

## “FOR A HOLY PRIESTHOOD”: A PETRINE MODEL FOR EVANGELICAL CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

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**Abstract:** Several recent works in evangelical theology of culture appeal either to 1 Peter or to the category of priesthood in setting forth their respective visions. Though the author of 1 Peter includes priesthood in a theology of Christlike cultural engagement, no one to date has explored a Petrine theology of culture focused upon the elements and function of the church's priesthood in Christ. Therefore, this essay highlights warrants for such a study in recent theology-of-culture literature. Then, the letter of 1 Peter receives a close reading for the elements comprising a priesthood model for theology of culture. This essay finds that such a model calls the church to embrace a Christlike, redemptive ethic of responsibility for the godliness of the world.

**Key Words:** *Theology of culture, Petrine theology, redemption, cultural engagement, priesthood, church as sign*

Regarding H. Richard Niebuhr's monumental *Christ and Culture*, theologian Miroslav Volf writes, "What interests me more is the observation that the one text which speaks more pointedly and comprehensively to the problem of 'Christ and culture' than any other in the NT is conspicuously absent from Niebuhr's account. I am referring to 1 Peter, the epistle whose main theme is Christian life in a non-Christian environment."<sup>1</sup> Volf is not alone in drawing upon 1 Peter as a key resource for theology of evangelical cultural engagement. On the other hand, still others draw upon the biblical trope of priesthood in developing insights for cultural engagement but do not consider 1 Peter's use of that theme.<sup>2</sup> Taking these cues from the recent literature, this article asks what vision for the church's engagement with culture results from a consideration of 1 Peter's use of priesthood imagery. First, this investigation will be grounded in a brief review of key works explicitly involving either priesthood or Petrine theology of cultural engagement in their discussions. We will then discuss salient passages in 1 Peter relevant to a Petrine structure for priesthood as a model of cultural engagement. We will see that the Petrine theological vision for engaging culture consists in the church's participation in Christ's priesthood by patiently enduring the burden of taking redemptive responsibility for the godliness of the world. In the interest of balancing thoroughness and concision, samples of the tacit presence of the elements of this Petrine model in

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<sup>1</sup> Miroslav Volf, "Soft Difference: Theological Reflections on the Relation between Church and Culture in 1 Peter," *ExAnd* 10 (1994): 16. The reference is to H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951).

<sup>2</sup> See section I below.

other relevant literature will be included in the footnotes. To begin with, then, we will first consider theology-of-culture literature warranting further investigation of priesthood within a Petrine theology of cultural engagement.

## I. RECENT CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT LITERATURE

1. *Petrine theology of culture.* Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon emphasize the Christian distinction with respect to the host culture in which disciples of Jesus live, which the image of “resident aliens” implies. However, this cultural difference is not to constitute a barrier to the church’s engagement with its neighbors.<sup>3</sup> As such, Hauerwas and Willimon seem to have articulated a vision for accomplishing a task Lesslie Newbigin called for, the task of being signs of the kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup> Anyone familiar with 1 Peter will easily associate the book’s title, *Resident Aliens*, with the phrases “who reside as aliens” (1 Pet 1:1), and “aliens and strangers” (2:11).<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, Hauerwas and Willimon provide no explicit evidence that their key metaphor is an allusion to 1 Peter. Nevertheless, if somehow they do not borrow this Petrine image, they truly keep in step with its spirit.<sup>6</sup> The paradigmatic “aliens” passage is 1 Pet 2:11: “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.” Abstinence from ungodliness, then, is the nature of the church’s difference as “aliens.” Likewise, in explaining their use of the aliens metaphor, Hauerwas and Willimon write, “We want to claim the church’s ‘oddness’ as essential to its faithfulness . . . being the colony of God’s righteousness in a world that refuses to acknowledge God as sovereign. . . . The church . . . teaches us what being moral is.”<sup>7</sup> For them, then, as with 1 Peter, “aliens” represents the church’s moral difference from the non-Christian world, which difference is a function of its Christian identity.

Five years after *Resident Aliens*, Miroslav Volf published a close reading of 1 Peter with respect to the symbolism of the phrase “strangers and aliens.” He argues

<sup>3</sup> Contra William A. Dyrness, *The Earth Is God’s: A Theology of American Culture* (Faith and Cultures; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 75. Hauerwas and Willimon write, “The church’s only concern is *how* to be in the world, in what form, for what purpose”; see Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 43. Also see James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 162. Hunter writes, “Hauerwas doesn’t want people to withdraw from the world as much as he wants people to *be* Christian in it.” Note that Hunter’s comment refers particularly to Stanley Hauerwas’s essay “Why the ‘Sectarian Temptation’ Is a Misrepresentation: A Response to James Gustafson,” in *The Hauerwas Reader* (ed. John and Michael Cartwright Berkman; Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001). Nevertheless, it reflects the consistency on this point in Hauerwas’s theological vision.

<sup>4</sup> Lesslie Newbigin called for the church to heed faithfully its calling as “the bearer to all the nations of a gospel that announces the kingdom of God . . . to become corporately a sign, an instrument, and foretaste of that sovereignty of the one true and living God over all nature, all nations, and all human lives,” Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 124.

<sup>5</sup> Hereafter, all Scripture quotations in English are from the NASB, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Volf, “Soft Difference,” 17. Volf includes *Resident Aliens* among recent literature playing off of the Petrine theme of aliens and strangers.

<sup>7</sup> Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 93–94.

that “aliens and strangers” is Peter’s way of advocating a “soft difference.” That is, the Christian missionary engagement with the non-Christian people in which the church necessarily exists is marked by such confidence in God’s strength and in God’s ability to complete the gospel mission, that Christians “seek to win others without pressure or manipulation, sometimes even ‘without a word’ (3:1).” Such an ethic answers 1 Peter’s exhortation to “gentleness” (3:16).<sup>8</sup> Therefore, Volf adds to other precedents for considering 1 Peter as an important text instructing evangelical theology of culture, though, like Hauerwas and Willimon, he does not explain what importance the Petrine priesthood metaphor might have upon the subject. In the next section, we will briefly discuss several theology-of-culture sources that have the opposite dynamic: they include priesthood explicitly as instructive for theology of culture, yet 1 Peter is either not their source for this metaphor, or they do not consider Petrine insights in any detail.

2. *Non-Petrine priesthood sources.* The four authors discussed here share, as the dynamic of their logic, the movement from OT theology to its application to Christian theology of culture.<sup>9</sup> In particular, creation theology supplies a “creation mandate,” according to which human beings fulfill their God-given purpose for good works in their dominion in the earth.<sup>10</sup> The notion of a creation mandate is evident when William Dyrness writes, “Human agency was meant . . . to bring about an embodied mediation between creation and God.”<sup>11</sup> Moreover, he affirms the identification of such mediation as an act of priesthood, “God’s original plan [for] humanity was to act as a mediator and priest, to unify the creation and offer it back to God.”<sup>12</sup> Not only does he include priesthood as a category in his theology of culture, Dyrness also discusses the importance of 1 Peter for cultural engagement (though he does not consider the Petrine use of priesthood imagery in this respect). Referring to key passages in 1 Peter indicating that Christian cultural engagement is to be distinctive and is to serve a “particular purpose,” he identifies this purpose by quoting the latter part of 1 Pet 2:9, “to ‘proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light,’ (2:9).” Curiously, though this purpose specifically relates to the church’s calling as a priesthood, Dyrness omits “royal priesthood” when noting the other images of the church’s collective identity

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<sup>8</sup> Volf, “Soft Difference,” 24.

<sup>9</sup> As we will see, this is also the logic in the Petrine use of the priesthood metaphor. However, the authors below do not engage the use of priesthood in 1 Peter. The exception here is Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015). They indeed note the reference to priesthood in 1 Peter but do not explore the distinct Petrine contribution to the topic. See discussion below.

<sup>10</sup> The phrase “creation mandate” is from Hunter, *To Change the World*, 4. The works of others considered in this section, however, reflect this same sense.

<sup>11</sup> Dyrness, *The Earth Is God’s*, 21.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, quoting John Aves, “Persons in Relation: John Macmurray,” in *Persons, Divine and Human: King’s College Essays in Theological Anthropology* (ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991). Aves, in turn, is quoting Kallistos Ware, “The Unity of the Human Person According to the Greek Fathers,” in *Persons and Personality: A Contemporary Enquiry* (A. Peacocke and G. Gillett, eds.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

in Christ.<sup>13</sup> Still, his inclusion of priesthood and Petrine theology of culture are adequately shown to contribute to the warrant for further exploration of that theme in 1 Peter.

J. Richard Middleton provides a connection between the theme of the image of God and the priesthood connotations of the creation mandate. First, he brings out the culture-making implications of the divine image in the human being. He writes, “The human task [of keeping the garden] thus reflects in significant ways the divine artisan portrayed in Genesis 1 as artfully constructing the world.” More to the point, Middleton then associates the divinity of this cultural work with a sense in which humans in general are to serve as priests of creation, and Israel in particular is to serve the world as God’s holy, covenant priesthood. He writes,

The *imago Dei* also includes a priestly or cultic dimension. In the cosmic sanctuary of God’s world, humans have pride of place and supreme responsibility, not just as royal stewards and cultural shapers of the environment, but (taking seriously the temple imagery) as priests of creation, actively mediating divine blessing to the nonhuman world and—in a postfall situation—interceding on behalf of a groaning creation until that day when heaven and earth are redemptively transformed to fulfill God’s purposes for justice and shalom. The human vocation as *imago Dei* in God’s world thus corresponds in important respects to Israel’s vocation as a “royal priesthood” among the nations (Exodus 19:6).<sup>14</sup>

Middleton does not pursue the matter into NT literature, but the phrase “royal priesthood” from Exod 19:6 supplies a ready connection to discussions of 1 Pet 2:9 below.

In the third source for consideration here, Eric Flett culls insights from the work of Thomas F. Torrance.<sup>15</sup> Flett, following Torrance, grounds his work in creation theology. Flett connects the church’s priesthood to its work of mediation in the world, writing, “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is revealed to be the God of Jesus Christ, present to the world through the priesthood of the church and as a consequence of the agency of Christ and the Spirit.”<sup>16</sup> Further, Flett writes that the church’s ministry is “grounded objectively in the Royal Priesthood of Christ,” therefore “that identity and mission will thrust her into the world as a royal priesthood, whose activity in the world of culture will not only bear witness to the God she worships, but will advance God’s mission in the world through cultural

<sup>13</sup> On doxology as the purpose of the priesthood imagery, see on 2:9 in the exegetical discussion below. The other images Dyrness lists from 2:9 are “a ‘people,’ a ‘holy nation.’” Dyrness, *The Earth Is God’s*, 75. However, the biblical text reads, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession” (1 Pet 2:9 NIV).

<sup>14</sup> J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 89–90.

<sup>15</sup> Eric G. Flett, *Persons, Powers, and Pluralities: Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Culture* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2012). See esp. Thomas F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood: A Theology of Ordained Ministry* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Flett, *Persons, Powers, and Pluralities*, 220.

transformation.”<sup>17</sup> Consequently, we observe that Flett explicitly identifies the church’s transformative engagement of culture as its ministry as a priesthood in Christ.

Kevin Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan have published a joint project that is primarily a work of practical theology regarding the nature of the task of those ordained formally as pastors of congregations of Christians.<sup>18</sup> It is therefore a work on theology of culture with particular attention to ecclesiology, similar to recent works by James K. A. Smith and Graham Ward.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the authors rely explicitly upon functional parallels with the priests in Israel’s cultus (as well as the roles of kings and prophets) to define the pastor’s work as public theology. Strachan writes, “Pastors are called, like priests, to shape the lives of the people through the instantiation of holiness in the church such that all the people of God, constituted a ‘royal priesthood’ in Christ (1 Pet. 2:9), offer sacrifices of praise and prayers of intercession.”<sup>20</sup> Hence, we observe not only an instance of their appeal to the theme of priesthood, we also see that they note the key passage in 1 Peter in this connection. Unfortunately, they do not offer sufficient discussion of the Petrine context to warrant inclusion among sources for Petrine theology of culture.<sup>21</sup>

The priesthood concept thus appears—explicitly and implicitly—in several important works on evangelical cultural engagement. However, it is always either incidental to the larger vision or simply left undeveloped. Even Dyrness, who perhaps comes closest, does not suggest that priesthood is more than a supporting metaphor for a larger vision. Others do more to draw upon insights for theology of culture in 1 Peter, but do not address the significance of the Petrine use of the priesthood metaphor. In light of the exegesis of key Petrine passages that follows, this article will show that priesthood is a crucial component in the Petrine theology of culture. Along the way, we will see that the several recent authors, especially those just surveyed, implicitly manifest the Petrine model of priesthood for Christian cultural engagement.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 220, 222. Flett’s work here is only indirectly Petrine. Various places from which Flett draws in Torrance’s thought doubtless draw upon the text in 1 Peter, as seems implied by the use of the phrase “royal priesthood.” Yet Flett does not make the Petrine aspect explicit.

<sup>18</sup> Vanhoozer and Strachan, *Pastor as Public Theologian*.

<sup>19</sup> Both works regard the transformative power of cultural practice within the church and for the church within the world. See, respectively, James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Cultural Liturgies 2; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013); Graham Ward, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> Owen Strachan, “Of Prophets, Priests, and Kings: A Brief Biblical Theology of the Pastorate,” in Vanhoozer and Strachan, *Pastor as Public Theologian*, 50.

<sup>21</sup> However, they do offer one further comment on the 1 Peter passage that also establishes a connection to the church’s engagement with non-Christian culture. Vanhoozer quotes Douglas Karel Harink, *1 & 2 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 69. Vanhoozer writes, “The ‘spiritual sacrifice’ that this corporate priesthood and temple offers is its holy, cruciform life as a godly people in the midst of the nations, and for their sake.” Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Artisans in the House of God: The Practices of the Pastor-Theologian,” in *Pastor as Public Theologian*, 149.

## II. PRIESTHOOD AS CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT IN 1 PETER

1. *Contextual warrants.* As Peter approaches the climactic end of his introductory section (1:3–2:10), he states explicitly that the Christians to whom he writes are a “priesthood” (2:5, 9).<sup>22</sup> Moreover, as such, they are “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God” (v. 5) and to “proclaim the excellencies of Him who transferred you from darkness into the kingdom of His marvelous light,” (v. 9). If it is true that “priesthood” provides a cultural engagement metaphor in 1 Peter, then the preceding quotations provide its basic elements: a priesthood, spiritual sacrifices, and proclaiming God’s heroic acts of love and redemption. However, it will not do to assume that which must be demonstrated. Though sources surveyed above incorporated a Petrine theology of culture sometimes and priesthood at other times, no one has treated Petrine priesthood in a detailed way as the church’s cultural engagement. Therefore, the present question is: what clues from 1 Peter lead one to understand “priesthood” as a metaphor for cultural engagement?

First, notice again another cultural relations metaphor, “aliens and strangers.” The imagery of “resident aliens” frames the introductory section at 1:1 and 2:11. While this imagery certainly may echo precedents in the Pentateuch and in the life of King David, its primary force here is to highlight the difficulty Peter’s audience was having as foreigners in their own country.<sup>23</sup> That is, their new birth in Christ indeed formed them as new creatures in important ways. As a result, though they continued to live among the familiar people and places in which they had spent their lives, they no longer belonged there. Their difference, truly a new ethnicity (1 Pet 2:6–8, 9), had made them strange in the eyes of their former fellow countrymen. The new difference resulted in hostile treatment from those who used to be their friends.

Notice, then, that to be “aliens” is to be related to a host culture in a certain way. That is, “aliens” primarily represents cultural difference. As such, “aliens” identifies something important about the circumstances of Peter’s readers, but it has nothing to say about how they came to be different, what form and character such difference has, or how these Christian aliens are to live from day to day.<sup>24</sup> It is

<sup>22</sup> The identity of the author of 1 Peter has not been decided among critical scholars. In the absence of clear evidence refuting the traditional view, this article will assume the apostle Peter was responsible for its writing. See John Hall Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 37B; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 118. Affirming the traditional view via a concise exegetical argument is Harink, *1 and 2 Peter*, 27–28.

<sup>23</sup> On the connection to David and Abraham, rather than Israel’s exile in Babylon, see Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 71. On the strained social circumstances signaled by the “aliens and strangers” imagery, Elliott writes, “This designation indicates that their political, legal, and social situation was a precarious one ... enjoyed only limited legal protection.... Their different languages, clothing, customs, religious traditions, and foreign roots set these aliens apart and exposed them to suspicion and hostility on the part of the native population and to charges of wrongdoing and conduct injurious to the well-being of the commonwealth and the favor of the gods.” Elliott, *1 Peter*, 94.

<sup>24</sup> Volf, “Soft Difference,” 18–19, also describes “aliens” as a description of the cultural difference that has resulted from a significant transformation in the Christians’ lives, “Christians are the insiders who have diverted from their culture by being born again. Christian difference is therefore not an inser-

therefore difficult to agree with Volf that “aliens” is the “dominant metaphor” of 1 Peter.<sup>25</sup> It is certainly part of the framework, but “priesthood” performs much more of the educational task in Peter’s spiritual formation of his readers, as we will see.

This is evident in the connection between the “excellent” behavior Peter urges “as aliens and strangers” and the holiness characteristic of a priesthood. Peter’s audience had become strange, because their daily moral behavior had become radically different than it used to be (4:1–4). Peter urges them not only to continue in this strangeness, but to do so to a virtuous degree: “Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet 2:12). Here, then, we already see two connections between the aliens and priesthood images. One is holiness. The “excellent” behavior Peter mentions for these aliens and strangers corresponds to holy behavior and is a mark of holiness (1:14–16). Likewise, their priesthood is a “holy” one (2:5). Another connection between the aliens and priesthood imagery is the glorification of God, which is explicitly a task associated with priesthood. That is, the holy priesthood of the household of God in 2:5 is for the purpose of offering acceptable sacrifices. The next verse mentioning priesthood also mentions a sort of offering that Christians make: praises glorifying God, namely, for his redemptive works (2:9; cf. Heb 13:15).<sup>26</sup> Such glorification, significantly, is also a fruit of the holy Christian difference, having the power to potentially transform the very ones persecuting the Christians (2:12). Therefore, in light of verse 12, it is already evident that the “alien” and “priesthood” metaphors are integrally related.

Following 2:11, 12, the epistle is dominated by instructions for daily behavior, which have the effect of developing the readers’ strangeness to their host culture by maturing them in Christlikeness (e.g. 2:19–25; 3:8–12; cf. 1:14–16). That is, their difference is a function of their holiness, which results from their election and practice (read: cultural engagement) as a priesthood. Consequently, they are “aliens,” because they are a “priesthood.” They are a priesthood because they have come to Christ in faith and follow him by faith (2:4–8). In view of these things, it is quite evident that “priesthood,” rather than “aliens,” characterizes both the nature and the qualities of the active engagement of these Christians with the non-Christian culture in which they live. We are therefore warranted in pursuing a close reading

tion of something new into the old from outside, but a bursting out of the new precisely within the proper space of the old.” Similarly, in the quote from Elliott in the preceding footnote, the claim is not that they are different because they are aliens, rather, that “aliens” results from their difference. Correspondingly, it is my claim here that priesthood identifies the cause and character of their difference.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 16, 21. Achtemeier argues that Israel, not aliens, is the “controlling metaphor” of 1 Peter; cf. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 69; similarly, see Martin H. Scharlemann, “Exodus Ethics: Part One—1 Peter 1:13–16,” *Concordia Journal* 2 (1976): 165–66. William Schutter identifies a “Temple-community motif” as dominating the structure and perspective of the letter; William L. Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition in 1 Peter* (WUNT 2/30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 176–77. This appears to corroborate our focus upon the church’s priesthood.

<sup>26</sup> On the parallel between v. 5 and v. 9, see Elliott, *1 Peter*, 421; also see Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 154.

of 1 Peter in order to discern more precisely what engaging culture as a “holy priesthood” entails.

2. *The basic priesthood model.* To this point in the essay we have established three key facts. First, recent authorities in evangelical theology-of-culture literature recognize 1 Peter as an important source for this field of study. Second, other literature affirms the relevance of the “priesthood” metaphor for Christian cultural engagement but has not considered it in its Petrine setting. Finally, we have observed contextual clues strongly suggesting that Peter’s treatment of the priesthood metaphor is distinct from the “aliens” metaphor and that priesthood bears more directly upon the church’s ethic of cultural engagement than does aliens. The task of the present section is to examine 1 Pet 2:4–10, the immediate context in which the explicit references to priesthood occur.

The priesthood verses (2:5, 9) occur in a passage governed by a discipleship metaphor, according to which these obedient, faithful Christians are similar in form and function as Christ himself, because their being is now determined by his. That is, Jesus is the living “cornerstone” of the house God is building with other “living stones” (2:4–6).<sup>27</sup> This sets forth two key principles that must be maintained in reading Peter’s “priesthood” metaphor. First, as imaged in the likeness of “living stones” to the living “cornerstone,” Christians are what they are by virtue of being “in Christ” (to borrow Pauline language, Rom 12:5). This principle implies that the form and function of a Christian’s life and character—because “stones” is figural for a “spiritual” project (1 Pet 2:5)—are determined by the dimensions of Christ’s character in godly living.<sup>28</sup> The cornerstone imagery serves this well, because all other stones in a building’s structure are placed in accordance with the lines for level and plumb established by the cornerstone.<sup>29</sup> Also, the “living stone” metaphor implies that individual Christians serve some role in a larger purpose, for which God maintains responsibility. This is the second principle: community. Individual Christians are not individually in Christ the cornerstone. Each participates in the work of Christ to the degree to which they participate in the community assembled in his name by the Holy Spirit. Hence, it is a “spiritual house.”<sup>30</sup>

It is this community gathered in the Spirit and sharing in Christ’s work to which Peter refers as “a holy priesthood” (2:5). Therefore, an important nuance to emphasize is that both verse 5 and verse 9 use the collective noun “priesthood”

<sup>27</sup> I relate this imagery in the text to discipleship, in view of Jesus’s indications that to follow him is to participate in his way of life, and to share similar experiences (e.g. Mark 8:34, 35; John 15:20). The imagery of the stones and God’s household construction project have to do with the church’s participation in the life and ministry of Christ; on this, see Elliott, *1 Peter*, 412; Harink, *1 and 2 Peter*, 68.

<sup>28</sup> Peter’s imagery appears to parallel that of Paul regarding the spiritual dwelling place of God (Eph 2:19–22) and the church as Christ’s “body” that is to become fully mature (Eph 4:15). Though not developing the priesthood metaphor per se, others recognize that the element of being “in Christ” is salient for evangelical cultural engagement. See Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 75; Russell Moore, *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel* (Nashville: B&H, 2015), 59.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Elliott, *1 Peter*, 425.

<sup>30</sup> See Harink, *1 and 2 Peter*, 68. The corporate aspect of the church’s effective cultural witness has been emphasized in recent literature. See Dyrness, *The Earth Is God’s*, 54; Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 113; Hunter, *To Change the World*, 243.



rather than a plural noun “priests.”<sup>31</sup> Also, this priesthood is a “holy” one. Again, holiness is related to their experience as aliens in their own hometowns. That is, they were as aliens to their former home cultures, because they now behaved differently in their new life in Christ.<sup>32</sup> Thus, they are “set apart” in their difference. Since this difference is motivated by the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit, they together comprise a part of God’s “spiritual house.”<sup>33</sup> They are holy in their sacred difference. Furthermore, being a priesthood, they present offerings to God; this is the distinctive work of any priesthood. So it follows, as Peter writes, that they are a holy priesthood “to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (2:5).<sup>34</sup>

Verses 6–8 focus attention upon both election and the role faith plays in proving election. These themes contribute to the priesthood of God’s spiritual house in a couple of ways. First, faith highlights their difference and holiness in a certain way. That is, they recognize that Jesus is God’s chosen “cornerstone” for the great religious project, whereas many others—including religious authorities—have rejected Christ Jesus in precisely this respect. This recalls verse four, “coming to Him as to a living stone.” This is the language of faith.<sup>35</sup> Based upon their belief in Jesus as God’s chosen one, the Christ, they have taken action accordingly. This is the definitive dynamic of their discipleship, and it is fundamental to a full understanding of “spiritual sacrifices”—and so of “priesthood”—within 1 Peter. There will be more on this below. Second, this faith proves their election by God, because they are “being built” into that spiritual house. They are not building themselves, and, again, the Spirit is actively involved in bringing together those God is forming to be his people.

Moreover, verse 9 confirms the element of election by quoting a series of images used of Israel’s election, and applying them to those gathered in Christ as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood.<sup>36</sup> Among those images of election is “a royal priesthood.” Peter appears to have quoted verbatim the Septuagint translation of Exod 19:6.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, Peter transfers qualities of Israel’s priesthood to that of

<sup>31</sup> A corollary issue, which here cannot be adequately engaged due to space restrictions, is the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, given a decidedly democratic and individualistic cast by Luther. Notwithstanding a basically correct desire to breach the priest/laity divide within the Catholic Church, Luther misapplied this text when focusing on priesthood as an individual office. Further on this, see Elliott, *1 Peter*, 449–52.

<sup>32</sup> See earlier discussion in the subsection on “Contextual Warrants.”

<sup>33</sup> See Elliott, *1 Peter*, 422.

<sup>34</sup> Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 154. In evangelical literature on cultural engagement, the category of “offerings” is manifest in the church’s worship and public being in holiness and peace. See, respectively, Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 46; Hunter, *To Change the World*, 231–35. In connection with Rom 12:1, Dyrness harnesses the offerings of the priesthood in his concept of “embodied worship,” by which he indicates a lifestyle of devoting one’s self to God in service to others. See Dyrness, *The Earth Is God’s*, 161.

<sup>35</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter*, 409: “the believers approach in faith.” See also Harink, *1 and 2 Peter*, 67–68; though he does not use the word “faith,” he uses cognates such as “trust” and “believe.”

<sup>36</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter*, 451 is emphatic that election is indeed the author’s thematic focus in this passage.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 420; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 70.

the church in Christ. This, too, will be instructive when considering “spiritual sacrifices” in greater detail below. More immediately, however, the series of images emphasizes collective election.<sup>38</sup> Like Israel, the church (again, being built into a household) is “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession” (2:9). Verse 9 concludes with a statement of the purpose of this election, which also aids in a fuller understanding of “spiritual sacrifices” in verse 5.

Peter states the purpose of God’s creation of a people in Christ this way, “so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).<sup>39</sup> This is, therefore, the purpose of their priesthood, and it is also a specific ministry for the church to practice. The practice of “proclaiming” *prima facie* includes ministries of the word, such as evangelism, preaching, and worship in song. Most likely, in view of the evident parallelism between verse 5 and verse 9, “proclaiming [God’s] excellencies [in redemption]” provides more specific content for the category “spiritual sacrifices.”<sup>40</sup> Yet, rather than naming a particular type of activity for this priesthood, in view of the ensuing sections of the letter, proclaiming God’s gospel excellencies identifies the chief characteristic, effect, or quality that should mark all actions of this priesthood.<sup>41</sup>

We have now the basic shape of a Petrine model of cultural engagement. It is distinguished by an identity, an ethos, and a signal effect. Identity is, of course, a priesthood. Priesthood, however, refers to a community, which is such in Christ Jesus. It is formed as a spiritual community, because it is a “household” God is building through the Spirit. The ethos of this priesthood is the offering of spiritual (read: Spirit-led) sacrifices, which are holy offerings by faith. Finally, the effect of these offerings is the glorification of God for his excellence in redemption. To test this reading and to gain further instruction on what it really looks like in practice, we must now discuss select passages in the rest of 1 Peter.

3. *Additional content in 1 Peter.* Through further study in 1 Peter in this section we will observe that Christian sacrifices aim to glorify God, particularly with respect to his ongoing work of redemption. That is, through the church, Christ offers to God God-glorifying actions. These actions glorify God for the precise reason that they call attention to the amazing, self-sacrificial love marking God’s work of redemption. That is, the redeeming God is glorified through his people, because they are led by the Spirit of Christ to offer themselves unto the redemption of those presently in darkness. Perhaps another way of stating it is that the priesthood of the church manifests in various forms of redemptive suffering for the sake of those who need to see concretely that the living God is a God of redeeming, self-giving love.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter*, 451.

<sup>39</sup> Note that this purpose statement reiterates the theme of election by referring to their constitution as being “called.”

<sup>40</sup> See footnote in the earlier discussion of “Contextual Warrants.”

<sup>41</sup> Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 166. On the importance of glorifying God in the way the church engages culture, see Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 45.

<sup>42</sup> Recall the quote from Leslie Newbigin in an earlier footnote in this article, calling the church to be the *sign* of the kingdom of God. Similarly, see Dyrness, *The Earth Is God’s*, 47; Flett, *Persons, Powers, and*

a. 2:11–12. The first choice for consideration here is 1 Pet 2:11–12, which serves as a transition passage, by which Peter connects the introductory themes to the paraenetic sections that follow.<sup>43</sup> There is a distinct shift in emphasis from election to ethics. As noted previously, “aliens” has especially to do with holiness, a sacred difference resulting from the spiritual behaviors appropriate to those God has formed into his chosen people. Hence, the instruction, “as aliens and strangers . . . abstain from fleshly lusts” (1 Pet 2:11). It is manifest here that Peter’s audience is different from their host culture due to the new desires of their heart. Consequently, their non-Christian neighbors are “surprised” that they no longer participate in ungodly behaviors (4:4).

Verse 12 provides a constructive move away from focus upon difference via abstinence to a vision of difference via moral excellence of a certain quality of character and for a familiar purpose. Where verse 11 holds forth abstaining from ungodly desires as integral to being “aliens,” verse 12 exhorts readers to practice “excellent” behavior publicly. In this way, Peter moves into the paraenesis by providing a view of the church’s priesthood in relation to their alien difference. The excellent behavior is in accordance with God’s morality and goodness, not necessarily that of their surrounding community (recall 1:14–16). In this scenario, their neighbors consider their virtue evil (“evildoers,” v. 12). In the long run, however, somehow the scoffers’ perspective shifts, so that they not only recognize that the Christians had been doing “good deeds,” but they even “glorify God in the day of visitation” (2:12). This change may be due to the power of the beauty of godliness, such that the church’s perseverance in godly virtues eventually transforms the minds of their observers. On the other hand, it may be that glorifying God, and the implied validation of Christian strangeness, does not come until the day of judgment when “every knee shall bow” (Phil 2:10), and, perhaps, the good deeds of Christians are recognized. More than likely, it is both of these, depending upon the person observing the church’s public actions.<sup>44</sup> Whatever the case, the crucial point is quite clear: the excellent behavior of the church—God’s holy, royal priesthood—will result in praises to the glory of God.

Therefore, “proclaiming [God’s] excellencies” certainly occurs by the mouths of Christians themselves in their worship of God. Perhaps that way of practicing priesthood almost goes without saying. Yet, what Peter appears to emphasize above everything else is that the excellent behavior of God’s priesthood, the church, results in the praise of God’s excellence. In verse nine, God’s excellence is qualified

*Pluralities*, 38, 223; Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 67, 94; Moore, *Onward*, 59. Andrew Robinson provides an interesting discussion of the nature of such signification, informed by Peircean semiotic theory; see esp., Andrew Robinson, *Traces of the Trinity: Signs, Sacraments and Sharing God’s Life* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2014), 112–13.

<sup>43</sup> Lauri Thurén, *Argument and Theology in 1 Peter: The Origins of Christian Paraenesis* (JSNTSS 114; Sheffield: JSOT, 1995), 132. See also Elliott, *1 Peter*, 83.

<sup>44</sup> Harink, *1 and 2 Peter*, 75 seems to blend these in his description. Additionally, the parallel in Matt 5:15–16 seems to imply a more immediate recognition by unbelievers. So, Peter at least has in view the day of the Lord’s appearing in judgment. Additional observations below strengthen the possibility of more immediate transformation in those observing the church’s ethics.

by his merciful redemption of the ungodly.<sup>45</sup> Since the church is formed in accordance with Christ, like a “cornerstone,” it follows, in light of verse 12, that the standard for “excellent” behavior is to also display Christlike redemptive love. The hope is that, at some point, those who observe the practical proclamation of God’s redemptive love come to see that it is not evil or foolish; rather, they experience it as beautiful and transformative.<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, the spiritual sacrifices of the priesthood in Christ are verbal and, especially, behavioral proclamations of God’s virtue, in light of his self-giving love in the work of redemption.<sup>47</sup> Such an ethic is powerfully beautiful, for it is able to transform dark hearts into those that glorify the light of God in Christ Jesus.<sup>48</sup>

b. 2:21–25. The next significant passage for our study of priesthood is 2:21–25. Here, Peter urges his readers to imitate Jesus’s patient suffering for others on a cross he did not earn. The immediate issue in the discussion is the unjust suffering of slaves; namely, that they are punished for doing what is right (v. 18). Christians would tend to be like anyone else, considering such suffering objectionable, if not altogether evil. Nevertheless, Peter states that doing the right thing even if it results in suffering follows after the pattern set by Jesus (v. 22), the living cornerstone (v. 4). Once again, we see that the church is to be formed according to the pattern of the life of Christ.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, suffering for righteousness reflects the priestly purpose of the church’s election in Christ.<sup>50</sup> It is an act of Christian priesthood, precisely because it glorifies God in two ways. First, Peter writes that such suffering

<sup>45</sup> “Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

<sup>46</sup> There may be an interesting word play between 2:9 and 2:12. In v. 9, Christians proclaim God’s τὰς ἀρετὰς, literally “moral virtues.” In v. 12, however, their behavior among the Gentiles is to be καλῶν (good). Elliott comments regarding this term, that it “denotes conduct that is both morally just and aesthetically attractive” (1 Peter, 466).

<sup>47</sup> C. Fred Smith, in email comments on an early version of this article, notes a distinction between the Petrine view brought out here and a cultural engagement ethic gaining popularity today. This article calls attention to 1 Peter’s call to imitate the redemptive suffering of Christ toward the greater realization of godliness in the world. Such actions tacitly communicate the gospel, though it is usually necessary, at some point, for this to be made explicit. In contrast, many today advocate a form of service to the culture that deemphasizes the need for proclamation. Smith is the author of *Developing a Biblical Worldview: Seeing Things God’s Way* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015).

<sup>48</sup> So, though not in terms of priesthood, Hunter, *To Change the World*, 285. Drawing upon Johannine visions in Revelation 21, rather than Petrine priesthood theology, see Dyrness, *The Earth Is God’s*, 12; Moore, *Onward*, 9. Hauerwas and Willimon seem to deny the church’s role in the transformation of the world, writing, “We argue that the political task of Christians is to be the church rather than to transform the world” (*Resident Aliens*, 38). However, see the quote in n. 55 below. There they seem to hope for a transformational effect of the church’s witness before the world.

<sup>49</sup> This element of Christlikeness is also emphasized in cultural engagement literature. This is, of course, central in John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972). Similarly, though not with respect to the priesthood of the church, Christians are called back to focus on Jesus as the soul of missional engagement in David E. Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission: Towards an Evangelical Political Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011). See also Dyrness, *The Earth Is God’s*, 24; Hunter, *To Change the World*, 192; Moore, *Onward*, 63–64.

<sup>50</sup> The cruciform ethic of the church is also emphasized as an element of the church’s priesthood in the world. See Dyrness, *The Earth Is God’s*, 99–103. In particular, Dyrness discusses bearing the burdens of others via forgiveness and hospitality. Again, Dyrness does not draw from Petrine theology of culture.

“finds favor with God” (v. 20). Hence, it conforms to the spiritual sacrifices the priesthood is to offer that are “acceptable to God” (v. 5). Second, it reflects the beautiful form of God’s supreme work of redemption in Jesus’s cross, “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps” (vv. 20, 21). As such, it is a form of proclaiming God’s gospel excellencies behaviorally (v. 9).

Importantly, Peter’s description of Jesus’s example provides further qualifying characteristics for what constitutes redemptive suffering. Verses 22 and 23 detail moral qualities Jesus exemplified. He was truly innocent, first of all. He guarded his innocence by speaking only the truth, and by refraining from using his words violently against his abusers. That is, he neither spoke harshly to them nor threatened them. Instead, “he kept entrusting himself to him who judges righteously” (v. 23). This detail is crucial, because by it Peter reveals the secret to Jesus’s success, as it were. He trusted that God would honor those who honor him. This is living by faith. It is the same dynamic evident in the church’s faith in the “cornerstone” that the ungodly experts rejected (vv. 4–7).

Finally, verses 24 and 25 provide details as to what constitutes redemptive suffering. The redemptive work on the cross was the suffering of the innocent Son in order to “heal” the sinfulness of the world (v. 24). To be sure, Christians cannot follow Jesus in providing the sacrifice for sin. That was once for all time (Heb 10:14). Yet, there remains a real sense in which Christians participate in Jesus’s redemptive work by imitating its form, resulting in the proclamation of the gospel message. It is that Jesus took responsibility for the burden of others, going to great pains to relieve them of it. Christians offer redemptive sacrifices by imitating this precedent of responsible agency willing to suffer in order to relieve the need of the other.<sup>51</sup> Hence, Peter describes following this pattern not only as “follow[ing] in his steps,” but also as fulfilling the “purpose” of their calling as Christians.

Therefore, we have in this passage a detailed case study of the very form that the sacrifices of the priesthood should take. In this context, these things are applied to slaves, whose ministry in God’s work of redemption is to respectfully submit even to “unreasonable” masters (v. 18). However, it does not only apply to these particular cases. Peter immediately extends the cruciform ethic to wives (3:1–6), husbands (3:7), and to “all of you” (3:8–22).<sup>52</sup>

c. 4:12–19. One more passage will be considered, because it reifies a key element of the priesthood model that might otherwise remain subdued, and it informs discussions of behavioral practices of the Christian priesthood as offering sacrifices to God. That key element is rejoicing in suffering.<sup>53</sup> We will consider it as one of

<sup>51</sup> This spirit of redemptive agency is reflected in Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 94. They write, “The way for the world to know that it needs redeeming, that it is broken and fallen, is for the church to enable the world to strike hard against something which is an alternative to what the world offers.” Similarly, see Hunter, *To Change the World*, 242, 245–46.

<sup>52</sup> That last reference is especially important, because it includes two echoes of the pattern of redemption noted in 2:21–25. Those echoes are 3:9/2:23 and 3:17–18/2:20–21.

<sup>53</sup> Including this element in his own discussion of a priestly cultural engagement, Dyrness writes, “praise is the language of Christian faith,” and is practiced “in the whole of life.” *The Earth Is God’s*, 159.

three thematic elements in this passage, relevant to the cruciform pattern of Christian priesthood observed above. The first elemental theme, of course, is suffering. Clearly, not just every form of suffering is fitting for God's glorification. This passage offers a number of qualifying phrases that are helpful. Cruciform suffering, in light of verse thirteen, is that by which "you share the sufferings of Christ." Similarly, in verse sixteen, it is to suffer "as a Christian," rather than as an ungodly, immoral person. Finally, in verse nineteen it is "suffer[ing] according to the will of God." These phrases provide further insight to what it means to suffer "for doing what is right" (2:20).

The second elemental theme is the particular one we are interested in, rejoicing. In several places in this passage, Peter exhorts his readers to rejoice in and because of their undeserved suffering for doing what is pleasing to God. In verse 13, he writes, "keep on rejoicing" when sharing the sufferings of Christ; in verse fourteen, "you are blessed"; finally, "if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name" (v. 16). Christians should rejoice in such times, "so that at the revelation of his glory you may rejoice with exultation" (v. 13). Due to the context of redemption, it is unlikely that present rejoicing results in also rejoicing on the day of judgment. Rather, rejoicing in suffering now is possible, because redemption in Christ provides the ultimate hope that, in spite of suffering now, one will rejoice in Christ when he comes again.

The third element being considered for this passage is that Christians rejoice in the expectant hope that they will be saved from the final judgment. Whence such a hope? Suffering for Christ now actually gives hope, because it is evidence that "the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you" (v. 14). This is consistent with the divine construction of a "spiritual house" in which are offered "spiritual sacrifices" (2:5). Also, the present passage reflects the definitive relationship the "cornerstone" has upon the placement of the "living stones." Peter writes, "Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right" (4:19). In his passion, Christ certainly suffered according to the will of God, and Peter has already said that Jesus's righteousness was with an attitude of "entrusting himself to him who judges righteously" (2:23). Consequently, those who suffer "as Christians," who "share in the sufferings of Christ," rejoice in hope, because they also prove to be genuine Christians in their attitude of trust in God's righteous judgment. Therefore, a definitive element of fulfilling the purpose of the priesthood in Christ is to endure all circumstances rejoicing in the hope that such hope proves one's anointing in the Spirit, which, in turn, signals one's election as a member of the spiritual house God is building for himself.

Before moving on, it is necessary to consider how this language of "entrusting" in 4:19 bears upon the spiritual sacrifices to be offered by the priesthood in Christ. The parallel wording in the NASB between 2:23 and 4:19, with respect to Jesus's "entrusting himself" and Christian sufferers also "entrust[ing] their souls" to

God, is not as exact as the English implies. In 2:23, Christ *παρεδίδου* (was commending) himself to the righteous judge. In 4:19, Christian sufferers *παρατίθῃσθωσαν* (they must entrust) their souls to God. These are obviously different word roots. The first is *παράδιδωμι* (to hand over), which has the sense of handing over to someone else authority for something. In 2:23, then, Peter appears to say that Jesus refused to act on his own behalf; that he submitted authority over his very life to the Father.<sup>54</sup> The word in 4:19 is similar, yet distinct. The root is *παρατίθῃμι*, which carries “the sense of ‘entrust’ or ‘commit’ something precious . . . including entrusting people to God.”<sup>55</sup> Both terms share the basic sense of handing over something to someone else. Indeed, based on this similarity, there is a real parallel in which Christ and Christian sufferers place themselves in God’s hands. At the same time, the distinct nuances of these terms are also profoundly instructive. We have already noted that, in the case of Christ, Peter uses a word connoting a sort of formal, perhaps even diplomatic, negotiation of power, in which one side simply relinquishes to the other some power to which they actually had a right.<sup>56</sup> Peter’s word regarding the suffering of Christ’s disciples is different. It carries cultic overtones, such that in setting something before someone, that someone is being shown worship through an offering.<sup>57</sup> Importantly, Peter’s word choice does not appear to be a word actually used of sacrificial cults, so there is no possibility of confusing the believer’s suffering with that of Christ on the cross. Nevertheless, at least in a derivative sense, Peter uses a word that associates Christian suffering in accordance with the pattern set by Christ with the offering of spiritual sacrifices that is the purpose of the Christian calling as a priesthood. Therefore, the offering of the Christian priesthood is the devotion of their very lives evident in their commitment to do things God’s way, though glorifying God in that way may result in their own suffering.<sup>58</sup>

4. *Summary.* Therefore, the priesthood model of cultural engagement in 1 Peter holds forth the active imitation of Christ’s redemptive suffering for the sake of others. This suffering results from doing good for them. As such, it eventually results in observers recognizing God’s self-giving for their redemption in Christ, which is beautiful and provocative for the faith of many. Several elements have thus been added to the basic priesthood model in 1 Peter. First, the identity as

<sup>54</sup> L&N, s.v. *παράδιδωμι*; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 531, writes that Peter’s use of the word here “is closer to the sense of Luke 23:46 . . . ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’”

<sup>55</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter*, 805.

<sup>56</sup> So, an apparent parallel to Phil 2:5–11.

<sup>57</sup> L&N, s.v. *παρατίθῃμι*, locate this word in the same semantic domain as words for giving tithes and for giving money as a way of showing honor to someone else.

<sup>58</sup> Hence, Russell Moore casts a compelling vision, writing, “Let’s live together in churches that call our neighbors to consider the justice and righteousness they see demonstrated among us. Let’s witness (albeit imperfectly and waveringly) to what the whole universe will one day look like. Let’s groan at the wreckage all around us, in this world of divorce courts and abortion clinics and gas chambers, and let’s pray for the day when, as the hymn puts it, ‘every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed.’ Let’s show in the makeup and ministry and witness of our congregations what matters, and who matters, in the long run. Let’s confront culture with the gospel, in all its strangeness, both inside and outside the church.” Moore, *Onward*, 90–91.

God's elect priesthood is now more explicitly spiritual, a work of the Spirit (4:14), for which spiritual sacrifices provide encouraging evidence.<sup>59</sup> Second, much in these passages fleshes out that ethos of offering spiritual sacrifices to God introduced in 1 Pet 2:5, 9. Emphasis is on offering to God excellent behavior, especially when such faithfulness results in suffering. The virtue in this is not the suffering but in such suffering as evidence of one's complete trust in God's faithfulness and righteousness. Furthermore, since this is precisely the form of Jesus's devotion to God, it is the ideal form of Christian discipleship; it is the way of being "living stones" in the household God is building. In addition to manifesting one's trust in God, suffering for righteousness also has a redemptive attitude. That is, the excellent behavior is with the good of the other person in view. Ultimately, this redemptive concern recognizes that godly behavior has the potential to transform the other, so that they also glorify God in their words and actions. Third, then, the effect of glorifying God at times results from the beauty of redemptive suffering. It is also in the spirit of rejoicing even while enduring suffering for righteousness, because one recognizes the implicit proof of election. Therefore, eschatological hope informs the offering of spiritual sacrifices, because one's own ultimate deliverance is assured, and that excellent behavior has the possibility of influencing others to be redeemed in Christ as well.

### III. CONCLUSION

We began by noting that in various ways authors in the field of evangelical theology of culture point in the direction of the epistle 1 Peter and to the category of priesthood as viable for theology of cultural engagement. Taking these cues, we read 1 Pet 2:4–10 closely in order to discover what Peter might have been saying by using the metaphor of priesthood. We discovered the basic structure for a model of cultural engagement. The church's priesthood is a collective offering of spiritual sacrifices in such a way that God is glorified with respect to his amazing work of redemption in Christ Jesus.

We then studied three other passages in 1 Peter for further insights into what this model of Christian ethics involves. We found that in Jesus the High Priest of God's new covenant, the Spirit forms the church, Jesus's body on earth, into a priesthood, through whom Jesus offers (again, by the Spirit) spiritual sacrifices of praise and glory to God the Father. These offerings bear the mark of radical, self-sacrificing love in obedience to the will of God. Though not in the same sense as Jesus's sacrifice on the cross, the sacrifices he continues to offer through his body continue to redeem people and the earth. The earth is redeemed as Christians work to realize God's revealed order for his own creation. People are redeemed as these cultural offerings bear beautiful witness as signs of the kingdom of God's love. That is, many see that light, are awakened, and come joyfully to the cornerstone by

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<sup>59</sup> On the importance of the empowerment of the Spirit for effective cultural engagement, see Hauerwas & Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 83; Hunter, *To Change the World*, 95–96; Flett, *Persons, Powers, and Pluralities*, 37, 220.



which we all are being built into God’s dwelling place, his temple. In other words, the church’s work in the world is to bear witness to God’s redemption of the world in Christ by being signs embodying that redemption. This is accomplished most effectively when the church patiently endures whatever trouble results from taking responsibility for the blessing of others in the peace of God.