

Resurrection in 1 Peter

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ABSTRACT: This study observes the literary role of the language of “resurrection” in developing the message of 1 Peter. The term itself goes mainly unexplained, and must be understood as part of the “retranslation” process in which the author is engaged—a process by which a dominant Roman political ideology is challenged as believers are encouraged to “rewrite” their lives in terms of experiencing the sufferings as a “normal” dimension of Christian existence.

KEYWORDS: resurrection, suffering, elect, exile, diaspora, antitype, Χριστιανός διεσώθησαν δι’ ὕδατος, δι’ ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκ νεκρῶν

1. Introduction: Resurrection in Text and Context

Resurrection in 1 Peter is, from a literary perspective (the perspective of building a text), an ambivalent concept. It is not trivial or expendable. It appears with minimal qualification (e.g. Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκ νεκρῶν, or simply Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) or elaboration, and yet depends upon knowledge shared in common by the author and his audience. In terms of social context, resurrection has perhaps assumed, or is in the process of assuming, its place within the Christian *doxa*: that “set of fundamental beliefs which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, self-conscious dogma.”¹ In Genette’s more textual terms, it necessarily reflects back in some way on a *hypotext*,² which in the case of “resurrection” could be a diverse, oral narrative telling the story of Jesus Christ (and interpreting its meaning) and/or specifically some narrated version(s) of Jesus’ resurrection (as in the Gospels), or interpretations of “resurrection” (as in 1 Cor 15). While this could be said of any part of a text—words need their contexts in order to

- 1 P. Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (trans. R. Nice) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press) 15; see also pp. 10, 11, 26, etc.
- 2 G. Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (trans. C. Newman – C. Doubinsky) (Lincoln, NE – London: University of Nebraska Press 1997) 229-248. Although Genette’s examples are extended texts, the effects produced by techniques of “condensation” and the ongoing role of preexistent texts in understanding such literary moves are worth considering in cases of “shorthand” references such as δι’ ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

make meaning—in the case of a term like resurrection, beneath which lies an entire history and conceptuality, and upon which rests a religion, when we encounter it in our reading of biblical texts, we expect that the particular text we are reading depends in some way on its meaning. But since we are dealing with human language and human discourse, we have to imagine, I think, that the biblical texts too are subject to some basic rules. Beginnings are important; endings are crucial; the whole of a text needs to be considered for the parts to make sense, and vice versa; and an author naturally operates on both the denotative and connotative levels. Moreover, in terms of a philosophy of language—and here the influence of Walter Benjamin might be seen—any given human language faces considerable limitations when it comes to the attempt to articulate anything beyond the mundane, such as resurrection.³ Whatever we may think of Scripture, since it too relies on human language, we should expect that these same limitations are in effect. It is why translation of serious, literary and religious texts is so important—each translation opens up the incomplete conceptuality of a source text, such as the ancient Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, to the new possibilities of articulation in another language.⁴ The making of meaning is continuous.

Another kind of textuality is that of cultural narrative. It subjects people to translation, shaping them into a particular mode. And the history of human culture is a history of this sort of translation. Those in power subject those who are powerless to a constant translation—it is how those in power make the sort of meaning that keeps them in power.⁵ The problem for those in power is that people, powerless or not, can resist the translation, can choose to retranslate the oppressive narrative and so re-identify themselves.⁶ This is what 1 Peter was engaged in—assisting its audience in the task of retranslating a dominant narrative in light of, among other things, resurrection. But the role of “resurrection” in this discursive process is not entirely clear.

³ W. Benjamin, “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man”, *Early Writings: 1910-1917* (trans. H. Eiland et al.) (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press 2011) 251-269; see also A. Berman, *The Age of Translation: A Commentary on Walter Benjamin's “The Task of the Translator”* (trans. C. Wright) (London – New York: Routledge 2018) 25-36.

⁴ See W. Benjamin, “The Translator’s Task”, *The Translation Studies Reader* (ed. L. Venuti; trans. S. Rendall) (New York: Routledge 2012) 75-83.

⁵ See H. K. Bhabha, “DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation”, *Nation and Narration* (ed. Idem) (London – New York: Routledge 1990) 291-322. On the power of political-religious narrative to shape the Roman imperial worldview, see esp., S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1984).

⁶ H. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London – New York: Routledge 1994) 303-337. Specifically in relation to 1 Peter, see (e.g.) D. G. Horrell, “The Label Χριστιανός: 1 Peter 4:16 and the Formation of Christian Identity”, *JBL* 126/2 (2007) 361-381.

2. Resurrection in 1 Peter

2.1. References to Resurrection

There are four explicit references to resurrection in 1 Peter and I want to divide these out from the start. Two occur as memories in what seem to be set catechetical or liturgical pieces (1.21; 3.18). These are in effect memories, or historical references. Each occurs in a liturgical or catechetical piece, and identifies that essential piece of the gospel, and an essential dimension of the faith, but as historical references to a past event, they are not particularly surprising.

But there are two occurrences of resurrection which are more challenging to the imagination. These occur in curious *διά* phrases (1.3—*δι' ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκ νεκρῶν*; 3.21—*δι' ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*). The functions of the *διά* phrases, which seem in their texts to be formulaic, are obscure, and I will concentrate on these. Otherwise, the presence of expressions whose connotations surely lead to “resurrection” is undoubtable—two occurrences of *ἀναγεννάω* (1.3, 23), and the reference to “a living hope” (the goal of rebirth)—but these connotations are muted and overpowered by explicit references to suffering.

Sometimes the absence of something expected can be significant. The absence of an explicit reference to resurrection in the set piece, 2.21-25 may be notable in this respect. In this intertextual application of Isaiah 53, the suffering servant figure routinely (by traditional usage) underscores and interprets the vicarious suffering of Jesus Christ. More novel is the weaving of the suffering of Christ-followers into the Messianic travail of Jesus by alterations of the tradition—specifically by changes from third to second person pronouns.⁷ In this way, the Messianic carrying of “our sins in his body on the tree” issues in a formula of Christian existence as “living in righteousness” in conjunction with the Christ-follower’s own death to sin (*ἵνα ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἀπογενόμενοι*), which in this context (and in that of the letter as a whole) must be equated with suffering, and possibly renunciation (volitional death—here the sense of *ἀπογίνομαι* is difficult, but the contrast with “life” points in this direction).⁸ The reference to a healing linked to the Servant’s own wounds, *οὗ τῷ μῶλωπι ἰάθητε*, which in another context would stress the efficacious effects of Christ’s suffering for those who believe in him, becomes here a reference to the Christ-follower’s personal experience of suffering “for the name” as a real and purifying/healing/salvific participation in the sufferings of Christ.

⁷ On the engagement with the LXX of Isaiah 53, see especially P. J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg – Fortress Press 1996), Logos edition, at 2:23-24.

⁸ See Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, at 2:24; and cf. J. H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Commentary* (ABC 37B; New York: Doubleday 2000), Logos edition at 2:24b.

It is precisely this conjoining of Messianic suffering and salvific Christian suffering that makes the function of resurrection in 1 Peter ambivalent. We are about to turn now to the occurrence of resurrection thought in the *διά* phrases. But we have to do this through the author's beginning.

2.2. Controlling Theme: Christian Existence as Ingathering and Expulsion

One of the greatest challenges for the writer is the beginning. Blanchot regarded the literary beginning as an act of violence:⁹ a passage from non-existence to existence, which, now spoken and heard, or written and read, becomes the space for the opposition of life and death, visibility and invisibility, audibility and silence. The beginning of anything literary, poetic, artistic, intends to introduce "difference," something new, or renewed. To comprehend this difference requires knowing something about the context in which the writer writes, the reality out there. We who deal with ancient texts stress the importance of this "real context," which is frankly often beyond our grasp.

In the case of 1 Peter, we are dealing with a beginning that is on the same level of significance as the opening words of Camus' novel *L'Étranger* (*The Stranger*): "*Aujourd'hui, maman est morte*"; "Mama died today." And if there were time, I would love to compare the function of the beginning statements in these two texts. But for now, let me simply say that in each case, these entire texts are haunted by their beginnings. The beginning affects the meaning of a great many things in 1 Peter, including the place of resurrection in the author's thought. Let us start with the beginning and consider the conceptual frame it introduces.

After spending four words to identify himself as "Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ," the author in an understated manner addresses his audience with a mixed metaphor that inserts a theological virus that will infect all easy thoughts of Christian existence in the message about to unfold. He calls them *ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς* (translated variously, but essentially "the elect exiles of the diaspora"). Cutting through the scholarly debate, this language, drawn from the LXX, is here used metaphorically.¹⁰ The term "elect," carried over from OT

⁹ M. Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* (trans. A. Smock) (Lincoln, NE – London: University of Nebraska Press 1982) 22.

¹⁰ For a full discussion of these terms (and the debate: literal or metaphorical), see T. B. Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter: Differentiating and Contextualizing Early Christian Suffering* (SuppsNovT 145; Leiden – Boston: Brill 2012) 91-128; P. J. Achtemeier, "Review of John H. Elliott", *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter; Its Situation and Strategy*, *JBL* 103 (1984) 130-133.

usage (cf. also Qumran¹¹) in reference to Israel and her special status as “chosen by God,” became a common designation of Christians in the NT.¹²

The combination of ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς presents the reader or hearer, at the very outset, with an evocative semantic knot,¹³ generating a complex conceptual (theological) environment (i.e. the entire letter) within which to explore what Goppelt called, the paradoxical situation of Christian existence: an ingathering by God that produces an expulsion in the world.¹⁴ Rhetorically, this is the first thrust of a message designed to theologially normalize the experience of persecution and suffering for 1 Peter’s audience of Anatolian Christ-followers—an intentional retranslation of a people’s identity that had suffered from an oppressive cultural translation constructed of stereotyping and criminalizing.¹⁵

2.3. Christian Existence and Suffering in 1 Peter

1 Peter interprets the problem, suffering, eschatologically in the frame of the Messianic Woes,¹⁶ which will modulate suffering by linking it with the Messianic suffering. Its author endorses a response, resistance, which assumes the shape of an ethics modeled on Christ. The plotting of resurrection in 1 Peter will involve these decisive coordinates. So let’s quickly survey this territory.

In 4.12-19, the author supplies several key pieces of information that reveal his perspective on the suffering of his audience. This text suggests the author addressed its recipients at a period of time in which Christ-followers faced legal action simply on the basis of their Christian confession (1 Pet 4.16).¹⁷ The author’s passing reference to suffering (πάσχειν) ὡς Χριστιανός suggests the following:

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- 11 E.g. 1QS 8.6; 11.16; et al.; L. Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (ed. F. Hahn; trans. J. E. Alsup) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1993) 81.
- 12 For references and discussion, see G. Schrenk, “λέγω, κτλ”, *TDNT* IV, 181-192, at ἐκλεκτός.
- 13 This collision of concepts may perhaps be categorized in terms of Michael Riffaterre’s notion of “ungramaticality”: see M. Riffaterre, *Text Production* (trans. T. Lyons) (New York: Columbia University Press 1983).
- 14 See Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 78ff; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, at 1:1-2.
- 15 Whether the situation(s) depicted in 1 Peter should be categorized as historical (cautiously Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 50; J. R. Michaels, *1 Peter* [WBC 49; Waco, TX: Word 1988] xlv) or in terms of “tradition-history” (or fictive; e.g. N. Brox, “Situation und Sprache der Minderheit im ersten petrusbrief”, *Kairos* 19 [1977] 1-13) remains a matter of debate. See the discussion in Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 17-33.
- 16 On the Messianic Woes as background to the biblical author’s understanding of Christian suffering, see esp. Mark Dubis, *Messianic Woes in 1 Peter: Suffering and Eschatology in 1 Peter 4:12-19* (SBL 33; New York: Peter Lang 2002); Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 286-296.
- 17 On the following conclusions, see esp. Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, ch. 10; Horrell, “The Label Χριστιανός”, 361-381.

- a. At the time of writing, the designation Χριστιανός is a stigmatized label used by outsiders (part of a stereotype, name-calling); (insider language is ἐν Χριστῷ 1 Pet 3.16; 5.10; cf. Rom 8.1; 1 Cor 4.15; Gal 3.28; Eph 3.6; Col 1.2)
- b. The author's move, retranslation, is to encourage his audience to embrace and reinterpret the stigmatized label assigned by outsiders, to create a more positive sense of group identity.
- c. Passing over the usual assembling of indications from the letter, the general picture of persecution/suffering is clear (informal kinds of interpersonal harassment to legal action).

But it is also in this text that 1 Peter's hermeneutics of suffering comes clearly to light. First, the present circumstances of suffering—the trial or test by fire—are to be expected (4.12).¹⁸ Second, this is described specifically in terms of “sharing in the sufferings of Christ” and as a privilege (4.13). Third, it is faith in Christ in and of itself (i.e. simply the confession of faith) that has brought about suffering (4.14, 16; undoubtedly with its concordant behavior, ἐν ἀγαθοποιίᾳ, 4.19). 1 Pet 4.16 seems to indicate a time in which Christianity had become criminalized.¹⁹ Fourth, sharing in the sufferings of Christ, suffering for the name, is a purifying test of the faithful belonging to the eschatological schema of the Messianic Woes, which commenced with the death/resurrection of the Messiah (Col 1; Mk 13; Rom 8). Paul understood his apostolic sufferings, as well as those to be embraced by believers, within this schema. And for 1 Peter: “the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God” (4.17-18; 1.6-7). For our author, this understanding, echoing and filling out that opening paradox of election and exile, is intrinsic to Christian existence: from theological/social paradox to ontological paradox (the collision of “rebirth” with the experience of death).²⁰

Then, in 5.6-11, assurances of God's concern for the faithful, who entrust themselves to God's disposition are followed by the imperative to “resist” the opponent—the devil—who prowls around like a hungry lion seeking someone to devour. It is modeled on God's “resistance” of the proud (Prov 3.34 LXX). Here, the enemy to be resisted and the Roman Empire converge: for this same suffering is the lot of the church throughout the world.²¹ Tracking back through the letter through numerous texts reveals that the shape of “resistance” is ethical, the practice of a consistent behavior towards all, even the wicked, characterized by doing good.

¹⁸ Cf. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, Logos edition at 4:12.

¹⁹ Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 285-288.

²⁰ Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter*, 290; and see Dubis, *Messianic Woes*.

²¹ On the question of contact with a preexisting tradition, cf. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, ad loc.; Elliott, *1 Peter*, ad loc.

2.4. The Memories of Resurrection

The section 1.3-12 is a powerful and densely packed argument which reflects on the present conditions of the hearers (in terms of theology and suffering) within the frame of the past and the future. To the past belongs God's "rebegetting" as linked to faith in the gospel; to the future belongs the promise of an inheritance kept in heaven until the revelation of Christ, the promise of the obtaining of salvation. Within these brackets, the present reality is dominated by the experience of suffering, struggle, invisibility, offset only by the futureward inclination of hope and the promise of divine protection. Solace is offered in an interpretation of suffering as testing, purifying, and the assurance this period is to be short (the "little while" of "various trials").

In this landscape of past, present and future, the prepositional phrase of v.3, δι' ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκ νεκρῶν, might modify God's "rebegetting"²² (but how? As a precedent? As an activator or initiator?). It is more likely linked to the "living hope" produced by God's regenerative act, a substantive hope ("by or through the resurrection"). Achtemeier probably says as much as anyone can about this: "Christian hope is a living hope rather than a futile hope because it is linked to, and grounded in, the resurrection of Jesus Christ."²³ But in what sense? Perhaps as a sign or symbol of a future resolution, an eventual solution to everpresent death: as Ignatius would later say in similar phraseology—Jesus "raised a banner for the ages through his resurrection [διὰ τῆς ἀναστάσεως] for his saints and faithful people" (IgnSmyr 1.2; cf. 1 Clem 42.3).²⁴ A memory waved as a banner. While this association of living hope with future resurrection, such as Achtemeier construes it, may be true on one level (that of pure syntax and the necessary semantics conjured up to explain the syntax), on the level of discourse and considering the direction in which it develops—a pronounced interpretation of the present distress of the hearers—resurrection as eschatological event (as fundamental to the gospel of the Christ event) is also unavoidably linked to the suffering of these Christ-followers. Christ's resurrection is somehow accountable for death/the participation of Christ-followers in the Messianic suffering. The prepositional phrase about resurrection disturbs the present by its association with both the past (Christ's resurrection) and the future (resurrection as the substance of hope); and its formulaic, unqualified use is a space that the audience must occupy for at least a moment on this first pass through the message, and then perhaps return to it again. Its meaning is not completely apparent.

²² So M. Dubis, *1 Peter: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press 2010) 7.

²³ Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, ad loc.

²⁴ The translation is that of Michael W. Holmes *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (ed. and trans. after the earlier works of J. B. Lightfoot – J. R. Harmer) (Grand Rapids: Baker Books ³2007) 249.

Equally ambivalent is the intention of resurrection in the second *διά* phrase that occurs at 3.21: δι’ ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. At 3.18-19 a catechetical piece is drawn into the discussion,²⁵ and leads into the difficult waters of the Noah-type and reflection on baptism as antitype. The didactic purpose of the piece is to provide the hearers with a Christ-model of suffering for doing good (3.17). (The resumption of this theme in 4.1ff. suggests that it is a controlling thought.) The history of interpretation is complex, so only exegetical conclusions can be offered here concerning: the meaning of the Noah-type and its relation to baptism, the value of the *διά* resurrection phrase, and the connection to Pauline thought.²⁶

As the author develops his thought, reference to “the spirits in prison” enabled (or required) him to take up the Noah story. The key exegetical issues are as follows.

First, Noah’s salvation “through water” in 3.20 (διεσώθησαν δι’ ὕδατος). Some (e.g. Achtemeier) take this to mean that the waters of the flood were the means of Noah’s salvation (from the evils of the world, or some such idea). This, I think, misconstrues the key reference to water in this text. Water in the case of the type (Noah and flood) and in the case of the antitype (baptism) is not the means of salvation but, rather, of judgment and death.²⁷ The means of Noah’s salvation was the ark; Noah was borne by the ark through the waters of death (locative use of *διά*).²⁸ 1 Peter, reflecting Pauline tradition or direct access to Rom 6,²⁹ applies the type to baptism—that is, the water of Christian baptism—and asserts that it saves.

This connection of thought is made through the difficult relative phrase that opens 3.21: ὁ καὶ ὑμᾶς ἀντίτυπον νῦν σφῶζει βᾶπτισμα. Here the neuter relative pronoun refers back to “water,” effectively setting up the type/antitype transaction—which requires the connection between the waters of the flood and baptism. Thus, when the “waters” pass through the type/antitype transaction, the waters of the flood and baptism are conjoined (the latter implicit in the term

25 On the use of tradition, see the summary of scholarship in Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, at 3:18-22.

26 Achtemeier (*1 Peter*, at 3:18-22) traces this history as well as anyone.

27 The narrative-background is, of course, Gen 6, where in the case of LXX (6:17—ἐγὼ δὲ ἰδοὺ ἐπάγω τὸν κατακλυσμὸν ὕδωρ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καταφθεῖραι πᾶσαν σάρκα; following the Hb closely, my emphasis), the association of water with destruction, and ark with escape from destruction (the implication of the context, and a main point of Noah’s massive undertaking), is perfectly clear.

28 Contra Dubis, *1 Peter: A Handbook*, 124. The contact here with Romans 6 (baptism as baptism into Christ’s death), in connection with the theology of “suffering” developed in 1 Peter, is decisive in my opinion. But see R. T. France, “Exegesis in Practice: Two Examples”, *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (ed. I. H. Marshall) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1977) 252-281.

29 On which see esp. France, “Exegesis in Practice”, 275. *Pace* Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, ad loc., who in my opinion misreads the eschatological dimension of Romans 6.

βάπτισμα), and “baptism” becomes the subject of the verb σώζει at the “now” end of the transaction.³⁰

A less difficult problem is the nature of baptism. Starting with 1 Peter, but also taking a cue from Paul, water (as a physical means of cleansing) is not in view. The symbolic/sacramental act (in this context) draws its meaning from the “appeal to God” from a good conscience (συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς ἐπερώτημα εἰς θεόν)³¹: an event of confession (or renunciation, or both) in acknowledgement of and agreement with God’s will and human need—“conscience” in ancient Greek terms³²).

How it is that baptism “now saves” is not stated at all; but left to the imagination (and association with Pauline thought). But apparently this is the function of the formulaic δία phrase, “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

1 Peter is driving in the same direction as Paul with baptism: 1. It is an event of confession (in acknowledgement of and agreement with God’s will and human need—the good conscience) and faith; 2. Association with Christ’s death; 3. Commencement of a life-experience marked by death to sin (ethical); and 4. (equally an experience of Christ’s death)—a life-experience marked by suffering-as-dying, sharing in the sufferings of Christ (Rom 8). And then, 5., the resurrection of Christ assures (as a sign, a promise; IgnSmyr 1.2) that true death will be vanquished, that baptism’s efficacy and message are true; as it is also (as an eschatological event) the cause of Christian existence as living the experience of Christ’s suffering and death.

1 Peter makes these associations of thought inescapable as 4.1-2 apply the opaque reflection on baptism/resurrection to these suffering Christ-followers. “Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, take on this same mindset: the one who suffers has ceased from sin.” This is simply a way of revising Paul on these topics. Baptism is into death; death is to sin; sharing in Christ’s death is also equated with Christ’s suffering; newness of life (Paul), “living in righteousness” (1 Peter) are realities made visible in the world in the ethical dimension of human life.

3. Concluding Reflections

In these two key passages of 1 Peter, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is associated with Christian existence, and, so, may through a variety of attendant promises and encouragements (through Spirit-teaching, through promises of God’s help for the humble, and the insistence that God will honor Christian

³⁰ On “type-antitype,” see L. Goppelt, “τύπος, κτλ”, *TDNT* VIII, 246-259; idem, *1 Peter*, ad loc.

³¹ On the difficulty of the phrase, and the term ἐπερώτημα (in the sense of “confession”) within it, see the thorough discussion (with alternatives) in Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, ad loc.

³² Cf. Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 258.

resistance to evil with strengthening) refer to “power for surviving the present troubles, and to ethical “newness of life.” But at the same time, paradoxically, “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” is the weak (memory) and necessary assertion of openness in an otherwise dying world; the assertion of openness in a life of Christ-following (in 1 Peter supremely marked by suffering) that is characterized as participation in Christ’s death.

In each case, resurrection might have been left out of the equation—that is, left implicit for the audience to tease out by chasing the connotations of other clearer statements until they led to resurrection. In each case, “through the resurrection,” introduces a thought that disturbs or qualifies some other statements, calling for reflection. 1 Peter describes Christian existence in terms of suffering, in terms of joining in the salvific sufferings of Christ. And while the author may stress the “short time, the brief moment” of this present age of suffering (to be ended with the revelation of Jesus Christ in glory), he does not really explain what difference resurrection makes. He simply, and in formulaic fashion, inserts resurrection into present Christian existence as a disturbing note of difference—disturbing not in the sense of bad news, but in the sense of a conundrum. And the conundrum reflects back on the opening words of the letter, which define the present age of faith in terms of ingathering and expulsion, life and death. The meaning of resurrection for those whose calling is to resist evil (from without and from within) is a meaning that can only be made within those puzzling spaces where suffering and hope converge.

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