this verse says nothing whatsoever about the nescient, and even if there is no hope for those who do not respond positively to whatever revelation they do have, nothing in this passage (or perhaps in all of Scripture) indicates precisely what a sufficiently positive response would be under a particular revelatory circumstance apart from special revelation. Even for those who have access to special revelation, when the Holy Spirit grants saving faith to a believer, it is altogether unclear just how sound that believer’s doctrine will be at first. There are certain bounds outside of which church discipline might be required, but if that correction is received, that would be proof that the Holy Spirit truly has already been at work and has generated saving faith in that person rather than that He has not been at work or has not generated saving faith.

It is clear from Abraham’s words in v. 26 that those in Abraham’s bosom wishing to crossover (οἱ θέλοντες διαβῆναι, v. 26) to those in torment (βάσανος, vv. 23, 28) and flame (φλόξ, v. 24) are unable to do so (μὴ δύνωνται, v. 26). It is also clear that those on

the other side of the huge rift (χάσμα μέγα, v. 26) are just as powerless to escape (μηδέ... διαπερῶσιν, v. 26) from the place of torment (τὸν τόπον... τῆς βασάνου, v. 28). Against this, it might perhaps be suggested that Jesus is able to come and go as He pleases; surely, the point is **not** that **He** is somehow unable to crossover. Rather, as Jesus states two chapters later, τὰ ἀδύνατα παρὰ ἀνθρώποις δυνατὰ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ ἐστίν. Might it not even be the case that He Himself has done so? That is, at best, highly unlikely given the divine passive ἐστήρικται here. God placed the chasm here, and the ὅπως construction which follows seems very much to indicate purpose rather than mere result. Thus, once God has consigned someone to punishment, even if that consignment be prior to the final judgment, it would seem irreversible.¹¹⁸ This is precisely why a feasible PME doctrine requires that some portion of the intermediate state take place prior to any particular judgment, and it has been argued above that, with specific reference to the nescient, Scripture does not explicitly deny some such portion.

118 Marshall's assessment here is correct, although he perhaps misunderstands the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory: "The judgment is thus irrevocable; there is no suggestion of purgatory." Marshall, *Luke*, 638. Bock made similar remarks: "A major point is that once one dies, one's fate is sealed. This account allows no room for those in Hades to eventually win their way into heaven." Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 2:1361. However, see note 119 for his apparent caution in assigning this point of no return specifically to the moment of death. Given the doctrine of particular redemption, it would be highly problematic for God to punish someone in this way for sins already paid for in Christ. This difficulty of double payment was already briefly mentioned in the introduction. See note 9 on page 8.

Luke 16 contains some important data points for addressing the issue of those who have never heard the Gospel, but it was not written to address this issue. Particular judgment for those who have access to special revelation is at least assumed if not taught in this passage, but it is not specifically taught for those who have not had such access. Moreover, this particular judgment does not necessarily take place immediately after death according to Luke 16. As with Hebrews 9, we have a sequence of events with no explicit exclusion of time passing between the events; rather, in Luke, there is even the distinct possibility of implied inclusion of some time passing between death and particular judgment. Regardless, the passage does not even require the rich man to be a paradigm for everyone who has had access to special revelation. Some even reduce the passage to the role reversal Abraham mentions in v. 25.¹¹⁹

119 For example, see Joshua Ryan Butler, *The Skeletons in God's Closet: The Mercy of Hell, the Surprise of Judgment, the Hope of Holy War* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2014), 81-83. Craddock stridently addressed our question head-on: "An eschatological reversal is central in Luke's understanding of the final coming of the reign of God. The parable reflects popular beliefs about the hereafter and the state of the dead. The preacher will want to avoid getting reduced into using the descriptions of the fates of the two men as providing revealed truth on the state of the dead. In other words, this is not a text for a sermon on 'Five Minutes After Death.'" Fred B. Craddock, *Luke, Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 195. See also similar comments on this passage from Ellis: "The picture of judgment and reward immediately at death is contrary to the usual New Testament understanding. Cf. Mt. 10:15; Act. 17:31; Jn. 5:28f.; 1 Th. 4:13ff.; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 20:13. See on 23:43. Probably it should be understood simply as a part of the setting of the story." E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke*, rev. ed., New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1974), 206. Ellis even went so far as to deny immediate entrance into paradise for the thief on the cross. *Ibid.*, 268f. Fitzmeyer offered something of a concession to such thinking: "The story says nothing about judgment, but inculcates only the reversal of fortunes." Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:1128. Italics in original. Bock also seems reluctant to commit to a strictly

Luke 16, then, cannot legitimately be called upon to definitively deny postmortem hope for the nescient in such a way as to negate any possible teaching on the subject that 1 Peter might offer. Given the cultural background from and into which He was speaking, it seems most likely that Jesus here assumed a doctrine of particular judgment for all. However, the probability of that interpretation could be negotiated down to a *mere* possibility if Apostolic teaching elsewhere on PME required it. This chapter has already argued that Scripture does not teach PME outside of 1 Peter, but it remains to be seen whether 1 Peter's purported support for PME can be similarly dismissed.

immediate transition: "The passage depicts the dead being conscious of their fate *quickly*, though it should be recalled that the picture is symbolic, so that no conclusions can be drawn about the timing of God's judgment in contrast to other texts that put such judgment later." Emphasis added. In a footnote, he notes discussions in the literature of several passages (which are discussed in this thesis elsewhere) which speak of "instant awareness of blessing after death" for "the righteous," and reflects, "It may be that instant consciousness occurs in what has been called the 'intermediate state,' with confirming judgment and glorified resurrection coming later." Bock, Baker Exegetical Commentary, 2:1369.

Chapter Three

Exegesis of 1 Peter 3:19 and Context

1 Peter is the best possible hope for finding “the wider hope” of PME taught in Scripture. Chapter one looked at how appeal to 1 Peter has consistently been made by PME advocates. Chapter two considered other passages cited in this debate which, on closer examination, fail to definitively resolve the issue one way or the other. The task of this chapter is the exegesis of 1 Peter 3:19 within its immediate context, with a focus on the question of whether or not this verse can legitimately be used to teach that those who do not have access to the Gospel through special revelation in this life might receive special consideration in the next, particularly in the form of a Gospel proclamation from Christ Himself. To that end, a brief overview of the interpretative options precedes a closeup look at the relevant phrases in 1 Peter 3:19 and its immediate context.

Overview of Options¹²⁰

Peter wrote this letter to Christians in Asia Minor who were facing mild to moderate persecution, primarily in the form of insults. His apparent concern is to strengthen their resolve to stay faithful to God in spite of this persecution. In particular, he is concerned that their good behavior in the midst of suffering should bear witness to the world of the glory of God.¹²¹ To that end, he repeatedly reminds them of the incredible grace that God has shown and will show them, of the terrible justice that God will dispense against those who disobey the word of God, and of the inspiring example of Jesus Christ as One Who suffered unjustly for the sake of others and in Whose vindication and exaltation they will take part.

It is this example of Christ which Peter has invoked in the passage in question. In verse eighteen, Peter clearly references Christ's crucifixion in the second to last strophe with θανατωθεῖς μὲν σαρκί, whether one reads ἔπαθεν or ἀπέθανεν in the first strophe. It seems equally clear to most (though not all)¹²² that Peter also refers to

120 For a full history of interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19, see sources in note 11 on page 12.

121 This can be seen in 1 Peter 1:7; 2:9, 11, 15, 19-20; 3:1-2, 9, 14-16.

122 E.g., Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901), 161. The relevant quotation is provided below and cited in note 148 on page 87. Selwyn, 197, recorded that "Bengel, who is followed here by Wand and Windisch, distinguishes between this 'quickenings', which was for the purpose of preaching to the spirits in prison during the 'three days' of the entombment, and Christ's

Christ's resurrection in the final strophe with ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι. Many now see Peter referencing Christ's ascension in verse nineteen with πορευθεὶς.¹²³ On this view, τὰ ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύματα are fallen angels to whom Christ ἐκήρυξεν.¹²⁴ However, this is a relatively recent development. It has been more common in times past to take πορευθεὶς as a reference to Christ's descent into hell, and this view still has some proponents.¹²⁵ On this view, τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν have typically been seen as the

resurrection.”

123 For example, Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 161-163; J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: A & C Black, 1969), 155-156; Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 257-258; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 186, 189; Martin Williams, 196-197.

124 Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 151. Kelly, 154-155. R.T. France, “Exegesis in Practice: Two Examples,” in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall, 2nd ed. (Exeter, England: Paternoster Press Ltd., 1979), 269-270. J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 207-209. Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 139-140. I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 127-128. Achtemeier, 255-256. M. Eugene Boring, *1 Peter*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 140. Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 244-245, 250-251.

125 Bigg specified “that what St. Peter affirms here is not simply the *Descensus ad Inferos*, which is already contained in his Pentecostal sermon... but a special form of the *Descensus*, the Harrowing of Hell.” Bigg, 163. Beare called this a “passing reference to the Descent,” but minimized it even further by his contention that the *Descensus* itself was “nothing else than the appropriation, and application to Christ, of a fragment of the redemption-mythology of the Oriental religions.” Francis Wright Beare, ed., *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961), 145. Cranfield also held this position. Charles E. B. Cranfield, *The First Epistle of Peter* (London: SCM Press, 1950), 103-104. Perhaps the most recent to hold the more traditional view is Goppelt: “If one understands the *descendit ad inferna...* as a reference to the statements in 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6, then it has a useful function.” Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, ed. Ferdinand Hahn, trans. John E. Alsup (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 263. Selwyn did see πορευθεὶς as a “definite ‘going’ to Hades at the time of [Christ’s] death,” but unlike the others already mentioned, he held regarding πνεύματα that “the primary reference is to... supernatural

spirits of deceased humans being held as prisoners in Hades.¹²⁶ For the purposes of this discussion, these two readings will receive the most attention and elucidation, but these are by no means the only positions that have been taken.

Some have taken up and expanded upon the conjecture of Augustine, according to which Christ “went” and preached to those in the “prison” of ignorance. Alternatively, it has also been suggested that perhaps the “spirits” were not yet “in prison” when Christ preached to them but were imprisoned later.¹²⁷ Thus, the more

beings,” though he admitted the possibility that certain humans were also referred to. Selwyn, 199-200. Similarly, Reicke, 118, viewed this as “a preaching in the underworld carried out by Christ in connection with his descent during the *triduum mortis*,” yet he viewed the πνεύματα as “the transgressors from the time of the Flood, with no very great difference between Angels and people, but with greater stress on the *motif* complex connected with the Angels’ fall.” Reicke, 69. See also Best: “Christ descended into the underworld where supernatural evil powers, the spirits, were held imprisoned.” Ernest Best, *1 Peter*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1971), 140.

126 E.g. Bigg, 162. Goppelt, 258. This is not necessarily to say that they were being punished there. In the ancient world, prison was more a place of holding until trial and punishment than it was a punishment in and of itself: “Since the context refers to the spirits as ‘disobedient’, it is clear that they are prisoners being kept for trial. It is to be noted that, in the ancient world, the period of detention, no matter how painful or miserable, was only an interval leading to judgment. Modern prison sentences, where the chief punishment is the actual detention, were unknown.” Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 159f. This distinction is important because of the theological problem of double punishment that would be created if these spirits were imprisoned as punishment for their sins but subsequently released on account of Christ’s propitiation for those same sins. See note 9 on page 8.

127 “Verse nineteen could equally well be understood to mean ‘he preached to the spirits who are now in prison’, *i.e.* those who are spirits in hell at the time Peter is writing but who were formerly human beings on earth at the time of the flood. ... It is quite natural to speak in terms of a person’s present status even when describing a past action which occurred when the person did not have that status. For example, it would be perfectly correct to say, ‘Queen Elizabeth was born in 1926,’ even though she did not become Queen until long after 1926.” Grudem, *1 Peter*, 209. Cf. NASB, “spirits now in prison.” See also note 289 on page 155.

recent of these commentators have suggested that Christ actually preached through Noah during Noah's lifetime.¹²⁸ In support of this, they offer that Noah is called "a herald of righteousness" (ESV; δικαιοσύνης κήρυκα) in 2 Peter 2:5 and that the prophets of old are said to have "the Spirit of Christ in them" (ESV; τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ) in 1 Peter 1:11. This view is neither impossible nor as improbable as it might seem at first glance, but even with the evidence from elsewhere in Peter's writings, it has less to commend itself than either of the two primary views mentioned above. More to the point, even if this was Peter's intended meaning, this reading would not change the answer to the question at hand: Does Peter teach that repentance unto salvation in Jesus Christ is possible after death for the nescient? On this interpretation, Peter teaches no such thing.

For the same reason, other views will receive little attention. What Reicke calls the "orthodox Lutheran theory"¹²⁹ takes τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν as the departed spirits of human beings, but Christ ἐκήρυξεν condemnation to them. This view pays close attention to the fact that (especially outside of the New Testament, but even in the context of the New Testament) κηρύσσειν does not necessarily entail proclamation

128 For examples of this, see Grudem, *1 Peter*, 158. John S. Feinberg, "1 Peter 3:18-20, Ancient Mythology, and the Intermediate State," *Westminster Theological Journal* 48 (1986), 334.

129 Reicke, 44-47.

of the Gospel. If this reading is correct, Peter not only offers no hope to those who have perished without access to the Gospel but also might even deny such a hope.

The same is true of the other main school of interpretation of this passage. Beginning with Cardinal Robert Bellarmine in 1586,¹³⁰ many Roman Catholic interpreters have found in φυλακῆ a reference to Purgatory. Thus, Christ ἐκίρυσεν release to those in Purgatory. However, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Purgatory is only for those “who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified.”¹³¹ Thus, though Purgatory is **not explicitly not for** the nescient,¹³² it is certainly **not explicitly for** them, either.

Rather, in Roman Catholic thinking there is (or, more accurately, there was) a place designated for at least subsets of those who have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ: Limbo. Limbo is not, strictly speaking, an official doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, but standard treatments of the idea of Limbo distinguish between the Limbo of the Patriarchs (*limbus patrum*), a temporary place of rest and relative blessing for the righteous of the Old Testament, and the even more controversial Limbo of Infants (*limbus infantium*), traditionally conceived of as a more permanent place of presumably

130 For references to Bellarmine’s works and a list of those in the same camp, see Reicke, 43-44.

131 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 291. §1030.

132 By implication of Rome’s sacerdotal soteriology, Purgatory could hardly be for anyone who has not received the sacrament of baptism.

even less blessing than the *limbus patrum*.¹³³ In fact, the Catechism of the Catholic Church appears to take 1 Peter 3:19 as a reference to the *limbus patrum*, though it only uses the language of “Abraham’s bosom.”¹³⁴ Significantly, since the righteous of the Old Testament did not have full access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, this would mean that, on this line of interpretation, at least some of those who have not openly professed Christ in this life will have had some opportunity to do so after death. However, when

133 Rome has been more open to the possibility of ultimate salvation for unbaptized infants in recent years. See the Vatican’s International Theological Commission, “The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptised,” Vatican.va, January 19, 2007, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070419_un-baptised-infants_en.html (accessed March 11, 2019).

134 The explicit teaching on the subject of particular judgment at §1021 and §1022 (CCC, 288-289), combined with its teaching on the importance of baptism at §977 (CCC, 277) and Purgatory at §1030 (CCC, 291), seems to leave Limbo (though this term is not used) as the only possible referent in the catechism’s teaching on the phrase “He descended into hell” in the Apostle’s Creed. In particular, §632 (CCC, 180) states “that Jesus, like all men, experienced death and in his soul joined the others in the realm of the dead. But he descended there as Saviour, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there.” The footnote on this last phrase even cites 1 Peter 3:18-19. §633 (Ibid.) clarifies that those in the realm of the dead “are deprived of the vision of God... whether evil or righteous, while they await the Redeemer: which does not mean that their lot is identical, as Jesus shows through the parable of the poor man Lazarus who was received into ‘Abraham’s bosom’: ‘It is precisely these holy souls, who awaited their Saviour in Abraham’s bosom, whom Christ the Lord delivered when he descended into hell.’ Jesus did not descend into hell to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the hell of damnation, but to free the just who had gone before him.” §637 (CCC, 181) summarizes this neatly: “In his human soul united to his divine person, the dead Christ went down to the realm of the dead. He opened heaven’s gates for the just who had gone before him.” However, the phrasing in §634 (CCC, 180) is not nearly so tight. After quoting from 1 Peter 4:6, it says, “The descent into hell brings the Gospel message of salvation to complete fulfillment. This is the last phase of Jesus’ messianic mission, a phase which is condensed in time but vast in its real significance: the spread of Christ’s redemptive work to all men of all times and all places, for all who are saved have been made sharers in the redemption.” The “spread of Christ’s redemptive work” mentioned here as being “to all men of all times and all places” seems to be far more extensive and inclusive than a reference to the *limbus patrum* would imply.

stated more directly, this must all be put in the past tense: those who hoped in God but died before Christ's atonement attained the beatific vision only after His atonement and liberating descent into the realm of the dead. Strictly speaking, this still offers no hope for those today who have never heard the Gospel, no matter how amenable it may be to such a hope.¹³⁵

Calvin's view of 3:19 was that "the manifestation of Christ's grace was made to godly spirits," who were not imprisoned but rather "were watching in hope of the salvation promised them, as though they saw it afar off." Practically admitting that this is a strained reading of ἐν φυλακῇ, Calvin opined that it was also possible "to retain the word *prison*" because these "godly souls" who had been under the Law ("a sort of confining prison," citing Galatians 3:23) their whole lives were now "constrained by the same desire for Christ, because the spirit of liberty had not as yet been fully given. Hence this anxiety of waiting was to them a kind of prison."¹³⁶ As for the question of "why it is that [Peter] mentions only the unbelieving," Calvin suggests that this was because "the true servants of God were mixed together with the unbelieving, and were

135 The *limbus patrum* is supposed to have been emptied and destroyed as part of Christ's work there. It would no longer serve whatever purpose it is supposed to have served prior to Christ's descent. No one goes there now.

136 John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and The First and Second Epistles of St Peter*, trans. William B. Johnston, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 293.

almost hidden on account of their number.”¹³⁷ Whatever one might wish to say about Calvin’s exegesis,¹³⁸ he clearly held that this passage offers hope only for those who already had access to the Law and thus not for those who perish without the Gospel generally.

Therefore, in the discussion that follows, the focus will be on the question of which of two schools of thought should be preferred. Does 1 Peter 3:19 teach that Christ preached the gospel to the spirits of those who had died, as the traditional *descensus* view has held? Otherwise, does 1 Peter 3:19 teach that Christ made a proclamation to evil spirits (alternatively called demons or fallen angels) as the modern consensus now holds? To answer this question, we now proceed to a phrase by phrase exegesis of the text, in which it shall be argued that the modern consensus should be followed.

3:18 ...θανατωθεῖς ὁμὲν σαρκί, ζωοποιηθεῖς δὲ τῷ πνεύματι...¹³⁹

There are both lexical and grammatical questions surrounding the interpretation of these two phrases, but for the purposes of this investigation, the questions all boil down to this fundamental issue: does ζωοποιηθεῖς refer to Christ’s

137 Ibid., 294.

138 Note how Calvin shifts from “godly spirits” to speaking consistently of “godly souls,” a blurring of the distinctive New Testament uses of πνεῦμα and ψυχή detectable also in Sproul’s commentary. See note 211 on page 113.

139 For the sake of convenience, the critical apparatus of NA28 is reproduced here:
ⲑⲫ⁷² A^{*vid} Ψ 1735 vg^{st.ww} sa^{ms} | τ τω 81. 1448 | εν ⲫ⁷²

resurrection or not? If it does refer to Christ's resurrection, then, depending on how one reads the relative clause that follows immediately afterward, this could severely weaken the case for understanding *πορευθείς* in the following verse as a descent into the underworld during the *triduum mortis*. Specifically, if the three participles in this passage (*θανατωθείς*, *ζωοποιηθείς*, and *πορευθείς*) are read as a sequence of events in chronological order, that would mean that, wherever Christ went and *ἐκήρυξεν*, it happened after His resurrection. The traditional *descensus* view to which PME advocates appeal, then, requires either that *ζωοποιηθείς* does not refer to Christ's resurrection or that the participles do not refer to a sequence of events in chronological order.¹⁴⁰ The former assertion will be examined under this heading, and the latter assertion will be considered on the basis of the *ἐν ᾧ* clause that follows.

It might seem ridiculous, *prima facie*, to question whether or not Christ's resurrection is in view in the second of these two phrases, but it is eminently reasonable to assume that the datives *σαρκί* and *πνεύματι* should be understood to have a parallel function.¹⁴¹ In other words, whatever grammatical function the dative

140 Given that many interpreters within the same basic school of thought on Christ's descent still take certain words or phrases in this passage differently, perhaps it would be better to speak of *descensus* "views" rather than "the *descensus* view."

141 Jobes notes that Clark and Kistemaker do not ascribe parallel function to these datives. Jobes, 240. Feinberg explicitly eschews such a parallel function when he stresses "that the exact antithesis is between the participles, not between the datives" and appears to take *σαρκί* as a dative of sphere but

πνεύματι performs, it is natural to expect the same grammatical function be performed by the dative σαρκί, particularly if the μὲν... δὲ construction is kept in spite of its omission by $\text{P}72$. It might come quite naturally to take πνεύματι here as a dative of agency since it was by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus was made alive, but the semantic range of the word πνεῦμα does allow for other options. It also comes rather naturally to take σαρκί as a dative of reference referring to Jesus' physical body which was put to death, but this would not be consistent with the dative's function in the πνεύματι clause that follows. Ideally, an identical or equivalent grammatical function for both datives should be found that would make sense within the semantic ranges of the terms.

Σάρξ, first of all, can be “used quite simply to denote the physical body.”¹⁴²

Possibly in 1 Peter 4:1-2 and more probably in 1 Peter 3:21, σάρξ means nothing more than this. If this is the meaning here in 3:18, and if the datives here are functionally equivalent, it would come most naturally to understand πνεῦμα here as “a part of human personality,” specifically, “when used with σάρξ... it denotes the immaterial

πνεύματι as a dative of agency just as Jobes reports Clark and Kistemaker doing. Feinberg, 313. Likewise, although Achtemeier ultimately does maintain parallel function for the datives, he also suggests (on the basis of 1 Corinthians 6:11 and 1 Timothy 3:16) that it is not strictly necessary to uphold such parallel function for the datives here. Achtemeier, 250f.

¹⁴² *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “σάρξ,” 4:261.

part,”¹⁴³ and by “close, dynamic association with God,” could “be used of a manner of existence or life force that survives death.”¹⁴⁴ This may be the sense in Mark 14:38 and Matthew 26:41, where τὸ μὲν πνεῦμα πρόθυμον ἢ δὲ σὰρξ ἀσθενής (“the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak”) might be “contrasting the physical and nonphysical aspects of the human personality.”¹⁴⁵ Indeed, BDAG and EDNT both proffer precisely this understanding of πνεῦμα in 1 Peter 3:18.¹⁴⁶ The chief problem with this is best summed up by Jobes:

[I]f Christ preached during the three days when his body was in the tomb, that flesh-spirit contrast must refer to the two components of Christ’s human being: his human body, which was put to death, and his human soul (or spirit?), which went to preach. If so, in what sense was his soul “made alive” when his body was put to death? One could argue that his soul remained alive, but that is not what the text says.¹⁴⁷

Jobes has here highlighted the problem which could be detected even in the elaborations of some of the advocates of such a strained reading, such as Bigg, who had insisted:

143 BDAG, s.v. “πνεῦμα, ατος, τό.”

144 J. Kremer, “πνεῦμα,” in *EDNT*, 3:118.

145 *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “πνεῦμα,” 3:808. However, if Jesus was alluding to the “willing spirit” of Psalm 51:12, this could be yet another reference to the Holy Spirit, in keeping with Psalm 51:11.

146 BDAG even specifies, “πνεῦμα is that part of Christ which, in contrast to σὰρξ, did not pass away in death, but survived as an individual entity after death.” BDAG, s.v. “πνεῦμα, ατος, τό.” Kremer suggests this “life force that survives death” understanding for both 1 Peter 3:18 and 4:6. J. Kremer, “πνεῦμα,” in *EDNT*, 3:118.

147 Jobes, 239.

The datives σαρκί, πνεύματι are antithetical; Christ died in body, and was quickened in soul or spirit. St. Peter does not mean that the spirit had died. The divine spirit of Christ which was in the prophets (i. 11) cannot have been subject to dissolution; and we can hardly suppose the meaning to be that His human spirit was first destroyed and then re-created, for there is no trace of such an idea elsewhere in the Bible, and the next verse shows that in St. Peter's view the spirits of the antediluvians were alive. We may explain ζωοποιηθείς perhaps by the χάρις χωῆς of iii. 7. The life of heaven is not unnaturally distinguished from that of earth as a new life, a second ἀναγέννησις, a fresh grace of God, though the two are continuous and not disparate.¹⁴⁸

In this last sentence, Bigg could perhaps be seen as grasping at the “strongly eschatological sense”¹⁴⁹ of πνεύματι which shall be considered below, but he is actually quite far from it. Rather than arguing that the person of Christ, touching the entirety of His human nature (body and soul), was “made alive” in this eschatological sense, Bigg's position was that Christ was somehow made alive only “in soul or spirit.” His solution to the linguistic difficulty that arose from this was apparently to shrug, “All phrases which apply to the point of transition from the old life to the new are necessarily vague, and the speculations which may be built upon them are endless.”¹⁵⁰ Again, Jobes helpfully lays out the problem:

If only the two individual nouns *sarx* and *pneuma* are contrasted, the lexical data may seem inconclusive. But these nouns occur in two syntactically parallel

148 Bigg, 161.

149 Although this phrase, which succinctly and helpfully summarizes the view, is borrowed from Grudem, he distances himself from the it. Grudem, *1 Peter*, 227.

150 Bigg, 161.

phrases. More important, the body-soul contrast required by the *descensus* interpretation does not do justice to the contrast between the full phrases “put to death in flesh” and “made alive in spirit.” In what sense could Christ’s soul be said to have been made alive in contrast to the death of his body? Even granting that Peter could refer to the doubtful body-soul contrast with *sarx* and *pneuma*, the soul would have remained alive and active, but the text says Christ “was made alive in spirit.” Christ in his entirety was put to death at crucifixion and in his entirety was made alive at the resurrection.¹⁵¹

In short, the *descensus* view requires ζωοποιηθείς δὲ πνεύματι to take on a rather idiosyncratic meaning here (“he was made active in his spirit”?), particularly when contrasted with its usage elsewhere in the New Testament, where it most frequently refers to the resurrection of the dead.¹⁵² Although “the dead” in some cases might be considered dead “in trespasses”¹⁵³ rather than biologically dead, surely Peter cannot mean here that Jesus needed to be “made alive” in this sense, for if Jesus needed to be “made alive” πνεύματι in this sense, that would seem to imply that Jesus was somehow sinful πνεύματι. The *descensus* interpretation also seems to assume a Greek

151 Jobes, 241.

152 In particular, consider John 6:63, τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ ζωοποιοῦν, ἡ σὰρξ οὐκ ὠφελεῖ οὐδέν (“the spirit is the one making alive, the flesh does not profit anything”), where the contrast is surely not between the physical and immaterial parts of a person. Romans 8:11, where Paul writes εἰ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἐγείραντος τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ νεκρῶν (“if the spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead”) dwells in you, then the one who raised Christ from the dead ζωοποιήσῃ καὶ τὰ θνητὰ σώματα ὑμῶν (“he will make alive also the mortal body of you”), seems to establish semantic ranges for ἐγείρω and ζωοποιέω that overlap at least somewhat. The LXX of Joram’s response to Naaman’s request for healing (2 Kings 5:7) might also be relevant: Μὴ θεὸς ἐγὼ τοῦ θανατῶσαι καὶ ζωοποιῆσαι.

153 Ephesians 2:5 and Colossians 2:13 both use νεκρούς... τοῖς παραπτώμασιν... συνεζωοποίησεν. A similar kind of metaphorical usage, as seen in the previous chapter of this work, also seems to be at play in the context of John 5:21 and could be in John 6:63, as well.

dichotomistic anthropology, but the laundry list of problems with foisting such an anthropology on the New Testament cannot be taken up here.¹⁵⁴

There are at least two better options available for understanding these datives in line with the semantic ranges of σάρξ and πνεῦμα in New Testament usage as well as that of ζωοποιέω in any literature. It is possible for σάρξ to connote “a theological understanding of mankind subject to the power of sin,” “bound to a sinful existence hostile to God.”¹⁵⁵ This is more typical of Pauline usage, but the use of the related adjective σαρκικός in 1 Peter 2:12 seems indication enough that Peter does not ignore this connotation of the term. If the datives σαρκί and πνεύματι are being contrasted in this regard, then it would be in keeping with the passive voice of both θανατωθείς and

154 This kind of dichotomistic understanding appears to have been precisely the sort of framework under which Clement and the rest of the Alexandrians were working, but it is explicitly rejected by, e.g., Achtemeier, 249f. Best, *1 Peter*, 139. Edmund P. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 158. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 136f. Elliott, 646f. France, 267. Goppelt, 253f. Jobes, 241. Kelly, 150f. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 204. N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 3 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 469. Standard reference works see this problem, as well: “The NT writers can speak of the (human) spirit as though it were something possessed by the individual... Such language, however, does not mean that they envisaged it as a divine spark (the real ‘I’) incarcerated in the physical body—an anthropology more typical of Gk. Philosophy.” *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “πνεῦμα,” 3:808.

155 A. Sand, “σάρξ, σαρκός, ἦ,” in *EDNT*, 3:231.

ζωοποιηθείς to understand σαρκί and πνεύματι as datives of agency.¹⁵⁶ Thus, Christ was put to death by “the flesh” (i.e., sinful humanity) but was made alive by the Holy Spirit.

Σάρξ can also carry the connotations of “human creatureliness and frailty.”¹⁵⁷ In the quotation from Isaiah in 1 Peter 1:24, at least, this sense seems to be in play. When contrasted with σάρξ in this sense, πνεῦμα then seems to carry the connotation of immortality and power. As Beare puts it, “His death took place in the sphere of ‘the flesh’, the earthly, temporal existence; His Resurrection took place in the sphere of ‘the spirit’, the eternal, the indestructible, the heavenly.”¹⁵⁸ The distinction here seems to be similar to the one Paul discusses in 1 Corinthians 15 concerning natural body and spiritual body:

156 This is essentially the approach advocated by Achtemeier (250-251), though even he cites the usage of σάρξ in 1 Peter 1:24 as referring to “the whole of mortal humanity” (Ibid., 250n123), which could be more amenable to seeing the contrast between σάρξ and πνεῦμα as one of mortality and immortality, discussed below. Curiously, although Feinberg takes care to note the significance of the passive voice of θανατωθείς, he nowhere considers the possibility of understanding σαρκί as a dative of agency. Feinberg, 335. This is particularly curious since he lists no less than eight options for understanding the dative πνεύματι. Ibid., 314.

157 NIDNTTE, s.v. “σάρξ,” 4:261.

158 Beare, 143. Similar comments are made by others. “If ‘flesh’ is the sphere of human limitations, of suffering, and of death (cf. 4:1), ‘Spirit’ is the sphere of power, vindication, and a new life.” Michaels, *1 Peter*, 205. “The contrast of flesh-spirit... refers to two orders of being, the flesh representing human nature in its weakness, its proclivity to evil, its actual evil once it opposes the influence of God; the spirit representing the consequence of God’s salvation, the presence and activity among us of the Spirit of God.” Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 127. “Although ‘flesh’ (*sarx*) has a range of meanings in the New Testament, whenever, as here, ‘flesh’ is contrasted with ‘spirit’ (*pneuma*), the contrast is between physical, visible things which belong to this present world and invisible things which can exist in the unseen ‘spiritual’ world of heaven and the age to come.” Grudem, *1 Peter*, 163.

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.¹⁵⁹

Notice that Paul here speaks of the body as a seed (σπέρμα is used in v. 38, not quoted above) and says that the body is sown ἐν φθορᾷ, “in perishability,” but raised ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ, “in imperishability.” It is interesting that 1 Peter 1:23 speaks of being born οὐκ ἐκ σπορᾶς φθαρτῆς ἀλλ’ ἀφθάρτου, “not of perishable seed but imperishable,” just before speaking in v. 24 of the perishability of the flesh, διότι πᾶσα σὰρξ ὡς χόρτος, “for all flesh is as grass.” Notice also the contrast here between the ψυχή word group and the πνεῦμα word group. Paul calls the resurrected body πνευματικός, “spiritual,” contrasted with the body that is sown ψυχικόν, “natural.” Jesus Himself, the last Adam, is called πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν, “a making-alive spirit,” in contrast to the first Adam, whom Paul calls a ψυχὴν ζῶσαν, “a living soul.” The ψυχή and πνεῦμα word groups are contrasted not only here but also contrasted in 1 Corinthians 2:14, where Paul writes, “The natural man (ψυχικὸς δὲ ἄνθρωπος) does not accept the things of the Spirit (τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος) of God... because they are spiritually (πνευματικῶς) discerned.” Just a

159 1 Corinthians 15:42-45, ESV. France points out this passage, as do many others. France, 267. Clowney even cites Luther as pointing out this passage from 1 Corinthians as relevant for the interpretation of this passage in 1 Peter. Clowney, 157f.

few verses later, however, Paul shifts from contrasting ψυχικός and πνευματικός (2:14) to contrasting πνευματικός and σάρκινος (3:1). Perhaps Paul saw σάρξ and ψυχή as conceptually related terms.¹⁶⁰

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that Feinberg's objection (while perhaps not foolproof) is a fair one: "Pauline usage is not Petrine. ... Peter compares *sarx* to *pneuma*, not one kind of *sōma* (or even *sarx*) to another."¹⁶¹ While this is true insofar as it goes, it would almost certainly be incongruous to speak of σάρκα πνευματικήν, so Peter could not be expected to contrast one type of σάρκα with another type of σάρκα in the way that Paul contrasts σῶμα ψυχικόν and σῶμα πνευματικόν. It has just been suggested above that Paul himself saw σάρξ and ψυχή as conceptually overlapping terms and, thus, if Peter indeed used σαρκί to express the same idea as Paul's own σῶμα ψυχικόν, Paul surely would have had no objection. The same could be said of Paul's σῶμα πνευματικόν and Peter's πνεύματι, regardless of any close relationship Paul may or may not have seen between the σάρξ and ψυχή word groups.

¹⁶⁰ I owe this insight to Robert Ewusie Moses, who notes that "Paul never places ψυχή in proximity to σάρξ, and he never contrasts ψυχή with σάρξ. ...ψυχικός is also synonymous in Paul with two cognates of σάρξ, σάρκινος and σαρκικός, words also often contrasted with πνευματικός... Thus, if the author of 1 Peter, for example, can set σαρκικός in opposition to ψυχή (1 Pet. 2:11), such a move would be extremely unlikely for Paul, because Paul seems to regard the ψυχή as being very close to the σάρξ." Robert Ewusie Moses, *Practices of Power: Revisiting the Principalities and Powers in the Pauline Letters* (Minneapolis, MN Fortress Press, 2014), 110.

¹⁶¹ Feinberg, 315.

Feinberg's other objection to seeing Peter's thinking here in the same vein as Paul's is that it "makes the mistake of treating a noun (*pneuma*) as though it is an adjective (Paul turns *psychē* and *pneuma* into adjectives in 1 Cor 15:42ff., but Peter does not)."¹⁶² This objection seems to miss the point of calling these datives of sphere. Peter's point would be that Christ was put to death σαρκί, in the sphere of the flesh; Christ was made alive πνεύματι, in the sphere of the spirit. Adjectives would be required if Peter were explicitly and specifically contrasting one type of body to another type of body. On the reading being proposed, though, the comparison is between one realm, sphere, or mode of being and another.¹⁶³ Peter could have and probably would have stayed closer to Paul's wording (or could have been clearer in some other way that he intended to refer to Christ's "natural body" and "spiritual body") if Peter had been speaking only of types of bodies, but this would be unnecessary and undesirable if, as here proposed, Peter was speaking of types of being.

In summary, θανατωθείς μὲν σαρκί, ζωοποιηθείς δὲ πνεύματι should not be understood to mean that Christ's physical body was put to death but His immaterial

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Goppelt seems to make much of the distinction between "realms of existence" or "spheres of existence" on the one hand and "modes of existence" on the other hand, regarding "modes" as the proper way of thinking. Goppelt, 253. He cites Kelly (150f) as agreeing with him on this point against both Beare (169) (see similar quotation above, cited in note 158 on page 90); and Schweizer, *TDNT*, 6:417.

soul was made alive. Rather, the clear meaning of ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι is that Christ was bodily raised from the dead. This is true whether the datives are specifically contrasted along with their corresponding verbs or not, but since there are at least two viable ways to understand a contrast between σαρκί and πνεύματι, there seems to be no reason to go against the natural expectation that there is such a contrast. It is possible to understand Peter to mean that Christ was put to death by humanity but made alive by the Holy Spirit. It is also possible (and probably preferable)¹⁶⁴ to understand Peter to contrast Christ being put to death in the sphere of the flesh but made alive in the sphere of the spirit along the same lines as Paul's contrast between a natural body (which dies) and a spiritual body (which is resurrected). Peter's variance from Pauline terminology must be acknowledged but does not disprove that Peter had a similar idea in mind. Rather, since this fits very well with the natural expectation of (though not the necessity of) a functional parallel for the datives, since it falls within the semantic range of the terms as used within the New Testament, and since it even coheres with New Testament theology, there seems to be no particularly exegetical motive for

164 "[T]he emphasis is not between the agents of the action but between the two states of Christ's existence. Just as Christ emerged from suffering and death into resurrection life, so will Peter's oppressed readers, which is a thought more apt to Peter's purposes." Jobs, 241.

denying that this was Peter's meaning.¹⁶⁵ Unsurprisingly, this view dominates contemporary scholarship.¹⁶⁶

3:19 ...ἐν ᾧ καὶ...¹⁶⁷

Having established that ζωοποιηθεὶς in v. 18 clearly refers to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the significance of the three aorist participles occurring in vv. 18-19

(θανατωθεὶς, ζωοποιηθεὶς, and πορευθεὶς) must now be considered. Are these to be

165 Feinberg all but admits this himself. "[I]t is surely not an impossibility, for there is a legitimate distinction between a natural body and a glorified body." Nevertheless, he persists in denying that this is Peter's meaning simply because it is not spelled out clearly enough: "While it is true that the person Jesus actually experienced physical death in virtue of his physical body, and while that point can be seen as being in direct antithesis to Christ later having a spiritual glorified body, Peter makes no such clear antithesis in the text. Had he wanted to do so, he could have easily used the Pauline formula." Feinberg, 315.

166 "[T]he majority of recent commentators understand the contrasting phrases 'put to death in flesh' but 'made alive in spirit' to refer either to two spheres of Christ's existence (the earthly sphere versus the eschatological) or to two modes of his personal existence (in human form before his death and in glorified form after his resurrection." Jobes, 242. Jobes provides a list of fifteen of the scholars who constitute this majority opinion. Williams also notes the consensus: "As most commentators now recognise, σαρκί and πνεύματι do not denote the material (body) and immaterial (soul / spirit) parts of Christ's person, but rather his earthly mode of existence and his spiritual mode of existence or resurrected state." Martin Williams, 192.

167 The textual emendations which insert Enoch into this clause, suggested by Bowyer and Harris (as well as others cited in the articles below) and included in the critical apparatus in the 27th edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece*, have been rightly and consistently dismissed by almost all major recent commentators and have finally been removed from the apparatus in the 28th edition. For discussion, see J. Rendel Harris, "An Unobserved Quotation from the Book of Enoch," *The Expositor* 6.4 (1901): 194-199; J. Rendel Harris, "A Further Note on the Use of Enoch in 1 Peter," *The Expositor* 6.4 (1901): 346-49; J. Rendel Harris, "On a Recent Emendation of the Text of St. Peter," *The Expositor* 6.5 (1902): 317-20; George Farmer, "Did Our Lord, or Enoch, 'Preach to the Spirits in Prison?'" *The Expositor* 6.6 (1902): 377-378; J. Rendel Harris, "The History of a Conjectural Emendation," *The Expositor* 6.6 (1902): 378-90. Although the suggestions rightly drew attention to the importance of 1 Enoch and, based on the phonetic similarity between Ενωχ καὶ and ἐν ᾧ καὶ, were not beyond the realm of possibility, there was never any manuscript evidence in their favor, and they created more problems than they solved.

understood as events occurring in chronological order? If so, wherever Christ went to make proclamation, He went after His resurrection, not during the *triduum mortis*. Thus, the traditional *descensus* school of interpretation needs ἐν ᾧ̄ to somehow take πορευθείς, which would otherwise quite naturally read as the last in a sequence of participles in chronological order, and make it refer to one event (a descent into hell, signified by πορευθείς) that took place in between two other events (the death and resurrection, signified by θανατωθείς and ζωοποιηθείς, respectively).

There are three main schools of thought on the grammatical function of this phrase. There are those who have held that ἐν ᾧ̄ is simply a prepositional phrase with a relative pronoun, the antecedent of which is πνεύματι at the end of v. 18.¹⁶⁸ Others have held that, while ᾧ̄ is a relative pronoun, the antecedent is not so much πνεύματι

168 Kelly, 152. France, 268-269. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 145. These three present important arguments in favor of this school of thought and will thus be quoted in the main text below. Feinberg, replying to Reicke's objections to this view, insisted that "there is no problem in treating *en hō* as a relative pronoun," and saw "no good reason for saying it refers to more than *pneumati*." Feinberg, 318-319. Achtemeier, suggesting that the understanding of πνεύματι as a dative of sphere is problematic, nevertheless maintained that "[o]ne can retain πνεύματι as the more obvious antecedent to ἐν ᾧ̄ as the word order indicates... if one construes πνεύματι not as adverbial but rather as instrumental." Achtemeier, 252. Schreiner, following Achtemeier, explained, "According to this view, Christ by means of the Holy Spirit went and proclaimed victory over the imprisoned spirits. This interpretation explains the 'also,' for the Spirit not only raised Christ but also empowered him to herald victory." Schreiner, 190. Jobes explicitly stated that "the antecedent of the relative pronoun is *pneumati*," but went on to argue for a temporal understanding of the function of ἐν ᾧ̄ as a prepositional phrase in this context, demonstrating sympathies with the third school. Jobes, 242.

specifically as it is “the preceding statement as a whole.”¹⁶⁹ The third school has held that the phrase “functions here, as elsewhere in the letter (1:6; 2:12; 3:16; 4:4), as a temporal or circumstantial conjunction.”¹⁷⁰ Those in the third school may or may not be denying that $\tilde{\omega}$ is functioning as a relative pronoun since the defining feature of the third school is the focus on the grammatical or rhetorical function of the phrase $\tilde{\omega}$ as a whole and not on the single word $\tilde{\omega}$ specifically. That being the case, there is room for some overlap between the three schools.¹⁷¹ Is there room in any of these schools for the *descensus* interpretation?¹⁷²

169 Selwyn, 315. In the same vein, Michaels suggested that $\tilde{\omega}$ does not refer to “ $\piνεύματι$ in particular... but the entire expression, ‘made alive in the Spirit,’ which amounts to the same thing.” Michaels, *1 Peter*, 206. Davids similarly held that “Peter is using the construction in a general sense.” Davids, 138.

170 Elliott made this assertion partly on the basis of his assessment that “the focus of vv 19-22 is not on the *mode* of Christ’s going (“in his spirit”) but on events involved with the *occasion* of his going, namely his resurrection (vv 18e, 21d) and ascension into heaven (v 22).” Elliott, 652. Boring specified that $\tilde{\omega}$ “does not refer to the Spirit, but should be taken as an adverbial conjunction.” Boring, 140. See also Martin Williams, 195. Williams cites both Wallace and Robertson. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 343. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 587.

171 Selwyn, Michaels, and Davids have affinities with the third school. Jobs was mentioned as sympathetic to the third school already in note 168 on page 96.

172 Note that, with the exception of Selwyn, all of the commentators cited in this paragraph explicitly deny the *descensus* interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19, whether or not they might find biblical basis for a descent doctrine elsewhere. Selwyn’s view of the *descensus* interpretation is complex, as shall be seen in more detail below, but as to the question of whether or not 3:19 offers hope for those who perish without trusting in Christ, his answer is clear: “The question was, no doubt, asked at an early date whether salvation was open to those who had never heard the Gospel... The question may also have been asked as to whether the benefits of Christ’s redemption might be thought of as covering a still wider range, embracing not only the righteous of past ages but their impenitent sinners as well... What we cannot say, however, if the conclusions hitherto reached are sound, is that to these

Some commentators have suggested that there is room in the first school. Bigg, apparently on the assumption that $\tilde{\omega}$ does refer specifically to $\piνεύματι$ (but without any consideration of arguments for or against such a reading), understood verse nineteen to mean that “Christ not only ministered to men upon earth, but also (καί) went as a spirit to preach to spirits in prison.”¹⁷³ Beare also focused on $\piνεύματι$, “taken by itself, without the participle; it is ‘in the spirit’, but not as ‘made alive in the spirit’ (risen from the dead), that He preaches to the ‘spirits in prison’.”¹⁷⁴ Both Bigg and Beare, then, fall into the first school on their reading of $\tilde{\omega}$.

Bigg, however, depends upon the same faulty understanding of the contrast in verse eighteen between $\piνεῦμα$ and $σάρξ$ already discussed at length above. If, as the first school holds, $\tilde{\omega}$ does refer specifically to $\piνεύματι$, then it is referring not to a

questions the author of 1 Peter ‘gives the most charitable answer’. It is not a question of doubting the charity of the Epistle, which indeed stands out on every page, but of whether or not it alludes to these questions at all. And on that issue we feel bound to render a negative verdict.” Selwyn, 357-358.

173 Bigg, 162. In the same location, Bigg made it clear that he believed that this took place during the *triduum mortis*: “After our Lord’s Death He still lived and ministered. The order of time is ἀπέθανε, πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν, ὅς ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ Θεοῦ πορευθεὶς εἰς οὐρανόν. There can be no doubt that the event referred to is placed between the Crucifixion and the Ascension.” Notice Bigg’s curious omission of ζῶσσι from the order of events. This omission appears central to his case.

174 Beare, 144. Beare proceeded to specify that “in the underworld in the interval between His death and His resurrection.... [Jesus] carries His Gospel of salvation even to that generation of desperate sinners who died unrepentant and were swept away by the Flood.” At the same time, Beare questioned whether the doctrine of Christ’s descent into Hades “can be said to have any legitimate place in Christian teaching at all.” He saw it as “the appropriation, and the application to Christ, of a fragment of the redemption-mythology of the Oriental religions.... rooted in old vegetation- and sun-myths.” Ibid., 145.

distinction between the physical and non-physical parts of a human being but rather to either (1) a distinction between the already and not-yet planes of human existence which correspond to the already and not-yet periods of human history or (2) a distinction between the mortal, sinful, and human agents who put Christ to death and the infinite, omnipotent Spirit of God Who made Christ alive.¹⁷⁵ Thus, on the first understanding of the σάρξ / πνεῦμα contrast, if πνεύματι is the antecedent of ᾧ, then at least part of the function of the phrase is to indicate that Christ's journey and proclamation were carried out in His resurrected state and must therefore have taken place after the resurrection. In this way, the first understanding of the σάρξ / πνεῦμα contrast, which understanding represents the majority view in current scholarship, precludes the *descensus / triduum mortis* interpretation of v. 19, for if Peter is teaching in this verse that Christ did something after His resurrection, then Peter is not teaching that Christ did something between His death and resurrection.¹⁷⁶ Consequently, it is somewhat baffling that Beare, in his discussion of the σάρξ / πνεῦμα contrast, specifically states that “the body in which He is ‘made alive’ is itself ‘spiritual’”¹⁷⁷ but

175 A third understanding would see σαρκί as referring to Christ's own human body, in which He was put to death, and πνεύματι as referring to the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom He was made alive. This third view, for the purposes of this paragraph, is the same as the second since they agree in their reading of πνεύματι in v. 18.

176 Bear in mind that to say “Peter is not teaching X” is not the same as to say “Peter is denying X.”

177 *Ibid.*, 143.

proceeds, in his discussion of ἐν ᾧ, to refer it to “His activity in the underworld in the interval between His death and His resurrection.”¹⁷⁸ Beare’s reading of πνεύματι, then, which is in keeping with the first understanding of the contrast in v. 18, seems to be in direct conflict with his own proposed reading of ἐν ᾧ in v. 19.

However, on the second understanding of the σάρξ / πνεῦμα contrast, if πνεύματι is the antecedent of ᾧ, then the phrase indicates that Christ’s journey and proclamation were *carried out in* the Spirit of God Who raised Him from the dead but not necessarily *carried out after* the Spirit of God raised Him from the dead. The second understanding, then, does technically allow a *descensus* interpretation, but Peter writing of Christ going and proclaiming in the Spirit immediately after Peter wrote that Christ was made alive in the Spirit certainly does not specifically avow a *descensus* interpretation. Rather, that very context points in quite the opposite direction. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that, if πνεύματι is a dative of agency referring to the Holy Spirit rather than a dative of sphere referring to something like Paul’s σῶμα πνευματικόν, there is technically some room within the first school for a *descensus* interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19. As of yet, though, no one appears to have argued along these lines, and even to attempt to do so seems ill-advised.

178 *Ibid.*, 145.

What of the other two schools of thought on the function of ἐν ᾧ? Is there room in them for a *descensus* interpretation of 3:19? If ᾧ, as a relative pronoun, refers “to Christ’s passion and resurrection generally,”¹⁷⁹ as the second school holds, rather than to πνεύματι specifically, then in theory it is possible to read ἐν ᾧ as “in which process” or “in the course of which”¹⁸⁰ and possible in turn to understand such phrases as indicating the *triduum mortis*. Still, in practice, commentators who attend to ᾧ as a relative pronoun tend to refer it either (1) specifically to πνεύματι rather than to the entire preceding phrase, thus placing themselves in the first school, or (2) specifically to the immediately preceding phrase ζωοποιηθείς δὲ πνεύματι rather than to the entire μὲν... δὲ contrast.

Typically, those who follow a *descensus* interpretation fall more clearly into the third school, which takes ἐν ᾧ as a conjunction. Reicke seems to have been particularly influential in establishing this school. In his own day, he could write, “The ordinary opinion is that ἐν ᾧ in 1 Pet. iii. 19 refers to the πνεύματι in verse 18 immediately preceding it. ... This opinion is accepted with almost 100% unity and certainty.”¹⁸¹ He

179 Both Selwyn and Best use this exact phrase, the latter citing the former without properly indicating that he is quoting from Selwyn. Best himself actually hedges between Selwyn’s suggestion and Reicke’s, i.e., between the second and third school, respectively. Selwyn, 197. Best, *1 Peter*, 140.

180 Both of these phrases are from Selwyn, 197. Reicke cites Selwyn’s wording favorably. Reicke, 113.

181 Reicke, 103. See also Cranfield, *First Epistle of Peter*, 103.

found this consensus “not quite incontestable by a sceptical critic,” suggesting that the author of the epistle “does not always use the so-called ‘relative connection’ in the way that it would then be formulated here, in direct contact with the antecedent, but there are often also some words between the antecedent and the relative pronoun,” citing 1 Peter 1:10, 12; 2:8, 10.¹⁸² More persuasive is his suggestion that “it is unnatural to make a dative of reference serve as antecedent to a relative pronoun.”¹⁸³ On these grounds and on the grounds of the usage the phrase elsewhere in the New Testament and other literature of the period,¹⁸⁴ Reicke argued that ἐν ᾧ here served as a temporal conjunction:

By a temporal interpretation... we can obtain the following natural meaning: »on which occasion» or »on that occasion», namely when He died (preferably

182 Reicke, 104.

183 Ibid., 108. Reicke also cites Selwyn, who had stated unequivocally, “The antecedent cannot be πνεύματι, for there is no example in N.T. of this dative of reference, or adverbial dative as I should prefer to call it, serving as antecedent to a relative pronoun.” Selwyn, 197. Similar statements along these lines can be found in Selwyn, 315, 317. Michaels follows along the same line of thinking and cites both Reicke and Selwyn in denying that πνεύματι is the exclusive antecedent. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 206. However, see Grudem, who argues that, “in spite of Selwyn’s claim, there are several ‘adverbial datives’ in the New Testament which serve as antecedents to a relative pronoun,” citing five verses to this effect before assessing that “Selwyn’s objection... would be unpersuasive even without these examples, because it is exegetically illegitimate to demand parallel examples which are so narrowly specified that one would not expect to find many, if any, examples. ... Nothing in the nature of New Testament Greek requires that relative pronouns only take antecedents that function in their own clauses in certain ways and not in others. Thus Selwyn has based his exegetical judgment on an artificial distinction which has no real significance in the actual use of the language.” Grudem, *1 Peter*, 227-228. Wallace quotes Grudem approvingly on this point in a footnote. Wallace, 343.

184 Reicke, 108-115.

not: »when He was made alive» because of the parenthetical character of those appositions) Christ went and preached also to the spirits.¹⁸⁵

Clearly, then, at least Reicke believed that it was possible to interpret ἐν ᾧ in such a way as to refer Christ's activity in v. 19 to the *triduum mortis*. Selwyn, too, appears to have held that this was the case, though more ambiguously or tenuously:

In iii. 18 the datives σαρκί and πνεύματι are adverbial datives, and there is no example in N.T. of such a dative being the antecedent to a relative sentence. ... In iii. 19 ἐν ᾧ is not, therefore, dependent on πνεύματι, but on the preceding statement as a whole, namely Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. This would not exclude the view of those who, like Huther in Meyer's Commentary, assign the *Descensus* to the period immediately following the resurrection, for no precise note of time is given; but the ground they advance, viz. that ἐν ᾧ refers to the spiritual condition of Christ's risen life, is invalid.¹⁸⁶

Note that Selwyn specifically mentions the *descensus* in this connection, but he does not insist on the descent taking place in the *triduum mortis* between Christ's death and resurrection. To the contrary, he is explicitly open to the idea that the *descensus* could have taken place after Christ's resurrection since "no precise note of time is given."¹⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the third school, which focuses on the function of ἐν ᾧ as a phrase (rather than on ᾧ individually as a relative pronoun) and which also explicitly denies

185 Reicke, 113.

186 Selwyn, 315.

187 With regard to the participle πορευθεὶς, Selwyn held that it refers to a "definite 'going' to Hades at the time of His death." Selwyn, 200. Although he took this view, Selwyn still denied that these verses (whatever Scripture might say elsewhere) offer hope for those who die without having heard the Gospel, as can be seen in the passage quoted above in note 172 on page 97.

that πνεύματι serves as the exclusive antecedent to the relative pronoun, at least admits some possibility for the *descensus* interpretation.

Which of these three schools should be followed? It would be tempting to urge the first school (which takes πνεύματι as the antecedent of ᾧ) for the sake of simplicity, since, as Williams observed, “This would immediately rule out any interpretation which understands ἐν ᾧ καὶ πνεύματι as a reference to either Christ’s pre-existent spirit (at the time of Noah) or disembodied spirit (between his death and resurrection).”¹⁸⁸ In defense of the first school, the objection to it raised by Selwyn and Reicke (that πνεύματι is an “adverbial dative” or a “dative of reference” and therefore cannot be antecedent to ᾧ) is not unanswerable. Grudem was not only apparently able to find five instances where adverbial datives do serve as antecedents for relative pronouns but also suggested:

Selwyn’s objection... would be unpersuasive even without these examples. ... It would be similar to saying that *hōn*, ‘of whom’, in 3:3 cannot refer to ‘wives’ because there is no other example of a relative pronoun taking as its antecedent an articular feminine plural vocative—a claim that would be harder to disprove by examples than this one, in fact!¹⁸⁹

188 Martin Williams, 195.

189 Grudem, *1 Peter*, 227-228. More is quoted above from this passage in note 183 on page 102.

Beyond this, there are positive reasons for seeing πνεύματι as the antecedent. Kelly noted that “this is how the ancient commentators, to whom Greek was a native language, unhesitatingly took it,” proceeding to observe that the function of the phrase ἐν ᾧ elsewhere in 1 Peter (1:6; 2:12; 3:16; and 4:4) cannot “be advanced as a parallel, for in those passages no single noun stands out as the obvious antecedent as spirit does here.”¹⁹⁰ France somewhat stridently asserted, “It is doubtful whether anyone would have disputed this rendering, if it did not lead in a direction incompatible with their chosen exegesis,” and echoes Kelly concerning those other occurrences of ἐν ᾧ in 1 Peter: “Here the presence of an eligible antecedent immediately before ἐν ᾧ places a strong presumption in favour of its translation as a straightforward relative.”¹⁹¹ Dalton is well worth quoting at length on this point:

If ἐν ᾧ is taken as dependent on the previous πνεύματι, then it is the equivalent of ἐν πνεύματι. Now this expression is extremely frequent in the New Testament: it occurs more than forty times, apart from phrases which are the equivalent. Thus, when there is a relative, ‘in which’, following immediately after a noun, ‘spirit’, it is difficult to see how they can fail to be united in meaning. This remains true despite the frequency of the wider use of ἐν ᾧ in 1 Peter.¹⁹²

190 Kelly, 152.

191 France, 268-269.

192 Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 145.

Even some of those who ultimately belong to the third school cannot deny the power of the simplicity of this reading. Williams frankly states that “this interpretation is certainly possible.”¹⁹³ Goppelt concedes that it “is quite possible philologically” that “ἐν ᾧ is connected... with the preceding πνεῦμα.”¹⁹⁴

In the final analysis, though, as long as one does not *ignore* the phrase ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι which immediately precedes ἐν ᾧ, it matters very little which of the three schools one follows. “In any instance,” as Michaels observed, “the words ἐν ᾧ καὶ serve to link ζωοποιηθεὶς [sic] closely to the πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν that follows.”¹⁹⁵ Reicke explicitly attempted to sever that link by describing the whole μὲν... δὲ contrast in v. 18 as a “parenthesis in the sentence, inserted as a clearer explanation of the main action, but on the other hand based on well-known christological formulæ of an elementary character.”¹⁹⁶ Reicke appears to be suggesting that Peter only mentioned

193 Martin Williams, 195.

194 Goppelt, 255. However, due to his inability to see πνεύματι as anything other than instrumental on this reading and his insistence both (1) that the sense of the datives be parallel and (2) that σαρκί could not be instrumental, he was ultimately driven to the conclusion that “[o]ne must ... understand ἐν ᾧ, as in 1:6 and 4:4, as a conjunction.”

195 Michaels, *1 Peter*, 205.

196 Reicke, 107. Michaels, quoting Reicke, sets up a bit of a straw man by leaving out Reicke’s statement about the “well-known christological formulæ of an elementary character,” thereby leaving the reader to infer that Reicke attempted to explain both parts of the σαρκί / πνεύματι contrast as “clearer explanation of the main action.” If Reicke had made such an attempt, Michaels would have been correct in his rebuttal that “only the first half of the couplet... summarizes v. 18a; the second half carries the thought decisively forward.” As it is, though, Michaels’ criticism of Reicke misses the mark. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 206.

being put to death in the flesh in v. 18b as an aside in order to explain in more detail what he meant when he said that Christ suffered in v. 18a; further, that Peter only proceeded to mention being made alive in the spirit because “put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit” was a sort of set phrase—what Reicke calls a “well-known christological formulæ of an elementary character.” Reicke thus held ἐν ᾧ to refer “to ἅπαξ ἀπέθανεν in the previous sentence.”¹⁹⁷

It is difficult to determine whether Reicke’s suggestion concerning the parenthetical nature of the μὲν... δὲ contrast goes too far or does not go far enough. On the one hand, it seems strange beyond belief to suggest that Peter mentions the resurrection in this context only because it was part of a set phrase that Peter wanted to use in order to “explain” what he meant by ἔπαθεν (or, still more strange but as Reicke apparently preferred, ἀπέθανεν).¹⁹⁸ On the other hand, perhaps each of the participial clauses could constitute “a clearer explanation of the main action” for each of the finite verbs in this context. Specifically, θανατωθεῖς would be expounding ἔπαθεν, much as Reicke suggested. More speculatively, ζωοποιηθεῖς could be related to

197 Reicke, 118.

198 It is curious that Reicke himself appears to have preferred ἀπέθανεν, specifically using that particular Greek verb in his discussion of ἐν ᾧ both on page 113 and on page 118. On this reading, it is far from clear why Peter would need to give “a clearer explanation of the main action” since it would seem rather redundant to “explain” ἀπέθανεν with θανατωθεῖς. One could far more readily see the sense in unpacking the meaning of ἔπαθεν with the use of the more specific θανατωθεῖς.

ἵνα ὑμᾶς προσαγάγη τῷ θεῷ in a fashion not unlike Paul’s “raised for our justification.” That πορευθεῖς is connected with ἐκήρυξεν is not in serious dispute, but the question of whether these verbs refer to a descent into hell or an ascent into heaven remains to be considered later. On this view, ἐν ᾧ could refer to all of v. 18, but the referent could not conveniently exclude the resurrection as Reicke’s does. Space prohibits full consideration of this theory, but it would at least be an improvement upon Reicke’s, which posits an ancient author (who otherwise has written in such fine Greek that some see this very eloquence as evidence that Peter could not have written it himself) wasting words with expensive ink on expensive paper.

Regardless of how one takes this relative clause, then, a straightforward reading of the text implies if not insists that Christ’s activity in v. 19 took place after His resurrection, especially since v. 18 has just emphasized the resurrection.¹⁹⁹ It is difficult to avoid this conclusion, as Michaels mused, for “[e]ven the translations suggested by those trying to avoid the idea of a temporal sequence tend to imply just such a sequence. Only by further discussion—sometimes at considerable length—are

199 “The μέν-δέ construction that correlates these participles suggests that the emphasis is placed on the second element, so that Christ’s resurrection is the emphasis.” John Dennis, “Cosmology in the Petrine Literature and Jude,” in *Cosmology and New Testament Theology*, ed. Jonathan T. Pennington and Sean M. McDonough (New York: T&T Clark International, 2008), 162. Dennis cites BDF, §447; BDAG, s.v. “μέν;” as well as Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 137n56, who further observed that “1 Peter stands out among the books of the New Testament for the use it makes of this construction.”

commentators able to blunt the force of that apparent sequence.”²⁰⁰ This temporal sequence would at least preclude any *descensus* view which sees Christ preaching in the realm of the dead during the *triduum mortis*, but (as we saw in the first chapter) this is precisely the sort of *descensus* view assumed by PME advocates who appeal to 1 Peter 3:19 for support. As a result, at least the vast majority of the arguments that have actually been made for PME on the basis of 1 Peter must be discounted. However, this does not yet disprove that Christ made a proclamation to spirits imprisoned in the realm of the dead. It only establishes that such a proclamation would almost certainly have had to have taken place subsequent to His resurrection. Could Peter still be teaching in this passage that there is hope for the nescient in the form of PME?

3:19 ...τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ τῶν πνεύμασιν...²⁰¹

This phrase presents two exegetical difficulties: who are these spirits, and where are they imprisoned? On the standard *descensus* view, these spirits were seen as the disembodied souls of deceased human beings who are (or were) imprisoned in the

²⁰⁰ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 206.

²⁰¹ Again, the critical apparatus of the NA28 is reproduced here for the sake of convenience:

τ κατακεκλεισμενοις C z vg^{mss} sy^p; Aug | τ πνευματι Ϟ⁷²

It is particularly worth noting that the 28th edition no longer mentions the fact that Ambrosiaster and Miniscule 614 (together with a few other manuscripts) specifically replaced φυλακῇ with τῶν ἄδη. Elliott’s comments on this variant leave one with the impression that he suspects that this replacement was carried out precisely because φυλακῇ does not amply lend itself to the desired interpretation either of Ambrosiaster or of the scribes copying the text. Elliott, 657.

realm of the dead. Specifically, it was held that these should be viewed as Noah's contemporaries who perished in the flood, given the further elucidation on their identity which follows in v. 20. The current consensus, however, is that these spirits, in keeping with Jewish traditions that are most relevantly represented in 1 Enoch,²⁰² are either identified with the fallen angels described as בני־האלהים in Genesis 6:1-4 or perhaps identified with their progeny, הנפלים in the same passage.²⁰³ On this view, they are typically seen as imprisoned somewhere in one of the heavens, which were conceptualized as plural by the ancients, but these spirits are sometimes envisioned as imprisoned in the netherworld.²⁰⁴

202 For the Greek text, see Matthew Black, ed., *Apocalypsis Henochi Graece* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970). Three English translations have also been consulted. Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch or I Enoch: A New English Edition with Commentary and Textual Notes* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985). George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, trans., *1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation* (Minneapolis, MN Augsburg Fortress, 2012). Michael A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch: A New Edition in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

203 Sproul specifically rejected this interpretation based on his reading of Genesis 6, which sees the "sons of God" as "descendants of the line of Seth." R.C. Sproul, *1-2 Peter*, St. Andrew's Expositional Commentary (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 127. Feinberg similarly denies that Genesis 6 refers to angels, but he nevertheless notes that "resting the exegesis of one problem passage on the exegesis of another problem passage is a very risky hermeneutical procedure." Feinberg, 322-323. Grudem echoes the "godly (ultimately Messianic) line of Seth" view and argues, based on one citation from Philo a few citations from other Rabbinic literature, that "no uniform interpretation of this passage can be demonstrated for the first century AD." Grudem, *1 Peter*, 211-213.

204 For example, Best held that, "in the period between his death and resurrection Christ descended into the underworld where supernatural evil powers, the spirits, were held imprisoned; these powers were those who had enticed women to sin before the flood (Gen. 6:1-4)." Best, *1 Peter*, 140.

Concerning φυλακή, it is a simple matter to look at its usage throughout the New Testament and conclude that there are at least no other instances where φυλακή is used for a place of holding for the disembodied souls of the dead, so it is certainly not a synonym for ἄδης or שׂאול, a fact frequently observed in the commentaries.²⁰⁵ In a handful of cases, φυλακή refers either to the action or a period of keeping watch (e.g., Luke 2:8 and 12:38, respectively). In the majority of cases, φυλακή refers to a physical place where living humans are kept under watch or guarded by other living humans. This is even the case in Matthew 18's parable of the unforgiving servant, where one might argue that "prison" is used as a metaphor for hell or Hades. Φυλακή is used only when the servant throws one of his own debtors into prison (ἔβαλεν αὐτὸν εἰς φυλακὴν, v. 30). The servant's master, in his wrath, actually gives this unforgiving servant over to "torturers"²⁰⁶ (παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν τοῖς βασανισταῖς, v. 34). If φυλακή should be understood as a metaphor for Hades, then one might have expected Jesus to conclude, "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you if you cast your

205 For example, Kelly states that "the abode of the dead is nowhere else depicted as a gaol in Biblical or extra-canonical literature." Kelly, 155. See also Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 160. Achtemeier, 256. Schreiner, 187. Jobes, 243. Elliott, 657. Marshall, *1 Peter*, 127. Against this consensus, see Selwyn, 200. Selwyn's remarks are dealt with in note 209 on page 112 below. Reicke, who ostensibly held that φυλακή was somehow equivalent to the realm of the dead, pointed out that φυλακή never refers in the New Testament to "the body as a prison," contrary to Augustine's suggestion. Reicke, 53.

206 NASB. See also ESV footnote and the KJV's "tormenters." Thayer suggests that βασανιστής could simply refer to a jailer, this harsher term being used only "because the business of torturing was also assigned to him."

brother's soul down into Hades." Thus, to take φυλακή in this parable as a metaphor for the realm of the dead seems a bit "wide of the mark."²⁰⁷ To be fair, in light of this sense of "prison" as a place of holding, it cannot be denied that the realm of the dead is a sort of prison. Be that as it may, a certain conceptual affinity is not sufficient to establish that φυλακή refers to the realm of the dead in 1 Peter 3:19.

On the contrary, the one place in the New Testament where the word πνεῦμα occurs in connection with φυλακή is in Revelation 18:2, where "Babylon" is described as κατοικητήριον δαιμονίων καὶ φυλακή παντός πνεύματος ἀκαθάρτου, which clearly refers to a place of evil spirits and unclean animals and not to the realm of the dead.²⁰⁸

A similar idea can be found in Revelation 20:7, where Satan's release ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς αὐτοῦ is mentioned.²⁰⁹ Other passages also speak of evil spirits being restrained in some

207 Achtemeier, 256. It is his brief assessment of the attempt by Vogels to find in this parable "a reference to the realm of human dead," as Achtemeier put it. Heinz-Jürgen Vogels, *Christi Abstieg ins Totenreich und das Läuterungsgericht an den Toten*, Freiburger Theologische Studien 102 (Frieburg: Herder, 1976), 136, quoted in Achtemeier, 256.

208 Michaels suggested that the sense of φυλακή in Revelation 18:2 is "refuge or haven." Michaels, *1 Peter*, 207-208. He cited BDAG, s.v. "φυλακή," as if in support of this rendering, but BDAG suggests instead "haunt" for this verse and does not mention "refuge or haven" anywhere in the entry. As recorded by Pierce, "Michaels' understanding... finds little support in the primary sources nor is this theory of the 'spirits in refuge' widely accepted today." Pierce, 20.

209 Achtemeier (256) rightly takes exception to Selwyn (200), who adduces both of the above passages from Revelation, along with 2 Peter 2:4, as examples of "Sheol regarded as a prison-house." Neither Sheol nor Hades nor the dead are mentioned in any of these verses; rather, demons, Satan, and angels, respectively, are mentioned. It is perplexing that Selwyn, after having just distinguished (198-199) between "the prison of the angels" (δεσμωτήριον ἀγγέλων) in 1 Enoch 21 and "the various divisions in which the dead are assembled in Sheol" in 1 Enoch 22, should proceed on the very next page to ignore this distinction. In fairness, Satan's φυλακή in Revelation 20:7 is also described as a

fashion or another. 2 Peter 2:4 has God “casting down into Tartarus” (ταρταρώσας) “sinning angels” (ἀγγέλων ἀμαρτησάντων) “in chains of darkness” (σειραῖς ζόφου). In Jude 6, we are told that God “has kept watch over” (τετήρηκεν) certain angels “in eternal chains” (δεσμοῖς ἀϊδίοις).

These considerations already give us some indication that Christ’s proclamation τοῖς πνεύμασιν was not to the disembodied spirits of human beings but to spirits, plain and simple, just as the text plainly says. “A human being may have a spirit,” as Michaels notes, “but it is not normally said that one is a spirit, much less that a group of human beings collectively are ‘spirits’—even though this is done with ψυχή, or ‘soul,’ notably in 1 Peter itself.”²¹⁰ Rather, as observed by nearly all commentators, the plural πνεύματα is almost never used in the New Testament to refer to human beings.²¹¹ In

“pit” (ἄβυσσος) in 20:3, and ἄβυσσος is also apparently used to refer to the realm of the dead in Romans 10:7. More subtly, Reicke identifies φυλακή in both of the passages in Revelation “as a technical term for some subterranean custody compartment.” Reicke, 53. It is easy to see how Revelation 20:7 (φυλακή = ἄβυσσος in 20:3) and 2 Peter 2:4 (σειραῖς ζόφου ταρταρώσας) could be seen as subterranean, but Revelation 18:2 does not nearly so readily admit such interpretation.

210 Michaels, *1 Peter*, 207. Such a use of ψυχή occurs in the very next verse.

211 E.g., Achtemeier, 255. Best, *1 Peter*, 142-143. Davids, 139. Jobs, 250. Reicke not only noted up front that “living people cannot be termed πνεύματα,” but also observed that “πνεῦμα actually is not used generally about the dead: a preferable word... is ψυχή.” Reicke, 53-54. Against this consensus, see the curious case of Sproul, who suggested, “The Bible does use the term ‘spirit’ to refer to living people. We do it ourselves when we refer to living people as ‘souls.’” Sproul, 128. This suggestion already blurs the distinction between πνεῦμα and ψυχή, which Sproul proceeded to do quite blatantly and inaccurately when he said, “In fact, when God breathed into Adam His breath, man became a living *nephesh* or *pneuma*—spirit.” However, in both Genesis 2:7 (Ⓞ) and Paul’s allusion to it in 1 Corinthians 15:45, the phrase is ψυχὴν ζῶσαν, ψυχή being the normal gloss for נַפְשׁ in the LXX (e.g., *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “ψυχή,” 4:727). It is rather Christ Himself, the last Adam, Who has become πνεῦμα ζωοποιῶν.

fact, only one clear case where the plural refers to human beings is consistently cited in the literature.²¹² Hebrews 12:23 speaks of “the spirits of the righteous made perfect,” but here the presence of a qualifying genitive signifies that these are spirits which

Selwyn records the contention of some that “πνεύματα and ψυχαί had become interchangeable terms by the Christian era.” Selwyn, 198. This is borne out by, e.g., *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “πνεῦμα,” 3:803. In response, Selwyn considered New Testament usage and noted how frequently “πνεύματα is followed by a qualifying genitive,” concluding, “There is no trace of πνεύματα being used absolutely to connote ‘departed spirits.’” Selwyn, 199. Grudem’s objection to this is dealt with below, in both the main text and note 212. While acknowledging cases in 1 Enoch (9:3,10; 22:3) where “πνεῦμα is given as a synonym for ψυχή,” Reicke posited that this phenomenon was “clearly only because the translators needed a variant to ψυχή in order to construct a double expression such as τὰ πνεύματα τῶν ψυχῶν or τὰ πνεύματα αἱ ψυχαί, corresponding to Semitic terms like *nēshāmāh* and *rūāh*.” Reicke, 55.

212 Feinberg concedes “that this is probably the one uncontested NT use of it.” Feinberg, 320. Jobes actually demurs, “it is not completely clear that this is a reference to the deceased.” Jobes, 250. Best tentatively offers the final words of Jesus in Luke 23:46 and of Stephen in Acts 7:59 as verses which “will accommodate themselves to this idea” of πνεῦμα as “the surviving part of man,” but he himself hastens to add that “they do not entail” this idea. Best, *1 Peter*, 142. Moreover, both of these cases are singular and have qualifying genitives. The qualifying genitives are important because they mark the distinction made by Michaels, already quoted in the main text above. This distinction would have been helpful for Grudem, *1 Peter*, 206-207. Grudem (1) was writing in the same year as Michaels, (2) was far more insistent than either Best or Feinberg, and hence (3) offered many more alleged examples in addition to those already mentioned. In the New Testament, he cites Matthew 27:50 (κράξας φωνῆ μεγάλης ἀφῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα); John 19:30 (κλίνας τὴν κεφαλὴν παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα); 1 Corinthians 5:5 (εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῆ); 1 Corinthians 7:34 (ἵνα ᾗ ἁγία καὶ τῷ σώματι καὶ τῷ πνεύματι); 1 Corinthians 14:14 (τὸ πνεῦμά μου προσεύχεται); and James 2:26 (τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς πνεύματος νεκρὸν ἐστίν). In the Old Testament, he cites Ecclesiastes 12:7 (⚡ τὸ πνεῦμα ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, ὃς ἔδωκεν αὐτό) and Numbers 16:22 (⚡ θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός, but note ⚡, which clearly has a genitive construction in place of ⚡’s conjunction, as reflected in the ESV’s “God of the spirits of all flesh”). Space does not permit detailed examination of each of Grudem’s counterexamples, but the Greek has been provided here so that it can readily be seen that all of them are nullified by Michaels’ distinction. In all of these cases πνεῦμα is viewed as an impersonal thing belonging to a person (or viewed as a part of a person) rather than being viewed as a personal being. Grudem also cites Josephus, but more importantly, he posits that there are even a couple of cases in 1 Enoch where πνεῦμα “is used ‘without a defining genitive’ to refer to a ‘departed’

belong to human beings rather than spirits who are themselves beings.²¹³ Grudem protested that undue attention has been given to such genitives, for “the larger issue is not whether we can find examples of *pneuma* used without a ‘defining genitive’ ... to refer to human spirits, for that is an artificial distinction. The real issue is whether the context specifies more clearly what type of spirit is meant.”²¹⁴ Grudem thus seems to

human spirit.” Grudem points to 1 Enoch 22:6-7. After Enoch has seen “dead men making complaint” in v. 5 (although the English translations provided by Black [*The Book of Enoch*, 37] and by Nickelsburg and VanderKam [*1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation*, 42] both have “I saw the spirit of a dead man,” the Greek text provided in Black’s *Apocalypsis Henochi Graece* [33] is plural and does not contain the word πνεῦμα here, but only τεθέσθαι ἀνθρώπους νεκρούς ἐντυγχάνοντας; see also the comments and translation in Knibb [*Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 109]), Enoch asks the angel Raphael in v. 6 about what he has just seen, “Whose complaining spirit is this?” (Τοῦτο τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐντυγχάνον τίνοσ ἐστίν.) Raphael replies in v. 7, “This is the spirit that came out of Abel.” (Τοῦτο τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ ἐξεληθὸν ἀπὸ Ἀβελ.) Once again, Michaels’ distinction turns Grudem’s efforts on their head. Even here, where πνεῦμα refers to, in the words of Best already quoted above, “the surviving part of man,” it refers to just that: a part of a man, not the man’s whole being or essence. Grudem also points to 1 Enoch 20:6, specifically citing the Greek edition by Black (*Apocalypsis Henochi Graece*, 32), but the Greek text reads Σαριήλ, ὁ εἷς τῶν ἁγίων ἀγγέλων ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν πνευμάτων οἵτινες ἐπὶ τῷ πνεύματι ἀμαρτάνουσιν. This would seem at first glance to be nothing more than begging the question. This Greek text does not explicitly identify these spirits as humans and could even be referring to precisely those fallen angels who sinned against the spirit by taking human wives. However, Black, in his own English translation, has, “Sariel, one of the holy angels, who is in charge of the spirits which *lead men astray in the spirit*” (*The Book of Enoch*, 36-37). The italics are his own, but they are intended only to indicate a textual critical issue. Nickelsburg and VanderKam have “...in charge of the spirits who sin against the spirit,” but they indicate by a footnote that the Ethiopic text has “in charge of the spirits of the sons of men who sin against the spirit” (*1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation*, 40). Knibb has “...in charge of the *spirits of men who cause the spirits to sin*,” the italics again presumably indicating the textual difficulty (*Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 107). Obviously, the textual criticism of 1 Enoch cannot be entered into here, but note that neither the Greek text which Grudem himself cited nor any of the English translations consulted seem to support Grudem’s contention.

213 Revelation 22:6 could also be seen as an instance of the same sort of phenomenon as in Hebrews 12:23.

214 Grudem, *1 Peter*, 208. He specifically calls this “simply one example of an error in exegetical method which occurs frequently in Selwyn’s commentary—that of drawing conclusions about the meaning of words or phrases from insufficient data or from artificially created distinctions in style which really

have missed the theological import of the attention to the genitives and the distinction made thereby: human beings are not, fundamentally, spirits. Appeals to the occurrence of the word νεκρός in 1 Peter 4:6 not only beg the question²¹⁵ but also fly in the face of the linguistic data just presented.

These πνεύματα, then, should not be seen as the sort of spirits possessed by humans but should rather be seen as the sort of spirits by which humans are possessed in so many places in the New Testament narratives. Some variant of ἀκάθαρτος πνεῦμα occurs twenty-three times in the New Testament, and variants of πονηρός πνεῦμα occur eight times. Here is an illustrative example from each of the Synoptics and Acts: Matthew 10:1 (ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων ὥστε ἐκβάλλειν αὐτά);

have no significant influence on the meanings of the words used.” Ibid., 207. At least on one occasion, Grudem’s assessment of Selwyn along these lines seems correct—namely, Selwyn’s insistence that πνεύματι cannot be antecedent to ἐν ᾧ. See discussion above in note 172 on page 97. Grudem also names Dalton (but citing the earlier edition of Dalton’s work; the second edition, from which the relevant pages are cited in this note, was published the year after Grudem’s commentary) and France as culprits. See Selwyn, 199, discussed in note 211 on page 113. Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 152-153. France, 269.

215 Reicke, who made just such an appeal, fairly readily admitted this fact: “Whether such a connection can really be considered to exist... cannot be decided without an analysis of each passage by itself, but in any case we can probably lay it down that a connection of some kind is imaginable. The word νεκροί in iv. 6 thus makes it probable, with a certain presumption, that πνεύματα in iii. 19 refers to the souls of dead people, i.e. those destroyed by the Flood.” Note the terms “imaginable” and “presumption.” Reicke, 56. Upon considering a good deal of the linguistic evidence against this presumption, he retreated to the idea that “the fallen Angels and people from the time of Noah have been confused, purposely or not.” Ibid., 57. Such appeals suffer from a lack of substantive lexical agreement between 3:19 and 4:6. At nearly every point, the vocabulary and syntax are different. These appeals also require, as shall be argued in the next chapter, a poor understanding of 4:6.

Mark 3:11 (τὰ πνεύματα τὰ ἀκάθαρτα, ὅταν αὐτὸν ἐθεώρουν, προσέπιπτον αὐτῷ); Luke 7:21 (ἐθεράπευσεν πολλοὺς ἀπὸ... πνευμάτων πονηρῶν); Acts 5:16 (ὀχλουμένους ὑπὸ πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων). The most relevant verses, though, are the cases where no adjective or other modifier is used.²¹⁶ In Matthew 8:16, Jesus ἐξέβαλεν τὰ πνεύματα λόγῳ. In Luke 10:20, Jesus instructed his disciples not to rejoice in the fact ὅτι τὰ πνεύματα ὑμῖν ὑποτάσσεται. In light of these passages, Feinberg conceded that “*pneuma* is the normal word used in the NT to designate a spirit in the sense of some superhuman being.”²¹⁷ Nevertheless, he held that this only proves the mere possibility of such an understanding being at play for πνεύματα here in 1 Peter: “only context can establish that it actually has that meaning here.”²¹⁸ To this challenge, the reply is simple: v. 22 specifically mentions “angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to” Christ in the context of Him having gone into heaven (εἰς οὐρανὸν), using

216 These are specifically highlighted by Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 153. He also cited Matthew 12:45 and its parallel in Luke 11:26. Grudem objected that “all these instances have prior contextual specification.” Grudem, *1 Peter*, 208. However, no parallel instances can be found where the word πνεύματα, without immediate qualification, refers to human spirits. Perhaps it could be argued from Luke 24:36ff that πνεῦμα, in the singular, is so used, but this cannot be assumed. In any case, Grudem omits this passage from the long list of verses (already dealt with above in note 212 on page 114) in which he purports to find such usage; to be fair, he is explicit that his list is not exhaustive.

217 Feinberg, 320.

218 Feinberg, 321.

the exact same aorist participle (πορευθεῖς) which is used here in v. 19 to refer to his having gone to these spirits.²¹⁹

Up until this point, nothing about either the exegesis of Genesis 6 or the possibility of an allusion to 1 Enoch has been assumed, but now both must be briefly considered. Full exegesis of Genesis 6:1-4 cannot be attempted here,²²⁰ but at least the identity of the בני־האלהים must be considered. There are three main views. As has been seen already, some influential voices suggest that this phrase refers to those from the godly line of Seth.²²¹ Others refer it to rulers of men, especially, in more recent scholarship, to the divine kings of the ancient Near East who were at least so-styled (in the singular and with reference to a particular local deity) as individuals.²²² All concede,

219 The meaning of πορευθεῖς is considered separately below, but the repetition is telling.

220 Commentaries consulted include Franz Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis*, trans. Sophia Taylor, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888), 222-234. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, trans. Israel Abrahams, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1961), 290-307. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 135-147. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 261-272. Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 1996), 320-339. Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 115-120. C. John Collins, *Reading Genesis Well: Navigating History, Poetry, Science, and Truth in Genesis 1-11* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 185-194.

221 See note 203 on page 110 for the views of Sproul, Feinberg, and Grudem. This is also the view of Matthews, 329, who points to Augustine, Luther, and Calvin.

222 This is the view advocated by Meredith G. Kline, "Divine Kingship and Genesis 6:1-4," *Westminster Theological Journal* 24 (1962): 187-204. See also the important article by David J.A. Clines, "The Significance of the 'Sons of God' Episode (Genesis 6:1-4) in the Context of the 'Primeval History' (Genesis 1-11)," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 13 (1979): 33-46. Clines combined the best of this second view with the angelic view.

however, that the most ancient view, which also happens to be the majority view among modern scholars,²²³ is that the phrase refers to fallen angels.²²⁴

Although it might be overly generous to call it an “exegesis” of Genesis 6,²²⁵ no one disputes that 1 Enoch 6:2 has οἱ ἄγγελοι υἱοὶ οὐρανοῦ where Genesis 6:2 has בני-האלהים (οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ).²²⁶ The book discusses at some length the sin and subsequent fate of these fallen angels. Enoch (of whom Genesis 5:24 says only that “God took him,” noting that he “walked with God,” leaving the reader to surmise that he did not die), in this book which bears his name, is supposedly sent from God’s presence to

223 Noted as such by Cassuto, 292. Clines, 34. Wenham specifically counts Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen among the early Christian advocates of this interpretation. Wenham, 139.

224 Delitzsch, *Genesis*, 226, suggested that some sort of demonic possession is probably in view, and Kline, 187, admitted that this relieved some of the difficulty with this view, the main question being how humanity could be punished when angels were at fault. Hamilton, 263, himself agnostic on the issue, pointed out that this difficulty hardly disproves the angelic theory since, at any rate, the animals are clearly punished for human sin; in the same vein, he brought up the punishment that fell upon the people of Israel for David’s sin. The other main difficulty (mentioned by, e.g., Waltke, 116) comes from the lips of Jesus in Matthew 22:30, which seems to imply that the angels in heaven do not marry. Jude 6 seems to suggest that perhaps it is just that “in heaven” clause which is the catch, for these angels abandoned τὸ ἴδιον οἰκητήριον. Cf. 1 Enoch 15:3, 7. Delitzsch, *Genesis*, 225, used Jesus’ words precisely to show that these were “unnatural relations with women” and suggested, on the basis of Jude 6-7, that these fallen angels seeking sex with women were just the reverse of the men of Sodom who sought σάρκα ἐτέρα. Cassuto, 294, mentioned an interesting Jewish tradition in this connection: “although the ministering angels do not beget offspring, the demons do procreate.” Wenham, 140, reflecting on how the ancients commonly conceived of the gods conceiving children with human wives, opined that perhaps the real reason why “the modern reader finds this story incredible” is simply “a materialism that tends to doubt the existence of spirits, good or ill.”

225 “The ‘angel’ interpretation is.... assumed in the earliest Jewish exegesis (e.g., the books of 1 Enoch 6:2ff; Jubilees 5:1)....” Wenham, 139.

226 Black, *Apocalypsis Henochi Graece*, 21.

proclaim God's judgment against these fallen angels (12:3ff). When they hear this message, they appeal to Enoch to intercede on their behalf before God (13:4ff). Enoch does this, but God commissions him to go back and tell these fallen angels that their fate is sealed (14:1ff).

In 1 Enoch's retelling of the story of the בני־האלהים, they are sometimes called angels (e.g., οἱ ἄγγελοι in 10:7), sometimes watchers (e.g., τῶν ἐγρηγόρων in 10:15), and sometimes spirits (e.g., τὰ πνεύματα in 15:7). Reicke argued along several different lines for an allusion to 1 Enoch in 1 Peter 3:19.²²⁷ Two of them are particularly relevant at this juncture. One is that, while φυλακή does not appear in any of the extant Greek texts of 1 Enoch, the binding or imprisonment of these spirits is very frequently mentioned using other conceptually related terminology, especially throughout chapters 10, 18, and 21.²²⁸ The other is his observation that πνεύματα "is probably not used of the beings from the Flood in any other place in early Christian and related literature than here in 1 Pet. and the *Book of Enoch*. In other places these beings are called »Angels«, »Watchers«, »Giants« &c., but not πνεύματα."²²⁹ What is more, he found that "πνεύματα

227 Reicke, 59-70. One interesting fact that he presented is that "Tertullianus fought to get the book regarded as canonical." Reicke, 68.

228 Reicke, 66. The main terms used are δεσμοτήριον (another word for "prison" used in Matthew 11:2; Acts 5:21, 23; 16:26) and δέω (the verb used, e.g., in Mark 3:27 for the binding of the strong man).

229 Reicke, 61. He had just finished an argument, begun on the previous page, to the effect that Peter's use of πνεῦμα here could not be adequately explained "by reference to any internal, logical motive."

is used... not of the Angels who continued to be good, who sometimes, however, are called ἐγρήγοροι, »Watchers«, exactly as their fallen brothers.”²³⁰

“Of the writing of books there is no end,” so much more could be said, for example, about the many speculations concerning the specific location of the prison based on intertestamental Jewish literature.²³¹ Nevertheless, for our purposes, the foregoing should be sufficient to establish not just the possibility but the probability that demonic powers of some sort are meant by τὰ ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύματα in 1 Peter 3:19 rather than the disembodied spirits of the deceased. As has already been noted, this has somewhat recently emerged as the consensus view. If this consensus view is correct, then there is no reason to think that Peter is here teaching anything like a PME doctrine which might offer hope for the nescient. However, in spite of the arguments advanced thus far, additional clues from the text might yet indicate that τὰ ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύματα are the spirits of deceased human beings after all and might yet thereby salvage a PME view. What, then, does the phrase “going, He preached” signify?

230 Reicke, 59.

231 See brief consideration by Reicke, 115-118. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 177-182. Most recently, an entire book dedicated to such an examination has appeared in Chad T. Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ: 1 Peter 3:18-22 in Light of Sin and Punishment Traditions in Early Jewish Christian Literature*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament · 2, Reihe 305 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

3:19 ...πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν...

Do these words portray Christ descending into the realm of the dead and preaching the good news of the Gospel to those whom He met there? What has already been said should at least make clear that such a reading needs to be argued rather than assumed. Wherever Christ is here said to be “going,” He went there after His resurrection. Although πορευθεὶς could theoretically be used for “descending” since it conveys the idea of movement generally, there are at least no other cases in the New Testament literature where it refers to “descending” specifically. The preferred word for that concept was καταβαίνω, as in Ephesians 4:9, discussed in the previous chapter. If anything, πορεύομαι in the New Testament carries the opposite connotation of “ascending” since it was used of Christ going into heaven after His resurrection not only in narratives (Acts 1:10, 11; see also, e.g., John 16:28, πορεύομαι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, and compare with John 20:17, ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα) but also right here in 1 Peter 3. Immediately after another mention of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (v. 21, using ἀνάστασις; cf. ζωοποιέω in v. 18), it says that He is at the right hand of God, πορευθεὶς εἰς οὐρανὸν, with angels, authorities, and powers subjected to Him. Nothing about

πορεύομαι particularly supports the *descensus* view, then, but this use for the ascension in the same context counts specifically against such a view.²³²

In the Gospels, κηρύσσω most often refers to the proclamation that the reign of God is at hand. The most relevant example of this is Christ's own command to His disciples in Matthew 10:7—πορεύμενοι δὲ κηρύσσετε λέγοντες ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. Indeed, the rule of God over and among His people is good news for His people who trust in Him. Thus, when Jesus went into Galilee and began His ministry, Mark 1:14 describes His activity as κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ, which Good News, as the next verse specifies, is that ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. More direct evidence can be found in Matthew 4:23 and 9:35, where the Gospel which Jesus is said to be κηρύσσων is specifically identified as τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας. Likewise, in Luke

232 Reicke suggested that, “[i]f the meaning was that Christ preached during His Ascension, the present participle ought to have been used. Yet Christ cannot first have ascended and then preached to these spirits: no one is ready to assume anything like that.” Reicke, 65. Best echoed that “we should more correctly expect a present participle rather than an aorist.” Best, *1 Peter*, 141. However, Dalton pointed out that “the aorist participle does not necessarily refer to an action prior to that of the main verb,” and that this wording “simply means that Christ went on a journey (to the area of the heavens).” Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 162. Similarly, Elliott held that “*having gone* is linked directly with *spirits in prison* and completes the initial phrase (*having gone... to the spirits in prison*), which is then followed by the main clause initiated by the finite verb ‘announced’ (*ekēryxen*): ‘he announced to these (spirits) who once disobeyed.’” Elliott, 651. The idea could thus easily be (contra Reicke) that Christ first ascended to one of the lower heavens where these spirits were imprisoned before ascending to the highest heaven and to the right hand of the Father: “In the course of his ‘having gone’ (*poreutheis*) to God in the highest heaven (v 22b), Christ had passed through the lower heavens and ‘had gone’ (*poreutheis*) to the disobedient spirits in the second or nether heaven with an announcement of their final condemnation.” *Ibid.*, 658.

8:1, Jesus is κηρύσσων καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ (see also 9:2). The reign of God over and among His people with Jesus as their anointed King was also the focal point of the apostolic message in the book of Acts (8:5; 20:25; cf. 5:42, where the verb is εὐαγγελίζομαι), especially seen in the concluding verse, where the curtain is drawn on Paul κηρύσσων τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διδάσκων τὰ περὶ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.²³³

233 This focus on the rule of God as the content of the good news that was preached preempts discussion of κηρύσσω as, e.g., “the ‘heralding’ of the good news of salvation” (Elliott, 660), “preaching the gospel of repentance and forgiveness” (France, 271), or “the proclamation of salvation in Christ and the Christian message.” Goppelt, 257. Goppelt followed this last statement by suggesting that “many representatives of the angelological interpretation of the passage assume that though Enoch preached judgment, Christ preached salvation,” but Goppelt named not a single advocate for such a view. He did acknowledge, however, that the majority see the proclamation as one of “rejection and dethronement through [Christ’s] exaltation.” Nevertheless, he held that such a view “stands in conflict with what these πνεύματα are supposed to encounter, which is the saving proclamation of Christ.” Ibid. Michaels advocated almost precisely the same understanding of Christ’s proclamation that is being advocated here when he observed, “κηρύσσειν in the NT usually refers either to Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom of God or his disciples’ proclamation of the good news of his death and resurrection,” proceeding to make a remark about how “Jesus directed the power of the Kingdom of God to set free those who were demon-possessed.” Michaels, *1 Peter*, 209. Later, he wrote of the spirits that “[t]heir kingdom was shaken by Jesus’ ministry.” Ibid., 210. However, as Davids observed, Michaels “weakens his argument when he takes an unusual meaning for ἐν φυλακῇ.” Davids, 141. Michaels ultimately suggested that “Christ’s proclamation to [the spirits]... may simply have been that their ‘prison,’ or ‘refuge,’ was no longer inviolate. ... Perhaps the proclamation is more accurately described as one of ‘domestication,’ or ‘taming,’ by which those formerly ‘protected’ from the presence of God are now invaded by it and made (however unwillingly) subjects of Christ the Lord.” Michaels, *1 Peter*, 210. Concerning the nature of the proclamation, the primary difference between Michaels’ understanding and that offered here is the attention given to the dynamic nature of the noun βασιλεία, better expressed in English with “rule” or “reign” than with the more static “kingdom.” To say “Christ preached the kingdom of God” probably obscures much of the force that is laid bare when the same Greek phrase is expressed in English with “Christ announced the rule of God”: and this is exactly what Christ did announce to these evil spirits.

This rule of God is not good news, however, for the evil spirits whom it overthrows or displaces. It seems significant, in this connection, that the verb here in 3:19 is κηρύσσω and not εὐαγγελίζομαι as in 4:6. Where εὐαγγελίζομαι necessarily entails a more positive message, κηρύσσω at least affords a more neutral understanding. The subjection of angels, authorities, and powers at Christ's ascension (3:22) could be seen partly²³⁴ as the outcome Christ's proclamation of the rule of God to these fallen angels. This seems to hold true whether or not πορευθείς in v. 19 refers to the ascension.

There are also noteworthy parallels in 1 Enoch again. While Enoch's message to the condemned fallen angels as recorded in 1 Enoch is nowhere described with the verb κηρύσσω, his initial commission is given as πορεύου καὶ εἶπε τοῖς ἐγγηγόροις in 12:4 and, in its fulfillment, as πορευθεὶς εἶρηκα πᾶσιν αὐτοῖς in 13:3, using the same aorist participle that occurs in 1 Peter 3:19 and 3:22. Reicke's thoughts on this point are provocative:

Nowhere else in the N.T. Epistles is there a single example of the pleonastic use of πορεύομαι with a finite verb, corresponding to the Semitic use of *hlk* which we otherwise know from the Gospels written in a more popular style and

²³⁴ It seems unlikely that these fallen angels would exhaust the categories mentioned in v. 22: neither every angel nor every authority nor every power was in rebellion prior to Christ's ascension. Many angels never rebelled and had always remained in subjection. Thus, the proclamation would better be seen as contributing to the subjection than seen as causing it across the board.

coloured by Semitic idioms. And just 1 Pet. is written in a particularly careful Greek, so that one must wonder why the author has used this construction.²³⁵

Nothing like dependence could be suggested on these grounds, but it seems safe to posit that 1 Enoch might have somehow influenced the wording here in 1 Peter.

It seems most likely, then, that Christ's proclamation τοῖς πνεύμασιν was not one in which any of them would have taken comfort. It is simply not the case that κηρύσσω implies a hopeful proclamation, and while the proclamation of the rule of God offers solace to those who trust in Christ for salvation, it offers none to disobedient spirits, which is precisely how Peter has proceeded to describe them in v. 20. Christ's πορευθείς in connection with this proclamation would be better understood as an ascent into heaven than as a descent into the realm of the dead, further distancing Peter's teaching here from any PME teaching. In any case, the evidence so far suggests that both the journey and the proclamation should be seen as subsequent to the resurrection. Perhaps a case could be made for placing the *descensus* after the resurrection,²³⁶ but the typical case made by PME advocates, as we have already seen in chapter one, assumes that the journey and proclamation referred to in 1 Peter 3:19

²³⁵ Reicke, 64.

²³⁶ Selwyn cited Huther as one who did this. See note 186 and relevant quotation on page 103. None of the sources directly consulted have argued for such a position.

occurred during the *triduum mortis*, between Christ's death and resurrection.²³⁷

However, there are a number of statements in v. 20 that could still theoretically point toward a different timing and audience than has thus far been argued.

3:20 ...ἀπειθήσασιν ποτε...

So far, we have been suggesting that Christ, after His resurrection and as a part of His ascension to the right hand of the Father, proclaimed the kingdom of God to evil spirits whose subjection to Him is mentioned in v. 22. However, it has been argued that quite a different timing for Christ's proclamation, a timing well before even His incarnation, is indicated grammatically by ἀπειθήσασιν in v. 20. Moreover, it has been argued that ἀπειθέω lexically indicates human rebellion and that the relationship between ἀπειθήσασιν and πνεύμασιν therefore requires that πνεύμασιν really does refer to human beings. Ultimately, these suggestions do little to undermine the answer being proposed to the fundamental question we are asking about the fate of those who

237 It is possible that not every PME advocate has explicitly taught a *triduum mortis* context, but at least the vast majority assume it. Among the ancients, this context is explicitly stated by Origen (note 24 on page 19) and Cyril of Alexandria (note 33 on page 21), and it is clearly assumed by Athanasius' statement that Christ's body was ἐν μνημείῳ... ὅτε αὐτὸς ἐπορεύθη... κηρῶσαι καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν (note 28 on page 20). Among the more modern PME advocates, this *triduum mortis* context is explicitly taught by Egbert C. Smyth (note 52 on page 28), strongly implied by Augustus Briggs (note 60 on page 30), and forthrightly stated by J.H. Leckie (note 62 on page 31).

have never heard the Gospel, but they could at least undermine the basis for that answer.

To support his contention that Christ preached through Noah, Grudem has suggested that ἀπειθήσασιν should be considered an adverbial participle; more specifically, he believed that it indicates the timing of Christ's proclamation: "when they formerly disobeyed."²³⁸ One would normally expect an attributive adjective in postposition to be arthrous if its antecedent is arthrous (as πνεύμασιν is in v. 19). It is not quite a universal rule, though, as Grudem himself acknowledged, citing two sections of BDF.²³⁹ One of the exceptions can be found in BDF §416: "The supplementary participle with verbs of perception and cognition."²⁴⁰ The other exception is more relevant for 1 Peter 3:20:

If a substantive has two or more qualifying adjuncts, the intermediate position (i.e. between article and substantive) of all of them often becomes cumbersome and clumsy so that there is a tendency to distribute them, i.e. some before and some after the substantive... The repetition of the article with those in postposition is not generally required (especially after a substantive with verbal

²³⁸ Grudem, *1 Peter*, 236.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 234.

²⁴⁰ In attempting to provide counterexamples to Grudem's suggestion that ἀπειθήσασιν must be arthrous if it is adjectival, Williams cited Acts 7:56, θεωρῶ τοὺς οὐρανοὺς διηνοιγμένους ("I see the heavens having been opened"). Martin Williams, 199. Note that Wallace explicitly identifies διηνοιγμένων in this verse as a predicate participle. Wallace, 618. Even if it should be understood as an attributive adjective, though, the fact that the verb is θεωρεῖν makes this participle of διανοίγειν fall under a category of exceptions (it would be a supplementary participle with a verb of perception) already admitted by Grudem, *1 Peter*, 234.

power), but only in those cases where the attributive in postposition receives emphasis (implies contrast) or where ambiguity is to be avoided.²⁴¹

In other words, cramming more than one modifier between the article and the substantive might be stylistically undesirable. In such cases, one or more modifiers might be moved to the postposition without the normally expected article accompanying. It is at least worth asking whether some such phenomenon is happening in the phrase in question: τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν ἀπειθήσασιν ποτε. Could ἐν φυλακῇ serve as the modifier in the intermediate position, with the anarthrous attributive ἀπειθήσασιν being pushed into postposition?

Regardless of the answer to that question, Grudem's argument that ἀπειθήσασιν must be adverbial fails. Even if it were utterly impossible for ἀπειθήσασιν to be functioning as an attributive adjective in v. 20,²⁴² this would still not necessarily mean

241 BDF §269. At least another two (Luke 12:28 and Hebrews 4:12) of the five counterexamples proposed by Williams fall under this category of exceptions. Martin Williams, 199.

242 "Even among the examples which fall in the categories of exceptions noted by BDF, in most cases the anarthrous adjectival participle will follow immediately after the noun it modifies, and 2 Peter 1:18 (with the verb of perception 'we heard') is the only example, even from those in the exceptional categories, where I found the participle separated from its antecedent by the main verb of the sentence, as it is in 1 Peter 3:19-20. Thus there may be no clearly parallel example anywhere else in the New Testament which would justify the translation 'who formerly disobeyed'." Grudem, *1 Peter*, 234. Grudem himself, in a critique of Selwyn (discussed above in note 183 on page 102), suggested that "it is exegetically illegitimate to demand parallel examples which are so narrowly specified that one would not expect to find many, if any, examples," (Grudem, *1 Peter*, 228), yet here he is requiring a parallel example of an anarthrous adjectival participle in postposition (and not pushed into postposition by the presence of multiple modifiers) with an arthrous antecedent from which it is separated by the main verb of a sentence, which main verb cannot be a verb of perception or cognition.

that it is adverbial. The very grammar which Grudem used to make his case actually indicated rather that an anarthrous participle in postposition with an arthrous antecedent, if adjectival, should be considered a predicate adjective.²⁴³ Grudem needed to show that ἀπειθήσασιν cannot be adjectival, but all that his argument could possibly show is that ἀπειθήσασιν cannot be in the attributive position. Granted, “the predicate participle is rare,”²⁴⁴ but that is hardly sufficient to disprove that it occurs here.²⁴⁵

A further problem with Grudem’s argument is that, even on the assumption that ἀπειθήσασιν is adverbial, the temporal understanding which Grudem proffers is hardly the only possible one. For example, it might be causal: “He proclaimed to the spirits *because* they were disobedient long ago.”²⁴⁶ This causal reading is made less likely, but not impossible, by the fact that “[t]he causal participle normally *precedes* the verb it

243 Grudem, *1 Peter*, 233f, cited BDF §270: “An attributive adjective (participle) when used with an arthrous substantive... if placed in postposition... must have its own article (ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἀγαθός).” Grudem failed to note that it is clearly stated, in this same section of BDF, that “if the adjective does not take intermediate position and has no article of its own, it is predicate: Jn 5:36 ἔχω τὴν μαρτυρίαν μείζω = ἡ μαρ. ἣν ἔχω μείζων ἐστίν.” Note especially that when BDF here rephrased John 5:36 to provide clarification of the example being given, it used precisely the sort of construction which Grudem was attempting to forbid: the arthrous antecedent μαρτυρία is separated by the main verb ἔχω (as well as the relative pronoun ἣν) from the postpositive, anarthrous adjective μείζων. The only difference is that μέγας (here in the comparative μείζων) is a pure adjective.

244 Wallace, 617.

245 Martin Williams, 199, for example, says that it “is best understood as an adjectival participle (in the predicate position) modifying the dative πνεύμασιν.”

246 Schreiner, 191, and Achtemeier, 262, suggest that ἀπειθήσασιν is a causal adverbial participle. See ESV, main text, although the footnote also notes “when” as a possibility.

modifies.”²⁴⁷ Still, even if ἀπειθήσασιν is both adverbial and temporal, “[t]he *aorist* participle is normally, though by no means always, *antecedent* in time to the action of the main verb.”²⁴⁸ It is true, though, that “when the aorist participle is related to an *aorist* main verb, the participle will often be contemporaneous (or simultaneous) to the action of the main verb,”²⁴⁹ and the main verb here (ἐκήρυξεν) is aorist. In other words, it is grammatically possible that the proclamation took place concurrently with the disobedience in the days of Noah. Nevertheless, in order to overthrow the argument for a post-resurrection proclamation laid out above, Grudem’s argument would have to prove not only (1) that ἀπειθήσασιν *cannot* be adjectival and (2) that it *must* be temporal but also (3) that the temporal nature should not be understood thus: “He proclaimed to the spirits *after* they disobeyed.” At best, Grudem has only effectively argued (1) that ἀπειθήσασιν cannot be in the attributive position, (2) that, *if* it is adverbial, it is *possibly* temporal, and (3) that, *if* it is temporal, it is *possibly* concurrent.²⁵⁰ This does not seem

247 Wallace, 631. Emphasis original.

248 Wallace, 624. Emphasis original. See also BDF §339: “The notion of relative past time, however, is not at all necessarily inherent in the aorist participle.”

249 Wallace, 624. Emphasis original. It is just possible that, due to this ambiguity of timing between the aorist main verb and the aorist participle, ποτέ was used after the participle partly to clarify that the action of the participle was not simultaneous with the action of the main verb.

250 Grudem essentially conceded that he has only established a certain relative plausibility for his reading: “These grammatical considerations open at least the possibility and perhaps the strong probability that we should translate *apeithesasin pote* in 1 Peter 3:20 adverbially - ‘when they formerly disobeyed.’” Grudem, *1 Peter*, 235f. He went on to state that “it is not merely grammatically possible, but it is grammatically preferable to the translation ‘who formerly disobeyed.’” *Ibid.*, 236. This last

sufficient to overthrow the considerations in the previous discussion, and even if it did, it seems unlikely that a proclamation to Noah's contemporaries while they were still living could provide any hope for those who have already died without having heard the Gospel.

Grudem has also suggested that the disobedience mentioned here could only refer to human disobedience since Genesis 6:5-13 "clearly emphasizes human sin, and human sin alone, as the reason God brings the flood upon the earth. ...1 Peter 3 speaks not of those who disobeyed long before the flood (as angels did), but of those who disobeyed precisely when the ark was being built."²⁵¹ Kelly called this "[a]n at first sight insuperable objection... for the transgression of the 'sons of God' presumably took place ages before the Flood," but "the two events became inextricably connected in the uncritical minds of the apocryphal writers... indeed one of them (Test. Napht. iii. 5) actually describes them as contemporary."²⁵² Also, Elliott observed that, in Jewish

statement neglects the possibility of a predicate participle.

251 *Ibid.*, 215. Note that Grudem was arguing for a proclamation through Noah during Noah's own lifetime and to Noah's living contemporaries. However, when he pointed to ἀπειθέω as evidence in favor of an anthropic view of πνεύμασιν in v. 19, he is in the company of PME advocates such as Beare, 146: "When he describes 'the spirits in prison' as 'those that disobeyed in the days of Noah', he is evidently thinking of the whole generation of mankind that perished in the flood." Goppelt, 258, similarly states that "the angels of Gen. 6:1-4 were 'disobedient' not 'in the days of Noah' (so 1 Pet. 3:20), but long before that."

252 Kelly, 154f.

literature, human disobedience took a back seat to that of the spirits in explaining the Flood:

The verb “disobey” is the author’s summary term for the rebellion of the angelic spirits portrayed in Gen 6:1-4 and variously described in the Flood tradition as transgression, illicit intercourse, boundary violation, impurity, or sin. According to this tradition, human sin followed that of the angel-spirits, but primary attention is directed to the transgression of the angel-spirits as the instigation of all subsequent evil eradicated by the Flood.²⁵³

To these observations it should be added that the disobedience of these spirits, whenever it began, presumably did not cease simply because Noah was born or because construction began on the Ark. Rather, their disobedience extended well into the days of Noah. The activity of evil spirits in the Gospels and Acts,²⁵⁴ to say nothing of certain passages in other epistles,²⁵⁵ could even suggest that perhaps their disobedience continued into apostolic times. Indeed, even today, some evil spirits remain active in at least some sense, just as 1 Peter 5:8 warns: “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”²⁵⁶

253 Elliott, 658. There do not appear to be any uses of the verb ἀπειθέω in the passages he cited in footnotes.

254 E.g., Mark 1:21-28; 5:1-13; Acts 5:16; 19:11-20.

255 See especially Ephesians 2:2; 6:12. Perhaps in the same vein, see Galatians 4:8-9 and Colossians 2:15.

256 Grudem is among those who have suggested that this activity of the devil makes a proclamation of victory over (or condemnation to) angels unlikely. Grudem, *1 Peter*, 232f. Since the devil is here prowling around like a roaring lion, it might seem as though the evil spirits have not really been imprisoned, condemned, or subjected as has been suggested by the interpretation presented above, but there is no disagreement about either the interpretation of 1 Peter 3:22 or the interpretation of other passages (e.g., Luke 10:17-20) which teach the subjection of Satan and his minions. If there

A brief word about the adverb ποτέ seems necessary. The ESV’s “they formerly did not obey” might be taken to imply “but now they obey.” One might similarly expect from the NASB’s “who once were disobedient” or the NIV’s “who were disobedient long ago” that the text would go on to say “but now they are obedient.” Even these English glosses for ποτέ (“formerly,” “once,” and “long ago”) do not in themselves entail that different conditions would pertain later, but the use of ποτέ in Greek storytelling makes it similar to the English phrase “once upon a time” in this context and, therefore, makes it an even less likely candidate to indicate a subsequent reversal in this verse.²⁵⁷

It does not explicitly deny or in any way preclude the possibility of change in

were any real contradiction between 3:19 and 5:8, then a contradiction between 5:8 and 3:22 (together with other passages) would seem completely unavoidable, but brief examination will show that there is no actual contradiction between any of these. The concern in 1 Peter 5:8 is not demon possession or oppression of the sort confronted by Jesus and the Apostles or of the sort possibly mentioned in Genesis 6. Rather, the concern is that believers might forget or otherwise neglect their gracious calling from God and engage in some kind of sinful behavior. The point in 3:19 is not that these fallen angels will not be able to cause any problems for believers in the present. On the contrary, the context (3:13-17; 4:12-17) indicates that believers should expect suffering, and the point in 3:19 is that these fallen angels are somehow restrained and that the victory and vindication of Christ should give Christians confidence in the face of that suffering.

²⁵⁷ So Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 164: “This adverb could be translated ‘once upon a time’. It involves, of itself, no comparison with any later event.” Selwyn, 201, also had held that, by means of ποτέ, “[t]he Apostle is drawing on ancient lore here exactly as he did in iii. 5, 6.” See also Franco Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, s.v. ποτε: “esp. at the beginning of fables, accounts etc.: οὕτω ποτ’ ἦν μῦς καὶ γαλῆ once upon a time, there was a mouse and a cat.”

circumstances, either.²⁵⁸ It simply does not imply here that the spirits who heard Christ's proclamation repented.²⁵⁹

Thus, there still appears to be insufficient evidence that Peter taught in this passage anything like a PME doctrine. Instead, Peter taught that Christ made a proclamation to spirits whose disobedience in ancient times led up to the Flood. These spirits, based on the evidence seen so far, were most likely the sort of spirits mentioned in v. 22: angels, authorities, and powers. Those who “disobeyed once upon a time” are probably the sons of God (בני־האלהים) of Genesis 6:1-4 which were identified as fallen angels in Jewish tradition at the time. However, there is one more important line of evidence left to consider in v. 20 which could still point to a human audience as the recipients of Christ's proclamation in v. 19: does the fact that “God's patience was waiting” imply that He was waiting for human beings to repent?

258 “In N.T., when ποτέ refers to the past, it is always used in this sense [of ‘once upon a time’], or to point to a contrast between past and present conditions of affairs (as in 1 Pet. ii. 10).” Selwyn, 201. The wording in that passage, however, only serves to reinforce that ποτέ does not necessarily entail such a contrast, even if it anticipates such a contrast. On the contrary, the contrast should be stated, as it is in 1 Peter 2:10: οἱ ποτε οὐ λαὸς, νῦν δὲ λαὸς θεοῦ.

259 See also the suggestion in note 249 on page 131 that perhaps ποτέ was used here partly to clarify that the action of the aorist participle did in fact precede the action of the main verb. Dalton examined the text of the Vulgate here (*qui increduli fuerant aliquando*, “who had formerly been unbelieving”) and even conceded, “If the context required it, the participle ἀπειθησάντων could certainly have a pluperfect meaning.” Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 164. No one appears to have argued or even explicitly asserted, however, that the context requires a pluperfect meaning for this aorist participle. In all likelihood, Jerome's late-4th-century Latin translation here merely reflects the immense influence of the interpretation urged by the Alexandrians.

3:20 ...ὅτε ἠἀπεξεδέχετο ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ μακροθυμία ἐν ἡμέραις Νῶε
κατασκευαζομένης κιβωτοῦ...²⁶⁰

Grudem has suggested that “the word *apekdechomai*, ‘waiting’, has the nuance of hopeful or expectant waiting for something to happen,”²⁶¹ and that, “because neither the Old nor New Testaments teach that fallen angels ever have a chance to repent,”²⁶² the spirits must be those of human beings. For the sake of argument, suppose that it were true that the “eagerness” of ἀπεκδέχομαι implied that God was waiting for human beings to repent. Even if “God’s patience was waiting” for human beings to repent in v. 20, would that be sufficient to establish that the spirits in v. 19 are human beings? Given the lexical evidence already considered above, that seems dubious but not impossible. However, it does not appear necessary to identify the disobedient spirits with those for whom God’s patience was waiting. The meaning could be that these fallen angels disobeyed back around the time when God was waiting for living human beings to repent.

260 The only relevant textual variant noted by the NA28 here: ἠαπεδεχετο 1175. 2344

261 Grudem, *1 Peter*, 217. He cited BDAG, s.v. “ἀπεκδέχομαι,” where the gloss suggested is “await eagerly.”

262 Grudem, *1 Peter*, 217f. To some extent, Grudem has begged the question. What prevents this passage from being the one text that does teach such a doctrine? Grudem did not, in this context, provide any argument beyond this assertion and has instead rested on what is a probably well-founded and certainly common assumption that repentance is not possible for fallen angels, leastwise repentance unto salvation.

More precisely, however, Grudem's suggestion was that "there would be no point in Peter's mentioning God's patience" unless "God was waiting for [the spirits in prison] to repent."²⁶³ Thus, Grudem held (1) that the spirits who disobeyed were the objects of God's patience and (2) that μακροθυμία somehow entails that God was waiting for someone to repent. Lexically, this latter supposition is suspect.²⁶⁴ There does not appear to be anything about the word μακροθυμία which implies that repentance is necessarily involved. On the one hand, one might fairly make the claim from Romans 2:4 that sometimes the patience of God results in repentance. On the other hand, Romans 8:25 shows that patience does not always have repentance as a goal, per se. Romans 9:22 even seems to indicate that God's patience is practiced with regard to some even when their repentance is explicitly not part of His plan.

Grudem's former supposition, already partly dealt with above, is open to even more doubt. God's patience might have been waiting for someone or something other than the repentance of the spirits in prison. The text could simply mean that God was waiting for the repentance of those who ended up perishing in the flood without identifying them with the spirits in prison. More to the point, though, it seems that the

²⁶³ Ibid., 217.

²⁶⁴ BDAG has "state of remaining tranquil while awaiting an outcome" or "state of being able to bear up under provocation" (s.v. "μαρκουθμία"). *NIDNTTE* offers the concise glosses "patience, long-suffering, endurance" (s.v. "μακροθυμέω," 3:209).

verse itself could readily provide a reason why God was waiting that does not have any explicit connection with repentance. The present passive participle κατασκευαζομένης is in a genitive absolute construction, with κιβωτοῦ as its logical subject. The participle clearly contains chronological content: “God was waiting *while* the ark was being built.” Might this participle contain telic semantic value as well?²⁶⁵ If so, then a better reading would be, “God was waiting for the ark to be built.” Even if it is not implied grammatically, might not this completion of the ark (and the salvation of eight souls through water which was accomplished through the ark) be that for which God’s patience was waiting? This seems to be at least as likely as Grudem’s suggestion that God’s patience was waiting for disobedient human beings to repent.

Much of the preceding exegesis of v. 20 has focused on interacting with the arguments of Grudem, who presented several arguments from the statements in this verse to the effect that the imprisoned spirits of v. 19 were human beings. Suppose now for a moment that those spirits were human beings from Noah’s generation. In

²⁶⁵ “[O]nce you have identified the temporal force of the participle, you should then go on and ask whether another, more specific semantic value is intended. ... You should probe the participle’s usage with questions such as, ‘Is the author *only* describing when this happened or is he also indicating *why* or *how* it happened?’” Wallace, 624. Wallace’s section on telic participles (pp. 635-637) lists three verses where an imperfect verb is accompanied by a present participle of purpose (Mark 1:13; Luke 11:16; John 6:6). Wallace noted that “many present participles that fit this usage are lexically influenced. Verbs such as *seek* (ζητέω) or *signify* (σημαίνω), for example, involve the idea of purpose lexically.” Wallace, 636. It is perhaps worth noting in this connection that BDAG, s.v. “κατασκευάζω,” has “to make ready for some purpose.”

Grudem's own view, Christ ἐκήρυξεν righteousness through Noah (called δικαιοσύνης κήρυκα in 2 Peter 2:5) during Noah's own lifetime. Christ did this ἐν πνεύματι (ἐν ᾧ, 1 Peter 3:19), the same Spirit (πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ, 1 Peter 1:11) Who had testified in advance to the prophets concerning the sufferings and subsequent glories of Christ (1 Peter 1:10-11). Thus, Grudem's view of Christ's proclamation to these spirits (who have been imprisoned subsequent to the proclamation) does not leave any room for a PME doctrine to be taught in this passage.

Even supposing that Christ's proclamation was to the human beings who died in the flood, the rule of God which Christ proclaimed to these disobedient and imprisoned human beings might not have been one in which they were able to take any comfort. In other words, the old Lutheran view mentioned earlier in this chapter (that Christ proclaimed condemnation to these imprisoned human spirits) could still be more or less true. Failing that, and supposing that Christ proclaimed an offer of salvation to all who would turn to Him in repentance and faith, there is still nothing in the text indicating that any of these human spirits actually repented.²⁶⁶ Thus, even if there

²⁶⁶ The only statements which could hint at such a possibility have already been considered and dismissed above in note 259 (concerning the possibility of a pluperfect reading of ἀπειθήσασιν) and in notes 257 and 258 (concerning the use of ποτέ to contrast the way things were in the past with the way things are in the present). Although "repentance" might in some sense be seen in the subjection of the angels, authorities, and powers of v. 22, two factors prevent this fact from being considered in favor of a postmortem hope of repentance for the nescient. First, any lexicon will show that

might be some sort of PME doctrine taught here, a hope of repentance unto salvation for these antediluvians is not explicitly taught. Even if such a hope could legitimately be inferred from this passage, it would still require further argument to get from a hope for those spirits back then to a hope for the nescient now. Detailed examination of these counterfactuals cannot be taken up here. Indeed, that examination need not be taken up because the pastoral concerns of this letter and of the immediate context seem already to militate against such a doctrine of hope for the nescient being taught here, whether or not such a doctrine has a rightful place in Christian theology. A brief examination of that contextual argument shall be taken up to conclude this chapter.

Context and Conclusion

Perhaps the most serious problem with seeking support for a PME doctrine from this letter and passage is that neither the letter as a whole nor this passage in particular

ὑποτάσσω does not involve the concept of repentance in itself, and neither the immediate context nor the broader New Testament context imply that such a concept is contained in the term here. In the immediate context, although some of the creatures described by those three terms in v. 22 were rebellious, some of them never rebelled (e.g., it is clearly not the case that all of the angels of heaven rebelled against God, a point already mentioned above in note 234 on page 125), and the subjection of those who always remained obedient to God could hardly imply repentance on their part. In the broader context, Luke 10:17 and 10:20 demonstrate that demons were already subject (*ὑποτάσσω*) to the disciples, but one would be hard-pressed to argue that this implies repentance on the part of the demons. The second and more important factor, however, is that the angels, authorities, and powers of v. 22 are most likely not human beings at all. Moreover, these angels, authorities, and powers are not identified with the imprisoned spirits on any reading of v. 19 except for that which sees the imprisoned spirits as fallen angels, so this would still fall short of providing the Scriptural warrant required to teach a postmortem hope of repentance for the nescient.

appear to be concerned with the fate of those who have never heard the Gospel in this life. The letter as a whole focuses on the perseverance of persecuted believers and shows only minimal interest in the conversion of any unbelievers, let alone the conversion of the very unbelievers who persecuted this Christian community.²⁶⁷ The problem becomes even more pronounced in the immediate context, where important theological grounding is being provided, as Dalton noted:

...[I]t follows that this passage is of extreme importance in the mind of the writer. It would seem unthinkable that, at this crucial moment, he would go off on a tangent, forget momentarily the point of the letter, and indulge in a *theologoumenon* quite remote from the pressing needs of his readers. Nowhere else has he done anything of the kind: all has been marked by a quiet purposefulness from the beginning. The writer is concerned with “witness” and “exhortation”, not with theological speculation. It follows that we have every right to expect in this text great central ideas of New Testament tradition, not theological side-issues. In fact, we do have... the basic story of the Christian kerygma, the proclamation of the passion, resurrection, ascension of Jesus and his victory over the powers of evil...²⁶⁸

To this, a further difficulty must be added. It is not only difficult to connect a PME doctrine with this pastoral concern, such that one must wonder why such a doctrine

²⁶⁷ Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 187, admitted only “one clear reference to the conversion of pagans in 1 Peter” (in 3:1), disputing the suggestion that such could be found in 2:12. Exegesis of those verses will not be attempted here, but Dalton’s summary of the issue seems correct: “True, every early Christian community hoped for the conversion of the non-believing world around it, but, in times of persecution, this aspect is definitely secondary. It is survival in the face of evil and unbelief which dominates. ... Thus, 1 Peter is not primarily a document exhorting its readers to more fervent missionary activity.”

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

would be taught here in the first place. If a PME doctrine were taught here, far from augmenting the pastoral argument for perseverance that is being laid out in the context, it would actually tend rather to undermine that pastoral argument. If even these most rebellious of sinners from before the Flood (who, however ignorant they might have been of justification by grace through faith in Christ, could hardly have been ignorant of the testimony of creation to God) received the grace of a visit and proclamation of the Gospel from Christ Himself, then why not bend in the face of persecution and rely on some similar grace from God after death? That is not to say that this line of thinking is particularly sanctified or even unanswerable, but if PME were being taught here, surely a sanctified answer to such thinking would be in order. Instead, if PME is taught here, it is taught without any apparent purpose connected to the context and without any helpful elaboration to even make it suitable within the context.

Thus, whether or not Christ has preached or does preach the Gospel to those who have never heard it while living in the body, it seems highly unlikely that such an idea is being taught here in these verses in 1 Peter 3. Certainly, many other interpretative options have been proposed. It is not strictly necessary to decide which one is correct in order to determine whether PME is being taught here, but most likely,

rather than the doctrine of PME being taught in 1 Peter 3:19 and subsequently being picked back up again briefly in 1 Peter 4:6, it is the theme of Christ's vindication and triumph in spite of suffering that is invoked in 1 Peter 3:18-19 and resumed in 1 Peter 3:21-22. Christ's journey and proclamation took place after His resurrection (ζωοποιηθείς, v. 18; ἀναστάσεως, v. 21) as part of His ascension into heaven (πορευθείς, v. 19 and 22), and the imprisoned spirits to whom He went and proclaimed the rule of God in v. 19 were of the same type as the angels, authorities, and powers who are mentioned as having been subjected to Him in v. 22. This interpretation is made all the more likely insofar as 1 Enoch was in the mind of the author and of the original readers,²⁶⁹ but even without 1 Enoch as background, the angelic view of 1 Peter 3:19 deserves its current status as the scholarly consensus because it seems to make the best sense of the lexical, grammatical, and contextual data which have been considered in this chapter.

²⁶⁹ Grudem, *1 Peter*, 220-223, is one of the few who have seriously questioned whether any influence of or allusion to 1 Enoch should be detected in this passage. That debate can be avoided by the straightforward observations of Jobes: "Peter's allusion to the tradition of the Watchers does not necessarily require a literary knowledge of the book of 1 Enoch. The book of 1 Enoch may preserve a tradition that was more generally and widely known. Many people today who are familiar with the concept of purgatory are neither Roman Catholic nor able to cite the religious texts in which that doctrine is stated. ... The fact that Peter neither refers to Enoch nor quotes from 1 Enoch shows that he is not interested in accrediting or exegeting 1 Enoch but is simply using a tradition that would have been familiar to his readers." Jobes, 245.

Chapter Four

Exegesis of 1 Peter 4:6 and Context

Having established in chapter two that there does not appear to be any biblical basis for PME outside of 1 Peter, and having argued at length in chapter three that 1 Peter 3:19 also does not provide Scriptural support for PME, the question of whether or not such a doctrine can be legitimately deployed to address the pastoral concern for the nescient (or for those descended from or otherwise close to the nescient) now seems to hinge on 1 Peter 4:6. Coming as it does on the heels of the discussion of Christ's own righteous suffering and subsequent vindication and glory, the primary pastoral concern of this passage seems clear and in continuity with that of the previous passage: 1 Peter 4:1-6 encourages persecuted Christians to stay faithful to God and to refrain from the sinful activities in which their persecutors so freely engage. Those persecutors, according to v. 5, "will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (ESV). In v. 6, it is stated that "this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does" (ESV). Was this preaching of the gospel to the dead

an instance of PME? If so, would this instance of PME give sufficient reason to teach that the nescient will have a similar chance to hear the Gospel after they have died?

As was seen already in chapter one, there have certainly been systematians who would answer both of those questions in the affirmative. This view is reflected in the commentaries of Beare, Best, Bigg, and Boring.²⁷⁰ It was also the view taken up by Bo Reicke, who, while conceding that “it is not probable that the author has quite the same action in view in both [3:19 and 4:6],” still held that 4:6 was “a good illustration of” 3:19 since 3:19, on Reicke’s view, “implies the principle of a universal mission, a universal evangelization.”²⁷¹

270 Bigg clearly linked 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6. “Πνεύματα may be used of men after death... and the νεκροῖς of iv. 6 fixes this as the right sense. The εὐηγγελίσθη, again, of iv. 6 must be taken to prove that in St. Peter’s view our Lord preached the gospel to these spirits, and offered them a place of repentance.” Bigg, 162. The same connection was made by Beare: “The thought must therefore be associated with Christ’s Descent into Hades and his preaching to the ‘spirits’ (3:19).” Beare, 156. More recent commentators generally do not believe these verses to be discussing the same idea, but some still think 4:6 teaches PME. Best clearly understood 3:19 to refer to “supernatural beings,” and he held that 4:6 “probably does not” refer “to the same event as 3:19.” Best, *1 Peter*, 143-144. Nevertheless, he believed that 4:6 taught an offer of the Gospel “to those who never had the opportunity of hearing it when alive.” *Ibid.*, 156. Similarly, Boring favorably cited a German work by one Norbert Brox, who, Boring alleged, saw in 4:6 “a fragment of another mythical picture, unrelated to 3:19, in which the dead of past ages had the gospel preached to them after they had died.” Boring, 147, summarizing but not quoting Norbert Brox, *Der erste Petrusbrief*, EKKNT 21 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), 196-201. This was also the view of Cranfield: “[T]he most natural interpretation is surely to connect it with 3.19, and to understand a reference to THE SPIRITS IN PRISON.” Cranfield, *First Epistle of Peter*, 110.

271 Reicke, 209.

However, even if this verse does teach some particular instance of PME, it could be that Christ preached the gospel of the forgiveness of sins more specifically to the righteous of Israel and to the God-fearing Gentiles of Old Testament times and not to a general audience of the dead. In the Early Church, this was certainly a common understanding of the import of Christ's *descensus ad inferos*.²⁷² Thus, if 1 Peter 4:6 means that the Gospel was preached in the realm of the dead to this specific group of dead people, that in itself would not directly address the pastoral concern regarding the rest of those who have died without access to the gospel. It could still be teaching nothing more than the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Limbo of the Patriarchs, discussed and (at least as the basis for hope for the nescient) dismissed already in chapter three.

A third view holds that the gospel here preached was preached to the spiritually dead and not to the physically dead as such. There are certainly other places in Scripture that seem to speak in this way.²⁷³ It seems that perhaps Clement himself, in spite of his apparent advocacy of PME in connection with 1 Peter 3:19, held such a view

272 Such an understanding can clearly be seen at work, for example, in Ignatius' *Epistle to the Magnesians* 9.2 and in Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* 4.27.2. Besides such teachings from the early Church Fathers, there is also an interesting tradition quoted by both Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, which was at least occasionally attributed to Jeremiah and which is therefore referred to as the Jeremiah Logion, which says, "The holy Lord remembered His dead Israel, who slept in the land of sepulture; and He descended to them to make known to them His salvation, that they might be saved." This translation comes from Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.22.1 (ANF 1:493B-494A). For other references and a similar theme in the apocryphal Gospel of Peter, see Reicke, 16-17.

273 In particular, see the discussion on pp. 43-46 above on passages that might use νεκρός figuratively.

of 1 Peter 4:6.²⁷⁴ If this view of 4:6 is correct, then there is once again no Scriptural basis for PME. The verse would simply be teaching concerning the normal preaching of the Gospel to those who are physically alive but spiritually dead.

The fourth view is that the dead in this verse were indeed the physically dead at the time this epistle was written but that they were not dead when they heard the gospel and believed. Thus, the passage would not be teaching a PME doctrine and would offer no hope for the nescient. The rest of this chapter will be dedicated to a phrase by phrase examination of the text and its context to show how this last view fits best with the context, grammar, and vocabulary of 1 Peter 4:6.

4:5 ...οἱ ἀποδώσουσιν λόγον ᾧ ἑτοίμως ἔχοντι κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς...²⁷⁵

Some outside the Church maligned Christians for not joining “in the same flood of debauchery” (v. 4, ESV; εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν τῆς ἀσωτίας ἀνάχυσιν) mentioned in v. 3, but ultimately, those maligning these Christians “will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (ESV). The clear implication is that the sort of people who ask Christians to give λόγον (3:15) for their hope will have the tables turned on

²⁷⁴ See pp. 15-17 for a discussion of Clement’s allusion to 1 Peter 3 and 4 in connection with the descent, especially note 18 on page 17 for a discussion of Dalton’s assertion that Clement held this “spiritually dead” view of 1 Peter 4.

²⁷⁵ The textual variants in v. 5 are immaterial to the present discussion, but discussion can be found in Elliott, 729.

them and be punished in the end.²⁷⁶ Certainly, this passage should therefore not be used to teach a postmortem hope for those who persecute the Church, but this is at least not typically the sort of scenario PME advocates have in mind. In relation to PME, this verse raises two relevant questions.

One question concerns the identity of the One ready to judge. Does this phrase refer to the Father or to Jesus Christ? Although the answer does not greatly impact the argument of this paper, it is worth observing that, despite clear reference to the “Father who judges impartially” in 1 Peter 1:17 (ESV), Peter identified Jesus Christ as “the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 11:42, ESV). A similar phrase is also applied to Jesus in 2 Timothy 4:1. In John 5, Jesus teaches about οἱ νεκροί hearing the voice of the Son of God (5:25), about those hearing the Son passing ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν (5:24), and about the Father giving authority to the Son κρίσιν ποιεῖν (5:27). Bigg also points out that “St. Peter connects the judgment with the Revelation of Jesus Christ, i. 13, and with the appearance of the Chief Shepherd, v. 4.”²⁷⁷ If the Son is the One who is “ready to judge” here in 1 Peter 4:5, and if the passive εὐηγγελίσθη of 4:6 has this phrase from 4:5 as its implied subject, then 4:6 would be

²⁷⁶ Boring, 146. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 234.

²⁷⁷ Bigg, 170.

teaching that Christ was preached (passive voice) to the dead rather than that Christ preached to the dead during the *triduum mortis*.²⁷⁸

The other question concerns the identity of the “living and dead” whom God (whether God the Father or God the Son) is “ready to judge.” There is little debate on one aspect of the question: the living and dead in v. 5 here are the physically alive and the physically dead rather than the spiritually alive and spiritually dead.²⁷⁹ This is significant for the present discussion because νεκροῖς in the next verse can hardly be understood in a different sense than it is used here, so this effectively precludes the understanding which sees the preaching to the dead in v. 6 as the regular, ongoing

278 It is conceivable that Christ could have been preached to the dead by Christ Himself, but whether or to what extent His own identity was the content of Christ’s proposed preaching to the dead, this is not what the text actually says. It appears that no scholarly consensus on the identity of the Judge in this verse has yet emerged. Plenty of New Testament material suggests that the Judge here could be Jesus, but scholars such as Jobes and Elliott have focused more on God the Father as Judge in 1 Peter 1:17 and 2:23. Jobes suggested that “1 Peter has Christ taking the role of the exemplary believer,” rather than the role of judge. Jobes, 270. Elliott similarly averred that in 1 Peter “Jesus nowhere is depicted as judge but rather as the one who submits to God’s will as his servant.” Elliott, 730. God the Father is Judge, but if it is fair to bring in the Johannine theology cited above, He has passed on the responsibilities of that office to His Son, Who will judge just as His Father would. 1 Peter 2:23 is less relevant than it might seem since there Christ’s humiliation is in view. If 3:22 is any indication, here it is rather His exaltation that is in view: “The word *ready* also seems to point to Christ. By his finished work and his exaltation he has accomplished everything; he is now ready to judge.” Clowney, 174.

279 Beare, 156. Best, *1 Peter*, 154f. Bigg, 170. Clowney, 175. Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 57, 232. Davids, 153. Grudem, *1 Peter*, 170. Jobes, 271. Kelly, 171f. Marshall, *1 Peter*, 137. Schreiner, 205. Selwyn, 214.

preaching to the spiritually dead. However, it is important to recognize just how universal the phrase “the living and the dead” is. As Kelly observed:

The expression “the living and the dead” with the noun or verb “judge” was one of the earliest tags to harden into a stereotyped formula, and very soon ensconced itself in primitive credal formula (e.g. Acts x. 42; Rom. xiv. 9; 2 Tim. iv. 1: cf. *Barn.* vii. 2; Polycarp, *Phil.* ii. 1; 2 *Clem.* i. 1). In all these quasi-credal passages the reference is to Christ’s Second Coming and to those who are physically alive or dead when that event takes place, and this unquestionably applies to the present text too.²⁸⁰

The thought is not merely that God will judge those presently living and presently dead. Rather, the thought is that God, at the final judgment, will judge everyone who has ever lived, whether they are at that time alive or dead. This is important because it is sometimes suggested that “the dead” in v. 6 *must* be *coextensive* with “the dead” in v.

5.²⁸¹ As shall be argued below, though, the nature of the case in v. 6 actually requires

that νεκροῖς in v. 6 be a subset of νεκρούς in v. 5.

280 Kelly, 171. Similar observations can be found elsewhere. The phrase “refers to all people who have ever lived.” Schreiner, 205. “This stereotyped expression is simply a way of saying ‘all’ (cf. ‘the God and judge of all,’ Heb 12:23), or ‘each person’ (cf. 1:17, ‘according to each person’s work’). ...[I]t is each person who has every lived, from the creation of the world until the day of judgment.” Michaels, *1 Peter*, 235. “The merism in 1 Pet. 4:5, ‘the living and the dead,’ indicates the universal scope of God’s purview.” Jobes, 270. “Judgment is to be universal. It will encompass, as is expressed here in a familiar confessional formula, those who are alive at the end as well as those who have died, since before the judgment all will be called to life again (1 Cor. 15:51f).” Goppelt, 287.

281 “νεκροῖς must have the same connotation as the preceding νεκρῶν; i.e., it must mean all the dead from the beginning of time, all that are to stand before the judgment-seat of God.” Beare, 156. “Νεκροῖς must be taken in the obvious sense of the word; they were dead at the time when the announcement was made. Further, it must have the same sense as in ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, that is to say, it must include all the dead, not merely those who perished in the Flood.” Bigg, 170. See also Best, *1 Peter*, 156.

4:6 ...εἰς τοῦτο γάρ...

PME advocates take these words to mean that the reason why Christ preached to the dead was that it would not be fair for Him to judge those who had never heard the Good News about Him; thus, He preached to the dead so that His judgment could be fair.²⁸² Assuming such a “fairness doctrine” were true, it might fairly be detected in the background here, but it is surely reaching to say that this text *teaches* such a doctrine, even *if* it did *assume* it. Whatever legitimate doctrinal concerns might be brought to the table, for the sake of exegesis, grammatical and lexical considerations should have priority. On that score, it seems most likely that, while γάρ does link the thought of v. 6 with that of v. 5, εἰς τοῦτο refers to the subsequent ἵνα clause in v. 6. The question being addressed within the context is not “How can God legitimately judge those who

282 “The γάρ then appears to relate the universality of the Judgment to the universal proclamation of the Gospel; the dead as well as the living will stand before the Judge, because they too have had the Gospel preached to them.” Beare, 156. “The Gospel is now offered to those who never had the opportunity of hearing it when alive. ...[A]ll men face judgement (verse 5) because all, even the dead, have heard the gospel (verse 6).” Best, 156. “Γάρ introduces an explanation of the words immediately preceding. He is ready to judge quick and dead; for soon the living will have heard, and the dead have already heard the gospel.” Bigg, 170. “...v. 6a gives the basis with γάρ καί first of all to the universalism of judgment to which v. 5 pointed, by pointing now to the universalism of the gospel: In the judgment all people, as 4:17f. declares, will finally be judged according to their relation to the gospel.” Goppelt, 289.

have had no access to the Gospel?” but “How is God’s judgment of the living and the dead supposed to comfort us?”²⁸³

4:6 ...καὶ νεκροῖς εὐηγγελίσθη...

Each word of this phrase requires careful consideration. First, the significance of καί, on a PME / *descensus* understanding, could be to highlight the unexpected nature of the audience of Christ’s preaching: “even to the dead,” with the sense being, “Of course, people who are living have opportunities to hear the Gospel, but even after people die, they still have a chance to hear the Gospel from Christ Himself, to repent, and to be

283 “This sentence is closely fitted into its context: while εἰς τοῦτο anticipates the following final clause, γάρ points back to the previous section. ... It follows that the γάρ of 4:6 much more probably introduces an explanation, not of how Christ could rightly judge the dead, but of how faithful Christians are vindicated against the vilification of their pagan neighbours.” Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 231. “...**this is why** (*eis touto*), as in iii. 9, refers forward, being the antecedent of **in order that they...** **For**, on the other hand, looks back to the preceding verse, where the writer’s interest is not in the all-embracing scope of Christ’s judgment... but in the judgment as such, involving as it will the vindication of the good as well as the punishment of the wicked. The point of **For**, therefore, is not to suggest reasons why Christ should judge the living and the dead, but rather to draw out and underline an aspect of His judgment which will comfort and sustain the Asian Christians, viz. that because He is a righteous judge their converted brothers who have died have not believed in Him in vain.” Kelly, 175. “This second use of *gar* in this context (cf. v 3), rendered ‘for,’ signals an inferential connection between the present thought and what precedes it (either v 5 or vv 1-5; cf. BAGD 152 §3.). Whereas in 2:21a and 3:9d *eis touto* refers to what precedes it, here, in conjunction with the following *hina* clause, it refers to the content of this purpose clause (v 6bc), with the sense of ‘to this end’ or ‘for this reason.’” Elliott, 731f. “Εἰς τοῦτο γάρ looks both backward and forward. The conj. γάρ provides the link with v. 5, a link further substantiated by the words νεκρός and κρίνω. Nevertheless, εἰς τοῦτο γάρ looks forward to the ἵνα clause for its content....” Greg W. Forbes, *1 Peter*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2014), 141.

saved.”²⁸⁴ On top of assuming that *καί* here implies that the Gospel being preached “even to the dead” would be unexpected, however, the *descensus* reading also assumes (1) that those here referred to as “dead” were dead when they heard the Gospel and (2) that Christ did the preaching mentioned in this verse. As shall be argued presently, these are both problematic assumptions. At any rate, the crux of interpretation is not the word *καί* but those that come after it.²⁸⁵

Νεκροῖς picks up *νεκρούς* from the end of v. 5, so its meaning must be consistent with the meaning there. As many scholars have noted, this connection effectively precludes reading *νεκροῖς* as “spiritually dead” in the sense employed in Ephesians 2 and elsewhere.²⁸⁶ The term certainly refers to those who are physically dead, so if these were dead when they heard the good news, then this verse would teach some sort of PME. The question then would be whether the PME taught here would be of benefit to

284 See, for example, the translation provided by Bigg, 170: “For this is the reason why the gospel was preached (not only to living, but) also to dead...”

285 Kelly’s reading of *καί* is in line with the interpretation offered in what follows: “It is understandable that the writer and his readers should have had Christ preached to them, for they presumably will experience the Parousia; the problem is why He should have been proclaimed **also** to people who were to die before His Coming.” Kelly, 175. Emphasis in original. Selwyn similarly construes the conjunction: “In the actual experience of the Apostle’s readers, wrong triumphs and right goes to the wall: what is his answer to the dilemma? His answer is that the Judge stands at the door; that the wrong-doers will have to give account to Him; and that the very reason why Christians—**even those who were already dead**—had had the Gospel preached to them was that, whatever the world might say of their troubled and seemingly fruitless lives here on earth, they might live eternally after God’s likeness in heaven.” Selwyn, 339. Emphasis added.

286 E.g., Bigg, 170-171. Selwyn, 214, 337. Goppelt, 288. Elliott, 732. Martin Williams, 218.

the nescient today. As already noted in the introduction to this chapter, some of the early Church Fathers seem to have believed that the kind of PME taught here, if any, was such that it would more likely inform the reading of Matthew 27:52 than that of 1 Peter 3:19.²⁸⁷ That is, the dead who heard the good news about Jesus Christ were the saints of the Old Testament era. Thus, even if those who heard good news in 1 Peter 4:6 were dead when they heard it, it would not necessarily entail that there is hope for any of the nescient today, let alone for all of them.²⁸⁸

287 Bigg conceded, “In very early times the εὐηγγελίσθη of iv. 6 was distinguished from the ἐκίρυσεν of iii. 19 and ascribed not to Christ, but to the apostles; see Hermas...; Clem. Alex..... This view was only rendered possible by the impersonality of εὐηγγελίσθη, and is quite fanciful. Further, Hermas, Clement, Irenaeus..., and Ignatius... restrict the preaching to the just, guided probably by the mention of the ‘saints’ in Matt. xxvii. 52. But, as noticed above, the use of ἀπείθησασιν in iii. 20 seems clearly to imply that in St. Peter’s belief the offer was made to all, though some might reject the light in Hades, as many do reject it in this world.” Bigg, 172. Bigg has here offered two arguments against this kind of reading. First, his suggestion that εὐηγγελίσθη is an impersonal passive will be challenged below. Second, his assumption that 3:19 and 4:6 are connected, as has already been argued and will continue to be argued, is problematic for a number of reasons and has been rejected by the majority of scholars today.

288 If saving faith always entails explicit knowledge of Jesus Christ as the second Person of the Trinity, then the postmortem revelation of Jesus Christ to Old Testament saints seems absolutely necessary for their justification. If God, in His mercy, saw fit to reveal Jesus Christ to those in the realm of the dead who had already trusted in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob while they were alive but who had also already quit this life prior to the advent of Christ, then it would be fitting (congruous, but not logically necessary) for Him to also reveal Jesus Christ to others who had responded in faith to whatever light they had in this life but who, for one reason or another, did not have explicit knowledge of Jesus Christ. In other words, if God did it once, it is not illogical to *infer* that He **might** do it again, but it is illogical to *insist* that He **must** do it again. Thus, if some of the nescient respond positively to what light they have had in this life, then those who do so might receive some special revelation from God after they die. Contrariwise, a postmortem revelation of Jesus Christ to the just of the Old Testament would offer absolutely no solace whatsoever for those of the nescient who did not respond positively to whatever light they have had in this life. This counter-factual discussion, however, neglects the doctrines of grace. On the one hand, apart from the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit, the set of those who respond positively to whatever light they have would be a null set.

Contrary to the idea that these people were dead when they heard the good news, there is merit to the suggestion that νεκροῖς may be used slightly anachronistically: they were physically dead when Peter wrote the letter, but that is not necessarily to say that they were thus when the preaching occurred. This, according to Kelly, “is no odder in Greek than the statement in English, say, that Prime Minister Wilson was taught economics at Oxford.”²⁸⁹ Perhaps a more relevant English example comes from President Lyndon B. Johnson: “[T]o deny a man his hopes because of his color or race or his religion or the place of his birth... is... to dishonor the dead who gave their lives for American freedom.”²⁹⁰ Obviously, the dead “gave their lives”

On the other hand, when God does grant this regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, He surely brings it to completion. Since no one responds positively (in the ultimate sense) to revelation apart from this effectual calling of the Holy Spirit, it would be logical to expect that, if explicit knowledge of Jesus Christ is necessary for salvation, God will reveal Jesus Christ to all of the nescient who respond positively to revelation.

- 289 Kelly, 174. Similarly, Grudem: “One can speak the same way in English: ‘Queen Elizabeth was born in 1926’ is an appropriate statement, even though she was not Queen when she was born—we mean ‘She who is now Queen Elizabeth was born in 1926.’” Grudem, *1 Peter*, 159. The illustration goes back at least as far as the first edition of Dalton’s work on this passage: “Linguistic usage parallel to our understanding of ‘preaching to the dead’ is extremely common. There is no danger of misunderstanding a sentence like the following: ‘Pope John XXIII was born and received his first religious instruction in a little Italian village near Bergamo.’ Everyone understands that he had to wait a number or [sic] years before actually becoming Pope. To take an example nearer our text, many scholars see in ‘the spirits... who did not obey’ of 1 Pet 3:19 the souls of Noah’s contemporaries. They are by no means deterred from this interpretation by the fact that these persons were not ‘spirits’ (souls) when they disobeyed.” William Joseph Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation to the Spirits: A Study of 1 Peter 3:18-4:6*, 1st ed. (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), 270. He makes much the same argument in his second edition. Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 235. See also note 127 on page 78.
- 290 Lyndon B. Johnson, “Special Message to Congress: The American Promise” (March 15, 1965), ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/242211> (accessed March 11, 2019).

prior to being dead. The most important merit to this suggestion of anachronism in the text at this point lies in the subsequent ἵνα clause which will be discussed below. In anticipation of that discussion, suffice it for now to suggest that “the dead” here are Christians who heard the gospel, repented, and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation while they were still alive but whose subsequent deaths left those still living with nagging questions about the value of righteous living since it did not save these others from death, much the same sorts of questions as Paul was addressing in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.²⁹¹

As has been noted above,²⁹² some scholars have insisted that “the dead” here must be the same as “the dead” in v. 5, not only in kind (i.e., physically dead) but also in number (i.e., not only those dead at the present moment but also all of those who will be dead at the time of the final judgment). However, when it comes to explicating the meaning of εὐηγγελίσθη, none of those scholars dispute whether the aorist indicative verb here is used for a simple past tense.²⁹³ Significantly, if the evangelism here

291 Selwyn, 337-39. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 234. Kelly, 174-75.

292 See note 281 on page 150.

293 As was already seen in note 284 on page 153, Bigg used the simple past tense in his gloss of the passage; he proceeded to remark that “soon the living will have heard, and the dead have already heard the gospel.” Bigg, 170. Beare, too, although he insisted on the basis of the universality of νεκρούς in v. 5 that νεκροῖς in v. 6 could not possibly refer to “only those who have lived and died since the coming of Christ, and have heard the Gospel preached in their lifetime,” he nevertheless used the simple past tense to translate εὐηγγελίσθη: “the gospel was preached.” Beare, 156. Best specifically stated, “The tense (aorist) of ‘preached’ implies a definite historical event.” Best, 155. He

described took place only at one particular time in the past, then the recipients of that evangelism could not have included anyone who has died since it took place. In other words, if this verse means that Christ preached the Gospel to “the dead” during the *triduum mortis* (or at any particular moment prior to the writing of this epistle, as the aorist seems to indicate), and if this evangelism “is encountered by the dead when they are dead,”²⁹⁴ then “the dead” who received this preaching could not even have included any of those who had died after Christ’s proclamation and prior to the writing of 1 Peter 4:6, to say nothing of all of those who have died in the roughly 2,000 years since this epistle was written.²⁹⁵ Goppelt almost seems to have recognized this difficulty, but even he seems not to have recognized it fully:

...the Hades proclamation of Christ applies not only, as 3:19 made clear, to the most lost but to all the dead. But should not then the present tense be used?

This Hades proclamation is for 1 Peter not an ongoing evangelization among the

even went on to acknowledge that “Two thousand years have passed and there are now many dead who did not hear the Gospel while alive and have not heard it since their death; to this our author would probably have answered that he did not expect the world to continue for more than a few years and could not have foreseen the alleged unfairness.” Ibid., 156. Thus, while Best was, to some extent, aware of the difficulty that this created for the presumption that a fairness doctrine could be found at play in this context, he apparently did not feel its full force because he believed that this letter represented only the perspective of its limited human author.

294 Goppelt, 289.

295 “[T]he simplest reflection shows that many pagans had died from the time of Christ’s death up to the time of the writing of 1 Peter without ever hearing the gospel; Christ’s preaching of the gospel would be of no benefit to these. ... Here we are not speaking of the thousands of years which have passed from the time of Jesus (Best, 156), but simply from the author’s point of view. Even allowing for an early date for 1 Peter, the difficulty is so obvious that it hardly needs stressing.” Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 235.

ones not reached in history but an eschatological event that together with Christ's suffering unto death and exaltation introduced the final event, whose imminent conclusion is expected by the letter (1:10-12; 4:7). All this means that the sentence is a kerygmatic statement, not a brief summary of objective facts about the Hades proclamation and the path to salvation of the dead.²⁹⁶

One might be tempted to take Goppelt's reference to this preaching as "an eschatological event" and understand him to mean that the preaching is a future event. If that had been Goppelt's intention, then the question he should have been answering in this quotation would have been "should not then the *future* tense be used?"²⁹⁷ In fact, Goppelt had already stated that "aorist εὐηγγελίσθη points to a past event,"²⁹⁸ and by further stating here that this is "not an ongoing evangelization," he seems to have conceded that this evangelization, even if it might be thought by some to be a model

296 Goppelt, 289.

297 If Goppelt had argued in this way, it would have opened up an interesting (albeit ultimately faulty) avenue from which to view the text. An eschatologically guaranteed act of postmortem evangelism, to take place once and for all immediately prior to the final judgment, could be understood here if εὐηγγελίσθη were taken as a proleptic aorist. See Wallace, 563f. The eschatological theme of the final judgment in v. 5 could count in favor of this possibility, but between the fact that the proleptic aorist "is not at all common" (Ibid., 563) and the clarification provided by the ἵνα clause in v. 6 (according to which being judged in flesh must be subsequent to the evangelism; see below, pp. 161-168), there does not appear to be sufficient support for this option. At least it should be noted that all other instances of an aorist indicative of εὐαγγελίζεiv in the New Testament (Acts 8:35; 1 Corinthians 15:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 11:7; Galatians 1:8, 4:13; Ephesians 2:17; Revelation 10:7) appear to have a simple past sense, so there seems to be no basis for asserting a proleptic aorist here on those grounds. In the apparent absence of strong evidence for a proleptic aorist, and since apparently no one has argued along these lines in the scholarly literature, the possibility will not be considered further here.

298 Goppelt, 288.

for some other ongoing evangelization today, is not taught by Scripture to be such a model.²⁹⁹

Concerning the aorist passive εὐηγγελίσθη itself, it should be observed that εὐαγγελίζεῖν is not a neutral term in the way that κηρύσσειν often is. In 3:19, nothing about the semantic range of the word ἐκήρυξεν (even as it is used within the bounds of the New Testament) prevents the understanding that Jesus proclaimed, say, condemnation to those spirits. If, instead of the aorist active ἐκήρυξεν, the equivalent aorist middle form³⁰⁰ εὐηγγέλισατο had been used in 3:19, then it really would have been obtuse to suggest that Jesus proclaimed anything other than “good news” to the spirits in prison. The semantic range of εὐαγγελίζεῖν indicates that its use here in 4:6 most probably refers, as it usually does elsewhere throughout the New Testament and within this epistle,³⁰¹ to the proclamation of the good news about Jesus Christ.

In fact, it is precisely the proclamation of the good news about Jesus Christ rather than Jesus Christ’s proclamation of good news which appears to have been in the

299 If the aorist indicative here should be understood in a simple past tense sense, as the vast majority of modern commentators believe, then this also counts against the view which sees this as the ongoing preaching to the spiritually dead.

300 Since εὐαγγελίζεῖν is a deponent verb in Koine, the middle form usually indicates the active voice.

301 The fact that εὐαγγελίζεῖν is used in 1 Peter three times for Gospel proclamation (1:12, 25; 4:6) could even be a further line of evidence against taking the only use of κηρύσσειν in 1 Peter to indicate that Christ preached good news to the spirits in prison. If Gospel proclamation was what the author had in mind in 1 Peter 3:19, why not use εὐαγγελίζεῖν there, too?

author's mind. The syntax does not clearly indicate who did the preaching,³⁰² but the choice of the passive voice could indicate the content of the preaching.³⁰³ Thus, although there is the remote possibility that εὐηγγελίσθη functions here as an impersonal verb,³⁰⁴ New Testament usage of the verb makes it at least more likely that Christ in this verse is depicted as being preached by someone else than that He is depicted as the One doing the preaching.³⁰⁵ This is another factor that distinguishes 3:19 from 4:6 and counts against the *descensus* view. The proverbial nail in the coffin, however, is the ἵνα clause which follows.

302 This vagueness could be a deliberate choice. “An *explicit agent would sometimes be obtrusive* or would render the sentence too complex, perhaps reducing the literary effect.” Wallace, 436. See 1 Peter 1:12, which speaks of τῶν εὐαγγελισαμένων ὑμᾶς, “the ones who told you good news.” One person might have heard the good news about Jesus from her mother, another from his father, another from a good friend or business associate, and another from a complete stranger. The passive voice here in 4:6 allows that each of “the dead” had heard the good news about Jesus Christ from a different person or from different people, but if εὐαγγελίσειν had been in the active voice, then the person or number of the verb might obscure the differing historical realities involved in the individual cases: “I preached,” “we preached,” “you preached,” “he preached,” or “they preached” could each be understood to exclude the others. As Elliott notes, “The fact that these earlier instances [1 Peter 1:12, 25] clearly refer to evangelizing by Christian missionaries suggests that their agency is implied here as well.” Elliott, 732. Similarly, see Achtemeier, 290n186.

303 Although εὐαγγελίσειν is a deponent verb, here it is in the aorist tense, in which the passive form is distinct from the middle form, only the latter of which is regularly used with an active voice sense for εὐαγγελίσειν in the New Testament. In the indicative mood, this is the only aorist passive of εὐαγγελίσειν in the New Testament. For the three aorist passive participles, see appendix.

304 For more on the issue of the possibility of an impersonal passive here, see appendix.

305 As Selwyn observed, there are a few cases in Luke where Christ is described as preaching with some form of εὐαγγελίσειν (Luke 4:18, 43; 8:1; 20:1), but Christ is more often the direct object of εὐαγγελίσειν in the New Testament (Acts 5:42; 8:35; 11:20; 17:18; Galatians 1:16). Selwyn, 214. Thus, if Christ is the one depicted as “ready to judge living and dead” in 4:5 and if εὐηγγελίσθη is a simple passive rather than an impersonal passive, Christ would most likely be the subject here: “Christ was preached to the dead.” Grammatically, there is absolutely no indication as to who did the preaching.

4:6 ...ἵνα κριθῶσιν μὲν κατὰ ἀνθρώπους σαρκί...

This ἵνα subjunctive clause clarifies the timing of the evangelism relative to the timing of the death of those who received the good news. Whether the ἵνα clause is understood as a purpose clause or as a result clause,³⁰⁶ the action expressed by κριθῶσιν must at least be logically (and is also most likely chronologically) subsequent to the action expressed by εὐηγγελίσθη. As Dalton observed, “the grammar of the passage requires that the action of the verbs in both the μὲν and the δέ clauses should follow that of the main verb.”³⁰⁷ Thus, by specifying that the dead heard this good news “that

306 Most take this as a purpose clause. E.g., Achtemeier, 287. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 239. Davids, 154. Elliott, 734. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 238.

307 Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 240. Bavinck had already picked up on precisely this grammatical feature of the text in his treatment of the topic long before Dalton began to write: “That proclamation of the gospel occurred once, and with the intent that those who heard it would be judged like everyone else, ‘in the flesh,’ that is, they would die, but might live, as God does, ‘in the spirit.’ The preaching of the gospel, therefore, preceded their death; the νεκροί are those who are now dead but who heard the gospel during their lifetime.” Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 4:631. Bavinck’s insistence on the proclamation occurring once could represent a problematic “punctiliar” understanding of the aorist, but his observation about the intention of the proclamation stands regardless. Augustine had already grasped at this truth well before Bavinck or Dalton, perhaps since the Latin *quidem... autem* which translated the Greek μὲν... δέ was less of a distraction from the syntax of the purpose clause: “For how can they be judged in the flesh, which if they be in hell they no longer have, and which if they have been loosed from the pains of hell they have not yet resumed? For even if ‘hell was,’ as you put in your question, ‘emptied,’ it is not to be believed that all who were there then have risen again in the flesh, or those who, arising, again appeared with the Lord resumed the flesh for this purpose, that they might be in it judged according to men; but how this could be taken as true in the case of those who were unbelieving in the days of Noah I do not see, for Scripture does not affirm that they were made to live in the flesh, nor can it be believed that the end for which they were loosed from the pains of hell was that they who were delivered from these might resume their flesh in order to suffer punishment. What, then, is meant by the words, ‘That they might be judged according to men in the flesh...?’” Augustine, *The Letters of St. Augustin* 164.4.11 (NPNF¹ 1:518AB).

they might be judged” (ἵνα κριθῶσιν), a phrase which even many PME advocates concede refers to death,³⁰⁸ the text itself insists that the evangelism happened while those presently dead were actually still living.

Bigg was only able to avoid this obvious conclusion that the preaching preceded the judgment (read “death”) by suggesting that “the sense is the same as if St. Peter had written ἵνα κριθέντες ζῶσι,” thereby substituting an aorist participle for an aorist subjunctive, ostensibly because “[t]he difference in tense in κριθῶσι, ζῶσι, makes the former verb antecedent in time to the latter.”³⁰⁹ It is possible that the contrast of the aorist tense κριθῶσιν with the present tense ζῶσιν implies that the judgment in the flesh occurred prior to the life in the spirit, and it is fair to highlight that fact with a hypothetical participial construction. However, it is dubious to advance this as grounds for reading a subjunctive as a participle. Similarly, albeit somewhat more carefully,

308 “Judgment in the flesh is death...” Bigg, 170. “...[T]he difficult phrase κριθῶσι μὲν κατὰ ἄνθρωπος σαρκί seems to mean simply ‘though they have died, as all men must die’ - death itself being regarded as God’s judgment on sin.” Beare, 156. “The judgement is that which the dead suffered in death and is the judgement of God on sin.” Best, *1 Peter*, 157. “The dead were ‘with respect to the flesh,’ i.e., in view of their mortal humanity, to which craving responds, ‘condemned.’ The condemnation is executed in their death.” Goppelt, 290. There are more exceptions on the other side of the aisle. For example, Achtemeier held that “the understanding of death as judgment on sin, while widespread in the bible, is not entirely relevant in this context, particularly if the phrase κατὰ ἄνθρωπος is taken to refer to the opinion of non-Christian contemporaries, since such an understanding of death would be foreign to them. It is therefore likely that the condemnation mentioned here must be found somewhere other than in the event of death.” Achtemeier, 288.

309 Bigg, 170. By obscuring the fact that κριθῶσι is here a ἵνα subjunctive, Bigg’s hypothetical participial construction appears to have obscured even to himself the fact that the preaching was done with *judgment* (as well as life) as either its purpose or result or both.

Beare suggested that “κριθῶσι, though co-ordinate with ζῶσι in construction, is best taken as subordinate in thought (almost = κριθέντες).”³¹⁰ It is true that the μὲν clause is subordinate to the δέ clause, but this hardly justifies transmuting a ἵνα subjunctive into a participle. Thus, if κριθῶσιν does refer to the judgment of death, as the majority of commentators today seem to believe³¹¹ and as the explicit contrast with ζῶσιν seems to suggest, then the preaching signaled by the main verb (εὐηγγελίσθη) preceded the death (κριθῶσιν) of those who are described as dead (νεκροῖς). This verse would then certainly not be teaching any sort of PME doctrine.

The important exception to the general concession made by PME advocates (i.e., the concession that κριθῶσιν refers to death) is Reicke, who argued that κριθῶσιν σαρκί actually refers to the final judgment. He did this on the grounds that (1) that is what κρίνειν referred to in v. 5³¹² and (2) there is no difficulty in conceiving of the final judgment as being “in the flesh” (σαρκί) since a bodily resurrection will precede this judgment.³¹³ Notice, however, that Reicke has effectively conceded by this argument

310 Beare, 156.

311 E.g., Davids, 154. Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 2:199. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 237f. Selwyn, 215f. Jobes, 270f. Michaels, 1 Peter, 239. Clowney, 176. Grudem, 1 Peter, 171.

312 “...κρίνειν, too, must in both places denote the same kind of judgment. When verse 5 states that God or Christ—which of the two is impossible to decide, but perhaps it does not matter—is ready for judgment, the judgment indicated in verse 6 ought also to be a future event. In both cases it must be the coming Great Judgment that is referred to.” Reicke, 205f.

313 Reicke, 206-208.

that the subjunctive κριθῶσιν is chronologically subsequent to the indicative εὐηγγελίσθη, for Reicke's proposed postmortem preaching precedes the final judgment. Moreover, Reicke was forced to concede that his understanding of κριθῶσιν as a reference to the final judgment is problematic given the explicit contrast between κατὰ ἀνθρώπους and κατὰ θεόν, discussed further below.³¹⁴ This acknowledged problem with Reicke's suggestion is only exacerbated by the additional contrast between σαρκί and πνεύματι.³¹⁵ A resurrection of the body does take place prior to the final judgment, but if that is what is meant by κριθῶσιν σαρκί, then what is meant by the contrast with πνεύματι? On the reading suggested above in the previous chapter for the same terms when they are used with respect to Jesus in 1 Peter 3:18, there is no difficulty: σαρκί essentially refers to the bodies in which we are born and which suffer physical death, but πνεύματι refers to the resurrection body. On Reicke's reading, however, the

314 "But really we must recognize a certain difficulty for the theory in question if we find it necessary to understand the expression κατὰ ἀνθρώπους in a strict analogy to κατὰ θεόν. The latter words are generally said to mean »according to God«, »in God's likeness«, that is »as God lives«. Possibly the meaning might also be: »according to God's disposition«, *deo iubente*. But in neither case do we get any possibility to give a quite analogous meaning to the κατὰ before ἀνθρώπους. At the most these words seem to mean »as (being) men« or »as it belongs to men«. Here we have no comparison of two factors but a relation of identity. Yet there is perhaps no possibility to avoid this discrepancy between the two κατὰ's. And on the other hand the scholars in general have not at all even observed the difficulty of this point." Reicke, 208.

315 This further difficulty with Reicke's position seems to have been noticed elsewhere only by Best: "[Reicke's reading] destroys the contrast between 'flesh' and 'spirit', for to say that men are raised in the flesh means they appear at the last judgement in a 'fleshy' (i.e. material) existence, whereas to live 'in the spirit' does not imply a 'spiritual' (i.e. non-material) existence but life in the sphere of God's Spirit." Best, *1 Peter*, 157.

contrast would seem to require a rather more dualistic or Gnostic implication: the body (even the believer's resurrection body) is contrasted somehow with the spirit. Apart from a more satisfactory accounting of these two contrasts within Reicke's framework, this framework should be dismissed.³¹⁶

For a third option, some have argued that κριθῶσιν is parallel to the action in v. 4, which not only speaks of the surprise that the Gentiles experienced at the refusal of Christians to participate in sinful behavior but also speaks of these Gentiles "maligning" (βλασφημοῦντες) believers: "Peter retains his focus on the maligning of believers by nonbelievers, but here he uses the word κρίνω instead of βλασφημέω."³¹⁷ On this reading, the preaching to the dead preceded the maligning of the Gentiles. In itself, the fact that this condemnation of believers by unbelievers—this judgment κατὰ ἄνθρώπους, "according to men"—came after the preaching would not necessarily require that the preaching to the dead preceded their death, but the fact that the dead faced this persecution σαρκί, "in flesh," would entail that they were still alive when

³¹⁶ It might also be worth asking whether Reicke's reading can be reconciled with Jesus' statement: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. **He does not come into judgment**, but has passed from death to life." John 5:24, ESV, emphasis added. Cf. John 5:29. Notice that the same contrast between life (ζωή) and judgment (κρίσις) made by Jesus in this verse is drawn in 1 Peter 4:6. Since John 5 clearly does deny that believers will come under the judgment of God, this passage is more problematic for Reicke's reading than for the others which see physical death as a type of judgment on sin.

³¹⁷ Martin Williams, 221. See also Elliott, 738. Forbes, 143. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 239.

they faced it. This means that death came after the judgment, the judgment came after the preaching, and, therefore, death came after the preaching.

Just as κριθῶσιν is directly contrasted with ζῶσιν and just as σαρκί is contrasted with πνεύματι, κατὰ ἀνθρώπους is contrasted with κατὰ θεόν. Scholars have suggested that κατὰ ἀνθρώπους means something like “in men’s estimation,”³¹⁸ “from a human point of view,”³¹⁹ “on a human level,”³²⁰ or “in the eyes of human beings.”³²¹ It would then constitute a contrast between two perspectives, two narratives about the ultimate fate of the dead who heard the good news about Jesus.³²² On this suggestion, the straightforward rendering “according to men” already used above would then suffice, provided that the phrase is understood much like it is in the Gospel titles. Although not technically its grammatical function here,³²³ the phrase could be used to answer the

318 Selwyn, 215. He also observed that Pauline usage of the idiom is always singular (κατὰ ἄνθρωπον), even when the referent is plural, concluding thereby that “[t]he plural in St. Peter’s phrase is less adverbial and more concrete, as though the ‘men’ in question were envisaged as real persons, who opinions rather than actions were in mind.”

319 Davids, 155.

320 Achtemeier, 288.

321 Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 238. In the same location, Dalton cited Wisdom of Solomon 3:4 as parallel. See also Clowney: “If Peter does not have the Wisdom passage directly in mind, he certainly is following the same familiar line of thought: the wicked scorn the behaviour of the righteous, but the righteous dead are justified in spite of the accusations of the wicked.” Clowney, 176.

322 Michaels points out a similar contrast at work in 1 Peter 2:4. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 239.

323 Grudem goes so far as to suggest that the senses “in the opinion of men” and “in the opinion or evaluation of God” are unjustified since “the Greek *kata* with accusative cannot take that specific sense of the English ‘according to’.” Grudem, *1 Peter*, 171. Grudem provided a reference to BAGD in support of this assertion, but it is far from clear how he intended this support to be derived. Rather, the equivalent section of BDAG will be quoted below in the main text of this work in support of the

question, “Who said?” or “According to whom?” In other words, those who heard the good news about Jesus were subsequently judged “according to men” or “on men’s telling.” Whether this is because these people actually viewed death as the judgment of God upon man for sin³²⁴ or because these people were themselves directly acting as judges over believers, the point of the phrase is that, if you asked for the opinion of unbelievers (ἄνθρωπος) about the fate of the believers who had died (νεκροῖς), those unbelievers would tell you that they considered those believers to be authoritatively “judged.” Their account, however, would then be contrasted with a more authoritative account in the second half of the ἵνα subjunctive clause.

This first half of the ἵνα subjunctive clause, then, should already be sufficient to establish that the dead who heard good news were not dead when they heard good news. Whether it was part of the purpose of the preaching or merely the result of the

same sort of reading that Grudem was opposing. Elliott seems to make the best sense of the grammar: “The phrase qualifies ‘judged’ (*krihōsi*). The noun *anthrōpous* (lit., “humans”) names the norm and identifies the subjects of the judging.” Elliott also cites the significant example of John 8:15, where Christ says of His critics, “You judge according to the flesh.” Elliott, 736.

324 Davids, citing Wisdom 2:24, remarked, “Thus the observer might comment with bitter sarcasm on the death of a Christian, ‘But through the devil’s envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it’.” Davids, 154. Achtemeier dissented: “[T]he understanding of death as the judgment on sin... is not entirely relevant in this context, particularly if the phrase κατὰ ἄνθρωπος is taken to refer to the opinion of non-Christian contemporaries, since such an understanding of death would be foreign to them.” Achtemeier, 288.

preaching,³²⁵ the judgment certainly came after the preaching. The judgment either refers to physical death (as God’s judgment on sin) or refers to persecution in this life (i.e., persecution “in flesh” as merely human judgment on godliness). Either way, this means that the preaching took place prior to the deaths of those described as dead. If the preaching took place prior to their deaths, then this verse cannot be used to justify a PME doctrine. Moreover, if κριθῶσιν refers to persecution in this life, then the dead in view are almost certainly the believing dead rather than the dead in general.³²⁶ There may be further indication of this in the ζῶσιν clause that follows.

325 The syntax certainly allows one to understand that the judgment came because of the preaching and not merely after it. Due to the difficulty in understanding how “judgment” could be part of the purpose of the evangelism, however, most commentators have held that the μέν... δέ construction makes the κριθῶσιν clause merely concessive (“so that, even though they might be judged”) rather than part of the actual purpose of the main verb (“so that they might be judged”). E.g., Achtemeier, 287n151; Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 239; Martin Williams, 220. Nevertheless, if one takes the judgment as some form of persecution from unbelievers, it is easy enough to see how such hatred from the world could be part of the purpose of the preaching, especially given the comparison here between believers in 1 Peter 4:6 and Christ Himself in 1 Peter 3:18. See Matthew 10:16-25; John 15:18-27.

326 Even if κριθῶσιν refers to physical death, the emphasis of καί seems best explained by the remarks of Kelly and Selwyn, both quoted above in note 285 on page 153, to the effect that the Christian dead, whose passing prior to the Parousia required explanation, are in view here. Further, if Jesus’ statements about life and judgment in John 5:25, 29 have any bearing on this discussion, then there is most likely an implied contrast between the unbelieving dead (those soon to be judged in v. 5) and the believing dead (those enabled to live in v. 6). There is also the remote possibility that κριθῶσιν refers to both physical death and persecution.

4:6 ...ζῶσιν δὲ κατὰ θεὸν πνεύματι.

There can be no doubt that the phrase “they might live according to God in spirit” refers somehow to the salvation of these dead ones. At least, there is no debate in the literature on that score. There are two issues, however, that shed further light on the question of PME.³²⁷ One is the meaning of κατὰ θεὸν in contrast to the phrase κατὰ ἀνθρώπους. The other is the possibility that this ἵνα subjunctive is not only a purpose clause but also a result clause, in which case the passage would seem to indicate that the salvation here mentioned is experienced by all of the “dead,” however extensive the referent of that term is intended to be.

The μέν... δέ construction naturally leads one to expect that the senses of κατὰ θεὸν and κατὰ ἀνθρώπους are equivalent,³²⁸ “but this alone does not solve the problem;

327 It is a matter of curiosity whether ζῶσιν refers to the sort of resurrection life which believers have already begun in principle prior to their physical death. To put it another way, might ζάω have regeneration or sanctification (rather than resurrection or glorification) as its theological referent? If so, then even the action of the ζῶσιν clause has its inception prior to the deaths of the dead who heard good news. Many are in agreement with Bigg, 170, however, whose suggestion that the action of κριθῶσιν (aorist) precedes the action of ζῶσιν (present) we have already seen. If κριθῶσιν refers to physical death, then on Bigg’s hermeneutic, the subsequent ζῶσιν could not have begun in this life. However, if κριθῶσιν is seen as parallel to βλασφημοῦντες, this is a live possibility. Alternatively, since timing is at least less of a function of tense than aspect is outside of the indicative mood (Wallace, 497f), the question of one action preceding the other might be less clear cut than Bigg suggested. The theological consequence of reading ζῶσιν as a reference to regeneration would then be that all of those referred to by νεκροῖς could have been regenerated prior to their deaths.

328 Achtemeier, 288. Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 239. Elliott, 737.

it only restricts the options.”³²⁹ There are basically two options. The first has already been suggested above: *κατά ἀνθρώπους* takes the sense of “in men’s opinion,” and this would naturally be contrasted with God’s opinion here. More precisely, the accusative here is “of the person according to whose will, pleasure, or manner something occurs.”³³⁰ The point of these phrases would then be precisely this contrast of wills concerning the Christian dead. According to the will of men, those Christians who have died were judged, but according to the will of God, they are living.

This seems preferable to understanding the contrast to be between the way men are judged (i.e., “in flesh,” and presumably by God) and the way God lives (i.e., “in spirit”), which is the only real alternative offered in the literature.³³¹ The teaching of Scripture elsewhere might not align with this reading. Jesus’ teaching in John 5 seems to provide two contraindications. On the one hand, He speaks of the “believer... not entering judgment” (*πιστεύων... εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται*, v. 24), and on the other hand, He says “the Father has life in Himself” (*ὁ πατήρ ἔχει ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτῷ*, v. 26). The former statement seems to imply that death itself is not, strictly speaking, a judgment on sin,

329 Forbes, 142.

330 BDAG, s.v. “κατά,” B.5.α. See also 1 Peter 5:2 for this sense of *κατά θεόν*.

331 E.g., Goppelt, 290. Grudem, *1 Peter*, 171. Best and Selwyn curiously blend the two options, with Best taking *κατά ἀνθρώπους* to mean “according to human standards” (158) and Selwyn taking it to mean “in men’s estimation” (215f), yet both taking *κατά θεόν* to mean “as God lives.” In this way, they violate the parallelism one would expect from the *μὲν... δέ* construction.

and the latter statement seems to deny the possibility that humans could live the way God lives since His is an eternal, self-existent life. Similarly, Hebrews 9:27, already studied above, seems to imply that judgment comes after death rather than death itself being a judgment. Romans 5:12 and 6:23 mitigate this argument considerably, however, and κατὰ θεόν requires only a certain similitude of life rather than total equivalence.

Even if this alternative should be followed, it would not affect the answer to the question at hand about the fate of the nescient today. It would only partially remove one of the objections to Reicke's suggestion that the judgment referred to is the final judgment,³³² but the problem that Reicke's reading has with the σαρκί... πνεύματι contrast would remain wholly unscathed. Whether the purpose of the good news was to make these dead live "as God lives" or "according to the will of God," salvation of some sort is thus signified. If salvation was the purpose of this preaching to the dead, the text seems either (1) to say that this purpose was definitely fulfilled in all cases such that all the dead were saved or (2) to say nothing whatsoever about the actual outcome. The latter case holds true if this is a purpose clause and not a result clause. In that case, even if the passage were teaching a PME doctrine, the passage would still not teach that

³³² Since the majority who understand κατὰ ἀνθρώπους to mean "like men" still take the judgment to be physical death, this would not be a wholesale concession to Reicke's position.

the nescient are able to repent unto salvation in Christ after death. As was already observed in the introduction, evangelism by itself does not save. It is only in those cases where evangelism is met with faith and repentance in its recipient that salvation has been granted. Thus, if the passage does not teach that the evangelism here was so met, then Peter has not explicitly taught here that repentance unto salvation is possible for anyone after death.

Bigg, then, was perhaps partially correct when he maintained that “the object of the preaching was the salvation of the dead; but St. Peter does not say, and probably does not mean, that the object was in all cases attained.”³³³ As has just been seen, if these ἵνα subjunctive clauses are only purpose clauses, then Peter does not say that the object was attained in even one single case. However, that is not the case if these ἵνα subjunctive clauses are understood as result clauses or as purpose-result clauses. In either of these two cases, the implication would be that, whoever the referents are for νεκροῖς, these dead were all judged in the flesh according to men and are also all living in the spirit according to God. If these dead are all conceived of as living in the spirit, then they are certainly all believers now. The argument given above should already suffice to establish (1) that the preaching was prior to the judgment, (2) that the

333 Bigg, 171.

judgment was either physical death or persecution that took place while they were still “in flesh” (i.e. still alive), and therefore (3) that the preaching took place while these dead were still living. If this preaching while they were alive resulted not only in the “judgment” of these dead ones but also in their salvation, then surely these dead ones are those who trusted in Christ prior to their deaths or, as Paul referred to such in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, “the dead in Christ.”³³⁴

Are these ἵνα subjunctive clauses either result clauses or purpose-result clauses rather than merely purpose clauses? There are no grammatical or contextual grounds for a definitive answer, but three considerations are offered here. The first is the cultural-linguistic observation “that the Semitic mind was notoriously unwilling to draw a sharp dividing-line between purpose and consequence.”³³⁵ However, this

potential for ambiguity cannot resolve the issue in and of itself. The second

334 It is unclear to what extent Achtemeier has accidentally assumed such an exegesis when he wrote that “if v. 6 refers to the final judgment, there will be no condemnation involved in it. The sole outcome of the judgment here is eternal life in the divine sphere; there is no mention of any rejection of those who have rejected Christ.” Achtemeier, 289. Here he speaks of an “outcome,” but he had already asserted that “ἵνα is to be taken as final (‘in order that’) rather than consecutive (‘so that’ or ‘with the result that’).” Ibid., 287. If ἵνα starts a purpose clause, nothing in the syntax requires that the purpose was in all cases fulfilled.

335 C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 142. A similar note comes from BDAG, s.v. “ἵνα”: “In many cases purpose and result cannot be clearly differentiated, and hence ἵνα is used for the result that follows according to the purpose of the subject or of God. As in Semitic and Gr-Rom. thought, purpose and result are identical in declarations of the divine will.” Wallace sums it up thus: “[T]he NT writers employ the language to reflect their theology: what God purposes is what happens, and, consequently, ἵνα is used to express both the divine purpose and the result.” Wallace, 473.

consideration is the minor struggle that exegetes have in accounting for the κριθῶσιν clause if it is taken as a purpose clause. How can judgment be the purpose of the evangelism? Would it not be better to take this as a result clause? Possible replies to this have already been considered above,³³⁶ and it is not a terrible difficulty. Finally, there is the phrase εἰς τοῦτο that introduces this verse. Just taking the phrase on its own, it could be literally rendered “into this.” Wallace lists both cause and result separately as possible connotations,³³⁷ so one might be tempted to view the NIV’s “this is the reason,” the ESV’s “this is why,” and the KJV’s “for this cause” as poisoning the well a bit. However, εἰς τοῦτο is apparently used to indicate purpose in 1 Peter 2:21 and 3:9, to say nothing of its use elsewhere in the New Testament, so one would expect purpose to be at least part of the implication of the ἵνα clauses here.

Context and Conclusion

Although some of the more specific exegetical questions that have been raised in this chapter cannot be definitively answered, and although not all of those exegetical questions that could be answered have been asked, the theological question posed in the introduction can be answered with confidence. No, Peter does not teach in this

336 See note 325 on page 168.

337 Wallace, 369. See also G.K. Beale, et al., *An Interpretive Lexicon of New Testament Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 40n5.

passage that the nescient are able to turn from their sins to salvation in Christ after they have died. That is not to say that the passage denies such a possibility. The passage is simply silent on that question because other pastoral concerns are in view. Rather than a concern for the lost who have no access to the gospel *per se* or even a concern for God's fairness in judging the nescient, a concern for the perseverance of believers in the face of persecution is primary in this passage. The verse in question focuses on concerns for a particular subset of persecuted believers: namely, for those believers who had already died when Peter wrote this letter and thus did not live until the expected parousia.

Chapter Five

Summary

This work has sought to determine whether or not exegetical support can be found in 1 Peter for one rather controversial theological solution to a pressing pastoral problem. The pastoral problem is that many Christians struggle to comprehend how a perfectly good God could forever sentence to eternal conscious torment in hell those who have had no knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ during this life. The moral intuition of many people screams that it is unjust to sentence those without knowledge of the Gospel (a group frequently referred to in this work simply as “the nescient”) to eternity in hell. One of the theological solutions that has been proposed is the doctrine of Christ’s descent between His death and resurrection (the *triduum mortis*) into the realm of the dead, where He preached the Gospel to the dead and whence He brought many out with Him. This doctrine has been called “postmortem evangelism,” which has frequently been shortened to “PME.” The primary task at hand has been to determine whether this doctrine can legitimately claim support from 1 Peter.

With that in mind, the first chapter sought first to carefully define at length the exegetical question to be asked so that a clear answer could be proposed. Does Peter teach in 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 that repentance unto salvation in Jesus Christ is possible after death for the nescient today? The first chapter sought to demonstrate that there have been significant voices in Church history who have not only taught such a doctrine but also have explicitly appealed to 1 Peter to make their case. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, and Cyril of Alexandria all believed that 1 Peter referred to Christ's descent into the realm of the dead and referred to a proclamation Christ made to the dead while He was there. Although Augustine had significant theological reservations about this interpretation, he did not have great confidence in the merits of his own interpretation, which despite his own trepidation came to hold sway over most of those who came after him. In more recent times, however, the monopoly that was once fairly effectively held by the Augustinian line of interpretation has been broken, and many able scholars have held PME doctrines of various sorts, which all appeal to 1 Peter on some level.

The point of the second chapter is that, to determine whether or not Scripture teaches a PME doctrine, there really is no substitute for a detailed exegesis of 1 Peter. On the one hand, none of the other passages adduced in support of PME can be rightly

taken to teach it.³³⁸ Although John 5:28f is surely about the resurrection and final judgment, John 5:25 is just as surely about the preaching of the Gospel to the spiritually dead. The infamous “baptism for the dead” of 1 Corinthians 15:29, whatever it might mean, certainly does not say anything about Christ’s descent into the realm of the dead to preach the Gospel to the nescient, nor does it imply that any other agent or agents are engaged in any kind of ongoing ministry to the nescient today. Christ’s “descent” in Ephesians 4:9 is most likely His descent from Heaven to Earth in the incarnation and not a descent from Earth into the realm of the dead. Even if Ephesians 4:9 did refer to Christ’s descent into the realm of the dead, it says absolutely nothing about Christ preaching the Gospel there or bringing the dead out with Him. On the other hand, there is scant Scriptural evidence to support dogmatic denial of PME. Hebrews 9:27 only says that one thing happens after another thing: “death, then judgment.” It does not explicitly teach anything more than this, and it is at least debatable whether anything more than this is even implied. The passage quite simply neither teaches nor denies that Christ has given or still gives a chance for the nescient to repent and receive salvation during a period of time after death but before judgment. Even with

338 Chapter 2 deals substantially with the primary passages, but chapter 1 deals with several other passages summarily in note 67 on page 34.

Luke 16, wherein several provocative statements might perhaps give proper indication that the destiny of a person is fixed at death, this possible testimony is mitigated by interpretive issues, particularly in the case of the nescient. The testimony of all these passages to this particular issue is far too weak to effectively oppose a PME doctrine if such could be found in 1 Peter or even to support a PME doctrine whether or not it is not found in 1 Peter.

Thus, the third chapter examines 1 Peter 3, focusing on a phrase-by-phrase exegesis of vv. 18-20. These verses have often been thought to teach that Christ, between His death and resurrection, descended into the prison-like realm of the dead, where He preached the Gospel to the disembodied spirits of the dead, who are also portrayed as having heard the Gospel in 1 Peter 4:6. There appears to be an emerging scholarly consensus that this is not at all what the author of the text had in mind. Rather, the vocabulary, grammar, and context of the passage seem to indicate that Christ, after His resurrection, ascended into heaven, where He proclaimed the reign of God to evil spirits, who are then portrayed as having been subjected to Him in 1 Peter 3:22. Some of the traditions preserved in the book of 1 Enoch regarding fallen angels in Genesis 6 appear to be an important cultural backdrop for the understanding of this passage, as they are in Jude and 2 Peter. In particular, 1 Enoch mentions a prison for

fallen angels in one of the lower levels of heaven. However, even if some fatal flaw should emerge with this line of interpretation, and even if it could be effectively argued that Christ made a Gospel proclamation, the simple fact is that the text gives no indication that Christ's proclamation was well-received by any of these "spirits who were disobedient in the days of Noah," which spirits were, on any reading, hardly analogous to the nescient today in terms of their epistemic situation. Hence, the passage does not teach PME, but even if it did, it does not teach the possibility of repentance unto salvation in Jesus after death for the nescient today.

Chapter four turns to 1 Peter 4, focusing again on a phrase-by-phrase exegesis, this time of vv. 5-6. PME advocates have held that v. 6 gives the justification for God's judgment of the living and the dead in v. 5: namely, God can rightly judge all because all, including the dead, will have had an opportunity to respond to the Gospel since Jesus evangelized even the dead. However, the dead who heard good news in v. 6 are necessarily a subset of the dead to be judged in v. 5 because of (1) the way the phrase "living and dead" operated in the early Church and (2) the aorist tense of εὐηγγελίσθη, which even PME advocates take to be a simple past tense. It is far more likely that the dead heard good news about Jesus (as most probably indicated by the aorist passive εὐηγγελίσθη, "He was preached") than that Jesus Himself preached to them during the

triduum mortis (an idea which has to be inserted into the text whole cloth since the grammar could not indicate Christ as the agent of the preaching, even if εὐηγγελίσθη were functioning as an impersonal passive, which is uncertain). Finally, whether the judgment in the flesh according to men refers to physical death or to primarily verbal persecution that was received while they were still alive, the syntax requires that the preaching took place prior to it. Though they are described as dead now, the preaching took place while they were still alive. Hence, this text cannot be legitimately employed in the service of any PME doctrine, and it therefore clearly does not teach any possibility of repentance unto salvation in Christ after death for the nescient.

The conclusion that must be drawn is that no solid Scriptural support can be found to justify teaching a PME doctrine and, as a result, that no PME doctrine should be taught by pastors, particularly from the pulpit, as a way to address the pastoral problem presented by parishioners perplexed by the justice of God in dealing with the nescient. However, it should be noted that a prohibition of preaching or teaching PME is not quite the same as definitively stating that the doctrine is false. To the contrary, if, as has been argued, Hebrews 9:27 and Luke 16 do not necessarily teach against this doctrine, then some sort of PME doctrine might very well be true, for all we know. The

point is simply that the Lord has not seen fit to reveal such a doctrine to us; therefore, we must not presume to teach it.

Not all would agree with this statement. Indeed, for some the silence of Scripture appears practically to function as an invitation to speculation. Pinnock, for example, went at least so far as to concede that “the scriptural evidence for postmortem encounter is not abundant,” but proceeded to suggest that this “scantiness is relativized by the strength of the theological argument for it.”³³⁹ There is not space to take up that theological argument in earnest here, but any theology which does not come directly from Scripture, or at least by good and necessary inference from it, should be suspect. In particular, any suggestion that God *must* conduct some sort of PME simply because human standards of justice demand that He do so should be firmly resisted. While one can fairly anticipate that a sense of the true justice of God would be found in His image bearers, that image is marred by the fall. Hence, one cannot necessarily draw conclusions about the true justice of God from fallible human moral intuition, for “the heart is deceitful above all things.”

Specifically on the question of PME, the position advocated herein is essentially that of “pessimistic agnosticism.” Scripture does not teach that it happens. Luke 16

339 Pinnock, *Wideness*, 169. Similarly, see extended remarks from Jonathan, 146-151.

gives possible but uncertain indication that it never happens. Apart from clear Scriptural witness, epistemic humility seems the most appropriate way forward, no matter how strong the existential urge might be to find some other way. That being the case, PME is not an acceptable theological solution to the pastoral problem of the nescient. Other solutions have been proposed, but there is not space to consider or even list all of them here.³⁴⁰

³⁴⁰ A helpful summary of different positions that have been advocated on this topic may be found in Jonathan, 23-47. The phrase “pessimistic agnosticism” comes from Jonathan, 25.

Appendix

Concerning the Alleged Impersonal Passive of εὐαγγελίζεῖν with an Examination of Every Occurrence in the New Testament

Four factors suggest that εὐηγγελίσθη probably is not an impersonal passive. First, there are only a handful of impersonal constructions of any type in the New Testament, including “the classical impersonal expressions in which the subject is implied in the verb (ἐκήρυξε scil. ὁ κῆρυξ),” and the impersonal passive construction was rare even in Classical Greek.³⁴¹ Selwyn suggested Romans 10:10 as the only possible parallel, and it seems that every commentator since has simply fallen back on Selwyn’s citation.³⁴² Achtemeier suggestively pointed out that Romans 10:10 “is a somewhat different construction” from 1 Peter 4:6, but he said no more than this.³⁴³ In Romans 10:10, πιστεύεται and ὁμολογεῖται are both third person present tense indicative verbs, so the middle and passive voices both share the same form. The fact that the previous verse is in the second person could indicate that these are passive verbs (“with the

341 BDF, §§129-130. See also Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, rev. Gordon M. Messing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), §935.

342 Selwyn, 214. Those who have cited Romans 10:10 as the only other instance of an impersonal passive include Kelly, 174; Goppelt, 288; and Davids, 154.

343 Achtemeier, 287.

heart it is believed” and “with the mouth it is confessed”), but it is also possible to read these verbs as benefactive middles (εἰς δικαιοσύνην, “into righteousness”; εἰς σωτηρίαν, “into salvation”) with an implicit generic third person subject (ESV: “one believes... one confesses”).³⁴⁴ This generic or indefinite use is not quite the same as an impersonal passive. Even assuming that these verbs are in the passive voice, πιστεύειν and ὁμολογεῖν most likely refer to believing and confessing the specific things which were already explicitly expressed in the previous verse. The grammatical subjects of each verb (which Greek does not require to be explicitly expressed since the verbs already imply their subjects) would function as their direct objects, which in this case would be the contents of the belief and of the confession, respectively. In other words, taking these verbs as passive, one could still translate “it is believed” and “it is confessed,” with the antecedents to the word “it” in both cases being spelled out in the previous verse. Moreover, this seems preferable to an impersonal passive reading, especially if cognate direct objects are implied (“faith is believed,” “confession is made”), since it could imply that the acts of believing and confessing, with the contents of each being self-referential, justify and save a person. In brief, it is unclear whether

³⁴⁴ “The nominative subject of the third person may be omitted... [w]hen the subject is indefinite... [or w]hen it is a general idea of person.” Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §931.

there is any other example of an impersonal passive in the New Testament, but that in itself does not establish that εὐηγγελίσθη is not the sole example of an impersonal passive in the New Testament.

Second, impersonal passives primarily occur “in the perfect and tenses derived from the perfect.”³⁴⁵ Goodwin observed that “the cognate subject [could be] implied implied in the verb itself,” but noted that “[t]his occurs chiefly in... neuter participial expressions.”³⁴⁶ He illustrated this with seven examples: five in the perfect tense, one in the pluperfect, and one in the aorist. Thus, the impersonal passive, already rare in general, is even rarer in the aorist tense and in the indicative mood, even in Classical Greek. This still does not rule out the possibility that εὐηγγελίσθη could be an impersonal passive, but it does reduce the probability.

Third, there is a lexical dimension to this phenomenon. “The personal construction is more common with λέγεται, ἀγγέλλεται, ὁμολογεῖται and other passive verbs of *saying* (regular with passive verbs of *thinking*).”³⁴⁷ Εὐαγγελίζειν is surely a verb of saying, cognate with ἀγγέλλεται, which Smyth categorized thus, making it less likely that it is here being used impersonally. For that matter, the verbs from Romans 10:10

345 Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §1750.

346 William W. Goodwin, *A Greek Grammar* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1892), §1240.

347 Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §1982a.

fall under this category, too. Πιστεύεται must be a verb of thinking, and ὁμολογεῖται was just specifically mentioned by Smyth as a verb of saying. These observations make it less likely there is a single use of the impersonal passive voice in the New Testament.

Fourth and finally, transitivity matters, for “Greek uses impersonals from intransitives... only when the active is itself intransitive.”³⁴⁸ “A passive may be formed in the case of verbs ordinarily intransitive but allowing a cognate accusative in the active.”³⁴⁹ Smyth seems to be indicating that, if an intransitive verb is in the impersonal passive voice, then the verb must be able to take a cognate accusative in the active voice. Εὐαγγελίζειν is sometimes intransitive. Within the New Testament, εὐαγγελίζειν occurs fifty-four times. There are at least eleven instances in which it functions intransitively, all of them in the active voice, with an additional four instances that might be debatable for various reasons. Twelve times, though, the accompanying word in the accusative is a person, and there are two additional occasions where the verb is used with a passive sense with people as the subject. In these cases, the verb functions much like its English cognate, “evangelize.” In English, one might “evangelize” a person, but it would be strange to say that one “evangelized” Jesus. Εὐαγγελίζειν, on

348 Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §1751.

349 Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §1749.

the other hand, can take Jesus as its direct object quite naturally.³⁵⁰ This is because the content of the good news being preached can be expressed with the accusative case. In fact, the content of εὐαγγελίζεiv is expressed in the New Testament twenty-two times this way, on a few occasions with the cognate εὐαγγέλιον as the direct object. Thus, although εὐαγγελίζεiv functions intransitively at times, since it takes a cognate accusative in the active, an impersonal passive cannot be ruled out on these grounds.

Taken together, the data suggests that it is unlikely that there are any impersonal passives in the New Testament, let alone that εὐηγγελίσθη is an impersonal passive such that the verb implies a cognate direct object. Nevertheless, this is the suggestion for εὐηγγελίσθη (1 Peter 4:6 being the only occurrence of an aorist passive indicative of εὐαγγελίζεiv in the New Testament) in BDAG as well as BDF.³⁵¹ Such has also been the view of many other scholars,³⁵² but there is by no means a scholarly consensus on the matter.³⁵³ Nothing about the grammar or syntax require that it be

350 See note 305 on page 160.

351 BDAG, s.v. “εὐαγγελίζομαι.” BDF, §130.

352 For example, Bigg, 170. Goppelt, 288. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 236. Davids, 154. Elliot, 732. Forbes, 141.

353 For the view that εὐηγγελίσθη is personal, with Christ as the subject of the preaching, see Selwyn, 214f. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 2nd ed., 232-233. Kelly, 172-174. Achtemeier, 287. Schreiner, 207. Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 2:198.

impersonal, and, as argued above, there are good contextual reasons for thinking it is not impersonal.³⁵⁴

The following pages feature a chart documenting every use of εὐαγγελίζεῖν in the New Testament, sorted primarily by the transitivity of the verb in each instance.³⁵⁵

Each was analyzed to determine, if possible, the agent doing the preaching, the recipient of the preaching, and the content of the preaching. The grammatical case of each is noted. Conclusions about transitivity were drawn primarily on the basis of whether or not there was an accompanying noun in the accusative or, in those instances where the verb is passive, if a subject is specified. In some instances, prepositional phrases specify the agent, recipient, or content of the preaching, and they are noted accordingly.

³⁵⁴ In particular, see note 302 on page 160.

³⁵⁵ Although the chart is similar in some ways to that found in Griffiths, it was developed without knowledge of his recent study, and its focus on the transitivity of the verb distinguishes it from Griffiths' work. See Jonathan I. Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 42 (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 20-24.

Location	Voice (Function)	Agent	Agent Case	Recipient	Recipient Case	Content	Content Case	Gloss	Type
Luke 4:18	Active		[Infinitive]	πτωχοῖς	Dative			He has anointed me... to preach to the poor	Intransitive
Luke 9:6	Active	[they]	Nominative Antecedent (Implied)					They... preaching	Intransitive
Acts 14:7	Active	[they]	Nominative Antecedent (Implied)					they were preaching	Intransitive
Romans 1:15	Active		[Infinitive]	ὑμῖν	Dative			there is eagerness on my part to preach also to you in Rome	Intransitive
Romans 15:20	Active		[Infinitive]					I... being ambitious to preach...	Intransitive
1 Corinthians 1:17	Active		[Infinitive]					Christ sent me, not to baptize, but to preach...	Intransitive
1 Corinthians 9:16	Active	[I]	Nominative (Implied)					if I am preaching	Intransitive
1 Corinthians 9:16	Active	[I]	Nominative (Implied)					if I do not preach	Intransitive
1 Corinthians 9:18	Active	[I]	Nominative Antecedent (Implied)					preaching free of charge	Intransitive
2 Corinthians 10:16	Active		[Infinitive]					to preach in the [lands] beyond you	Intransitive
Galatians 4:13	Active	[I]	Nominative (Implied)	ὑμῖν	Dative			I preached to you	Intransitive
Luke 20:1	Active	αὐτοῦ	Genitive Absolute	λαὸν	Accusative [of other participle]			He... preaching... [or "evangelizing the people"]	Intransitive?
Acts 8:12	Active	Φιλίππῳ	Dative Antecedent			περὶ	Prepositional phrase	Philip, preaching [about the kingdom and the name]	Intransitive?
Galatians 1:8	Active	ἄγγελος	Nominative	ὑμῖν	Dative	παρ'	Prepositional phrase	If an angel might preach to you against what we announced...	Intransitive?
Revelation 14:6	Active		[Infinitive]	ἐπὶ	Prepositional phrase	εὐαγγέλιον	Accusative [shared with participle]	an angel... having a good message to preach to those dwelling...	Intransitive?
Luke 1:19	Active		[Infinitive]	σοι	Dative	ταῦτα	Accusative	God sent me to announce to you these things	Transitive: Content
Luke 2:10	Active	[I]	Nominative (Implied)	ὑμῖν	Dative	χαρὰν	Accusative	I announce joy to you	Transitive: Content
Luke 4:43	Active		[Infinitive]	πόλεσιν	Dative	βασιλείαν	Accusative	I have to announce the kingdom of God to the other towns	Transitive: Content
Luke 8:1	Active	αὐτὸς	Nominative Antecedent			βασιλείαν	Accusative	He... announcing the kingdom	Transitive: Content
Luke 16:16	Passive	[unspecified]				βασιλεία	Nominative	kingdom is announced	Transitive: Content

Acts 5:42	Active	[they]	Nominative Antecedent (Implied)			Χριστὸν	Accusative	they... announcing Christ Jesus	Transitive: Content
Acts 8:4	Active	διασπαρέντες	Nominative Antecedent			λόγον	Accusative	the scattered ones... announcing the word	Transitive: Content
Acts 8:35	Active	Φίλιππος	Nominative	αὐτῷ	Dative	Ἰησοῦν	Accusative	Philip announced Jesus to him	Transitive: Content
Acts 10:36	Active	[He]	Nominative Antecedent (Implied)			εἰρήνην	Accusative	God... announcing peace	Transitive: Content
Acts 11:20	Active	ἄνδρες	Nominative Antecedent	[πρὸς]	Prepositional phrase [relates to main verb]	Κύριον	Accusative	men... announcing the Lord Jesus [to even Hellenists]	Transitive: Content
Acts 15:35	Active	Παῦλος καὶ...	Nominative			λόγον	Accusative	Paul and Barnabas... announcing... the word...	Transitive: Content
Acts 17:18	Active	[he]	Nominative (Implied)			Ἰησοῦν...	Accusative	he announced Jesus and the resurrection	Transitive: Content
Romans 10:15	Active	[unspecified]				ἀγαθά	Accusative	the feet of those announcing the good	Transitive: Content
1 Corinthians 15:1	Active	[I]	Nominative (Implied)	ὑμῖν	Dative	εὐαγγέλιον	Accusative (Antecedent to Relative)	the gospel that I announced to you	Transitive: Content
1 Corinthians 15:2	Active	[I]	Nominative (Implied)	ὑμῖν	Dative	λόγῳ	Dative [τίμι as relative]	If you cling to the word [which] I preached to you	Transitive: Content
2 Corinthians 11:7	Active	[I]	Nominative (Implied)	ὑμῖν	Dative	εὐαγγέλιον	Accusative	I announced the gospel of God to you	Transitive: Content
Galatians 1:8	Active	[we]	Nominative	ὑμῖν	Dative	ὅ	Accusative (Relative pronoun)	...might preach to you against what we announced to you	Transitive: Content
Galatians 1:11	Passive	ὑπ' ἐμοῦ	Prepositional phrase	ὑμῖν	Dative [relates to main verb]	εὐαγγέλιον	Accusative Antecedent	...known to you that the gospel preached by me...	Transitive: Content
Galatians 1:16	Active	[I]	Nominative (Implied)	ἔθνεσιν	Dative [but with preposition]	αὐτὸν	Accusative	so that I might announce Him among the Gentiles	Transitive: Content
Galatians 1:23	Active	[he]	Nominative (Implied)			πίστιν	Accusative	...now he is announcing the faith which he formerly ravaged.	Transitive: Content
Ephesians 2:17	Active	[He]	Nominative (Implied)	ὑμῖν	Dative	εἰρήνην	Accusative	He announced peace to you who are far and peace to those near.	Transitive: Content
Ephesians 3:8	Active		[Infinitive]	ἔθνεσιν	Dative	πλοῦτος	Accusative	...given to me to announce to the Gentiles the riches of Christ	Transitive: Content
1 Thessalonians 3:6	Active	Τιμοθέου	Genitive Absolute	ἡμῖν	Dative	πίστιν καὶ...	Accusative	Timothy... announcing to us your faith and love and that...	Transitive: Content
1 Peter 1:25	Passive	[unspecified]		ὑμᾶς	Accusative [but with preposition]	ῥῆμα	Nominative	This is the word having been announced to you.	Transitive: Content
1 Peter 4:6	Passive	[unspecified]		νεκροῖς	Dative	[He]	Nominative (Implied)	For into this He was announced also to the dead, so that...	Transitive: Content
Matthew 11:5	Passive	[unspecified]		πτωχοὶ	Nominative			the poor are evangelized	Transitive: Recipient

Luke 3:18	Active	[He]	Nominative (Implied)	λαόν	Accusative			He evangelized the people	Transitive: Recipient
Luke 7:22	Passive	[unspecified]		πτωχοὶ	Nominative			poor are evangelized	Transitive: Recipient
Acts 8:25	Active	[they]	Nominative (Implied)	κώμας	Accusative			they evangelized villages of the Samaritans	Transitive: Recipient
Acts 8:40	Active	Φίλιππος	Nominative	πόλεις	Accusative			Philip evangelized towns	Transitive: Recipient
Acts 13:32	Active	ἡμεῖς	Nominative	ὑμᾶς	Accusative			we evangelize you	Transitive: Recipient
Acts 14:15	Active	ἡμεῖς	Nominative Antecedent	ὑμᾶς	Accusative			we evangelize you	Transitive: Recipient
Acts 14:21	Active	[they]	Nominative Antecedent (Implied)	πόλιν	Accusative			Having evangelized that city, they...	Transitive: Recipient
Acts 16:10	Active		[Infinitive]	αὐτούς	Accusative			God called us to evangelize them	Transitive: Recipient
Galatians 1:9	Active	τις	Nominative	ὑμᾶς	Accusative	παρ'	Prepositional phrase	If anyone is evangelizing you against what you received	Transitive: Recipient
Hebrews 4:2	Passive	[unspecified]		[we]	Nominative Antecedent [Implied]			we are having been evangelized even as they	Transitive: Recipient
Hebrews 4:6	Passive	[unspecified]		[they]	Nominative Antecedent (Implied)			those formerly evangelized did not enter in	Transitive: Recipient
1 Peter 1:12	Active	[unspecified]		ὑμᾶς	Accusative			which have been reported to you by those who evangelized you	Transitive: Recipient
Revelation 10:7	Active	[He]	Nominative (Implied)	δούλους	Accusative			...as He evangelized His servants, the prophets.	Transitive: Recipient

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