Counter-Hegemonic Strategies in 2 Peter: The More Reliable Prophetic Word Versus "Plastic" Words

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This article explores the counter-hegemonic legitimation strategies that are employed by the author of 2 Peter to challenge a group of false teachers who had encroached and gained sway over some number of members of the group of Jesus followers whom the author addresses. This article will also point out how, by means of the very same strategies, the writer attempts to legitimate his own teachings and position of authority over the putative readers.

Keywords: 2 Peter, legitimation, hegemony, discourse analysis, linguistic criticism, ideology, values

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Introduction[1]

Scholars have rightly identified the letter of 2 Peter as a "testament" (i.e., "final words" or farewell discourse).[2] Bible readers living in the modern West often misunderstand the social purpose of this genre,[3] for in the West, where the prevailing

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[1] It is a privilege to contribute to this *Festschrift* in honor of Distinguished Professor Emeritus Dr. Lynn McMillon. I have tremendous respect for Dr. McMillon as a scholar, professor, and leader, and even more so as an encourager, advocate, and friend.

[2] See David A. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, and Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 876–77; Richard J. Bauckham, "2 Peter," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Development* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1997), 923. Contra Gene L. Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 165–66, who, taking too wooden a view of the genre, defines "testament" primarily on the basis of structure rather than goal-oriented social activity.

[3] "Genres" are staged, purposeful, goal-oriented social activities in which members of a culture engage or, more colloquially, they are "how things get done when language is used to accomplish them." See James D. Dvorak, *The Interpersonal Metafunction in 1 Corinthians 1–4: The Tenor of Toughness*, Linguistic Biblical Studies 19 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 30–34. "They are social because we participate in genres with other people; goal oriented because we use genres to get things done and feel a sense of frustration when we don't resolve our telos; staged because it usually takes us a few steps to reach our goals" (J. R. Martin and P. R. R. White, *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005], 32–33). See also M. M. Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holqust, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of

social institution is *economics*, the main purpose of a testament is to, upon a person's death, bequeath their earthly possessions to others. However, in the sociocultural world reflected in the New Testament, where *kinship* was the prevailing social institution, testaments were concerned primarily with the perpetuation of the dying person's kin group and, to an extent, fictive kin groups through the restatement and promotion of the group's core values. As Malina and Pilch put it,

> final words will deal with concern for the tear in the social fabric that results from the dying person's departure. Hence, the dying person will be deeply concerned about what will happen to his/her kin (or fictive kin) group. Before death, the dying person will impart significant information about what is soon to befall the group in general and individuals in the group. This includes identifying who will hold it together (successor) and giving advice to kin group members on how to keep it together.[4]

Keeping the (fictive) kin group together describes the purpose of 2 Peter.[5] Peter[6] presciently perceives that the end of his life is drawing near (1:13–14), and he is keenly aware that false teachers were encroaching the boundaries of the fictive family of believers—i.e., those who had accepted the same body of teachings as he (1:1)[7]—and,

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Texas Press, 1986), 60–102.

[4] Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 202. See also John J. Pilch, *A Cultural Handbook to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 141.

[5] Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, The Anchor Bible Commentary 37C (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 112; Richard J. Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, Word Biblical Commentary 50 (Waco: Word, 1983), 132.

[6] On the issues surrounding the authorship of 2 Peter, see Bauckham, "2 Peter," 924–25; deSilva, *Introduction*, 876–78; and critical commentaries. In this article, I shall refer to the writer as "Peter."

[7] J. N. D. Kelly (*Epistles of Peter and Jude*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries [New York: Harper and Row, 1969], 296) argues that ἰσότιμος should be interpreted as meaning "of equal privilege" so as to affirm that the readers are not "under-privileged" or "second-class Christians." This appears to be based on the idea that the etymology of the term connotes "value" (or honor [ἰσότιμος = same value/honor]). As is the tendency with etymological interpretations, this reading is a bit overbaked; however, Kelly does go on to say that the basic idea here is that the readers are being told that they have received the exact same doctrine or teaching as other believers elsewhere. This seems to be the right idea, and it resists overloading the Greek term. If value is to be understood, it appears that the value would apply more to "the faith"—that it is "equal in kind" (cf. J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* [New York: United Bible Societies, 1989], 1:589 [58.34])—than to the readers. In regards to "the faith," John H. Elliott says that the term "in v. 1b has the sense not of a response to Jesus as Christ and Lord or obedient trust in God . . . but faith is commitment to responsibility" (see John H. Elliott, "I–II Peter/Jude" in R. A. Martin and John H. Elliott, *James, I–II Peter/Jude*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982], 134). Yet, as Kelly intimates, it seems that Peter uses the term πίστις ("faith") objectively to refer to the body of Christian beliefs or, better, the values promoted in the Jesus tradition, which he further describes as "knowledge from God and from our Lord Jesus" (v. 2) that is to be remembered and is to function as the standard of the believers' identity as well as the rule by which one is to live. "The faith" is something the writer will defend; he will also defend God by drawing upon "the faith."

worse, were introducing into the group values[8] that do not align with those of the Jesus tradition (2:1ff.). Thus, Peter addressed this testament to his fictive family in order to strengthen group solidarity by reminding them (1:12; 3:1) of the core values of the Jesus tradition from which the group gains its identity and by which it marks out its boundaries.[9] At the very center of these values stands the gracious patronage of God, namely the "honorable and majestic promises" that he had granted to them and through which they, "having fled from the corruption that exists in secular society on account of evil desire," had become "sharers in the divine nature" (1:3–4).

That said, Peter is clearly disturbed by the fact that some converts[10] to the Jesus group, apparently neophytes (ψυχὰς ἀστηρίκτους, "unsettled people" [2:14]), had succumbed to the enticements of the false teachers (2:14, 18) and had "again become entangled in the defilements of secular society" (2:20).[11] As a result, in addition to restating positively the group's core values, Peter's testament also emphasizes rather forthrightly that those same values that ought to unite the addressees should also function to set them apart from other groups that operate by opposing values—groups such as those represented by the false teachers.[12]

It is typical of commentators to describe Peter's strategic response to the false teachers with such terms as rebuke, refutation, invective, or vituperation.[13] These and

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[8] Values are shared ideas or standards about what constitutes the worthwhile goals and directions in life for members of a group; they are, as Pilch and Malina put it, (1) general qualities and directions in life that human beings are expected to embody in their behavior; (2) general, normative orientations of action in a social system; and (3) emotionally anchored commitments to pursue and support certain directions or types of actions. See James Peoples and Garrick Bailey, *Humanity: An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, 10th ed. (Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2015), 31; John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina, "Introduction," in *Handbook of Biblical Social Values*, 3rd ed., Matrix 10 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), xix; James D. Dvorak, "Ask and Ye Shall Shall Position the Readers: James's Use of Questions to (Re-)Align His Readers," in *The Epistle of James: Linguistic Exegesis of an Early Christian Letter*, ed. James D. Dvorak and Zachary K. Dawson, Linguistic Exegesis of the New Testament 1 (Hamilton, ON: McMaster Divinity College; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019), 201–4.

[9] See James D. Dvorak, "The Linguistics of Social Identity Formation in the New Testament," *Filología Neotestamentaria* 33 (2020): 9–35.

[10] In his classic work on the subject (*Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1998], 7), A. D. Nock described conversion as "the reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right." On the challenges to abiding conversion/resocialization, see Dvorak, "Ask," 206–8.

[11] On glossing κόσμος as "secular society," cf. Louw & Nida, 508–9 (41.38).

[12] Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress refer to such a social reality as a "double and contradictory necessity" (*Social Semiotics* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 1988], 3). See also James D. Dvorak, "To Incline Another's Heart: The Role of Attitude in Reader Positioning," in *The Language and Literature of the New Testament: Essays in Honor of Stanley E. Porter's 60th Birthday*, Biblical Interpretation Series 150, ed. Lois K. Fuller Dow, Craig A. Evans, and Andrew W. Pitts (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 605–6.

[13] Elliott, "I–II Peter/Jude," 128; Ruth Anne Reese, *2 Peter & Jude*, The Two Horizons New

other terms like them are certainly apropos, but they are rather blunt and, thus, fail to describe the finer contours of Peter's "struggle" to influence[14] his readers away from the false teachers' "'plastic' words" (πλαστοῖς λόγοις [2:3]) and to recenter them upon the values promoted in the "more reliable prophetic word" (βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον [1:19]) that they had accepted upon their conversion. One way to gain a clearer picture of Peter's goal and strategy is to deploy van Leeuwen's model of legitimation in order to elucidate Peter's counter-hegemonic, reader positioning strategies.[15] Doing so opens the possibility of recognizing what values of the Jesus tradition that Peter promotes, which, in turn, can provide a contextual bridge for those wanting to apply the message of 2 Peter to the life of the church in the modern world.

A Model of Legitimation

As a leaping-off point, two key terms must be defined. The first is *hegemony*. This is the process of advancement and promotion of a particular group's values, norms, ideologies (or worldviews)[16] over or vis-à-vis those of other groups;[17] it is the negotiation of values and ideologies in contexts where conflicts of interest exist.[18] The second key

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Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 126; Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 122; and Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, 151.

[14] I use "influence" intentionally because in the strong group/low grid environment in which this testament was produced, and given that Peter's main focus is to generate obligation on the basis of commitment in the "belonging system"—specifically, the (fictive) kin group of believers—influence (the capacity to persuade) is the primary generalized symbolic medium for interaction. See Malina, *Christian Origins*, 80–82, 84–89. See also James D. Dvorak, "'Prodding with Prosody': Persuasion and Social Influence through the Lens of Appraisal Theory," *BAGL* 4 (2015): 85–120.

[15] Theo van Leeuwen, "Legitimation in Discourse and Communication," *Discourse & Communication* (1): 91–112. See also Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003), 98–100. On the use of models in biblical interpretation, see John H. Elliott, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship New Testament Series (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 40–48; James D. Dvorak, "John H. Elliott's Social-Scientific Criticism," *Trinity Journal* 28 (2007): 260–62.

[16] "Ideology" refers to the conglomeration of a group's values preferences or orientations that give meaning to the group's activities and that distinguishes that group from other groups. Ideologies reflect the perceived needs and interests of a group at a particular time in history; contain the criteria for interpreting social reality; and serve to define, explain, and legitimate groups' values and norms (Elliott, *What is?,* 130). See also Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 35–40; Dvorak, "Ask," 200–1.

[17] Because the social world of the New Testament is characteristically strong group (collectivist) rather than weak group (individualist), interest here is focused primarily on *group* values and norms. See Bruce J. Malina, "Collectivism in Mediterranean Culture," in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, ed. Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris (London: Routledge, 2010), 17–28.

[18] See Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 218; Zachary K. Dawson, "The Rules of 'Engagement:' Assessing the Function of the Diatribe in James 2:14–26 Using Critical Discourse Analysis," in *The Epistle of James: Linguistic Exegesis of an Early Christian Letter*, ed. James D. Dvorak and Zachary K. Dawson, Linguistic Exegesis of the New Testament 1 (Hamilton, ON: McMaster Divinity College Press; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019), 169.

term, *legitimation*, refers to the processes that serve hegemonic purposes, namely that of explaining and justifying group values and norms; it is the attempt to answer the often unspoken question, "'Why'—'Why should we do this?' and 'Why should we do this in this way?'"[19] In van Leeuwen's scheme, there are four basic categories of legitimation:[20]

- AUTHORITY LEGITIMATION:[21] Authorization is legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom, or law and of persons in whom institutional authority is vested.[22] Authorization answers the "why?" question with "because I/so-and-so said so," "because this is what we always do," or "because this is what everybody else does."[23]

- MORAL LEGITIMATION: Moral legitimation occurs through references to value systems. Moral evaluation answers the "why?" question with "because it is the right/appropriate thing to do."[24]

- RATIONAL LEGITIMATION: Rationalization is legitimation by reference to the goals and uses of institutionalized action and to the knowledge that groups (or society at large) have constructed and endowed with cognitive validity. Rationalization answers the "why?" question with "in order to do, be/come, promote, or effect what is good or appropriate" or "because that's the way it is" or "because it's necessary."[25]

- MYTHOPOETIC LEGITIMATION: Mythopoesis is legitimation through rehearsing the myths/narratives that embody a group's (or society's) deepest

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[19] Van Leeuwen, "Legitimation," 92–93. See also Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor, 1967), 92–93; Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 219. Note that every form of legitimation relies on the linguistic system of Appraisal, on which see Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 1–93.

[20] Adapted from van Leeuwen, "Legitimation," 92, but cf. Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 98.

[21] In Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL), uppercase letters (or small caps) denote names of semantic systems (domains) and subsystems (subdomains). Lowercase letters denote the final selectable option(s) in a (sub)domain. AUTHORITY LEGITIMATION has three subdomain options from which the language user may make selections (under constraints of the context of situation), viz. CUSTOM, AUTHORITY, or COMMENDATION. If CUSTOM is selected, an additional choice resides between conformity and tradition. Supposing the language user opts for tradition, the selection chain is written up as [AUTHORITY LEGITIMATION: CUSTOM: tradition].

[22] "Authority" is "the socially acknowledged right to oblige another" (Bruce J. Malina, *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation* [1986; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010], 116).

[23] Van Leeuwen, "Legitimation," 94, 96.

[24] Van Leeuwen, "Legitimation," 97–100.

[25] Van Leeuwen, "Legitimation," 100–5.

truths and concerns.[26] Mythopoesis answers the "why?" question symbolically via the outcomes of these narratives: legitimate actions are rewarded and non-legitimate actions are punished.[27]

Each of these legitimation strategies has sub-strategies, and these will be detailed in the analysis below.[28] Moreover, as Fairclough has intimated and as will become apparent, legitimation strategies may overlap with one another.[29] Any one of these semantic domains may be called upon to justify why certain value positions ought to be adopted or eschewed. As with other linguistic analyses, such as attitude and engagement analysis,[30] this sort of determination must be made on the basis of careful co-textual and contextual analysis. Through the deployment of this model, it is at least possible to caricature Peter's view of the false teachers' ideological perspective and hegemonic stance, as well as to describe his counter-hegemonic maneuvers, which, in essence, serve to reestablish the hegemony of the Jesus tradition. The linguistic elements of each will be highlighted along the way where appropriate.

Challenge and Riposte (2 Peter 1:16—2:3)

There are a number of points where Peter more or less directly engages the hegemony of the ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι, perhaps even quoting at one point an expression of their main value position (i.e., 3:4).[31] The first of these engagements appears in 1:16—2:3, where Peter leads with a straightforward *denial* of what appears to have been a strike against him. He writes, "For we did not make known to you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus the Messiah by following cleverly contrived myths."[32] Denials invoke

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[26] W. Randolph Tate, *Interpreting the Bible: A Handbook of Terms and Methods* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 229. The function of myths is to "stabilize the existing régime, to afford infallible precedents for practice and procedure, and to place on an unassailable foundation the general rules of conduct, traditional institutions, and the sentiments controlling social behavior and religious belief" (E. O. James, "The Nature and Function of Myth," *Folklore* 68 (1957): 477.

[27] Van Leeuwen, "Legitimation," 105–7.

[28] See van Leeuwen, "Legitimation," 94–107 for full treatment.

[29] Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 99.

[30] See Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 45–93.

[31] See esp. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 124–27; Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 154–57. Of course, at one level the entire document is a response to the false teachers, but the goal here is not to write a full commentary. Thus, I will focus more narrowly on Peter's more direct engagements. On the linguistics of engagement, see Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 67–82; Dvorak, "Incline Another's Heart," 611–14; Dvorak, "Linguistics of Social Identity Formation," 22–27.

[32] Οὐ γὰρ σεσοφισμένοις μύθοις ἐξακολουθήσαντες ἐγνωρίσαμεν ὑμῖν τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δύναμιν (all translations are my own). Incidentally, the clause-fronted negative particle οὐ negates the main verb ἐγνωρίσαμεν ("we made known") and not the aorist active participle ἐξακολουθήσαντες ("following/imitating"), despite most English versions' incorrect rendering, "We did not follow. . ."

(often, but not always, implicitly) alternative voices[33] for the purpose of rejecting them.[34] Here, Peter invokes and denies the ostensible claim made by his opponents that his teaching derives from "cleverly contrived myths" (σεσοφισμένοις μύθοις).[35] In terms of the model, it would appear that the false teachers had attacked at least part of the *content* of the tradition that Peter promotes (–ve AUTHORITY LEGITIMATION: CUSTOM: tradition),[36] but this is only part of the strike. As Neyrey points out, "In the cultural world of the New Testament [Peter's] claim to be Christ's spokesman is challenged and his honor is threatened as his role and status are called into question."[37] Thus, the attack on the content of Peter's teaching was tantamount to an attack on his honor both as an expert (–ve AUTHORITY LEGITIMATION: COMMENDATION: expert) and as a leader in the Jesus tradition (–ve AUTHORITY LEGITIMATION: AUTHORITY: personal).[38]

In an agonistic, honor-shame culture these sorts of challenges expect a riposte,[39] and Peter does not disappoint. His retort begins with the strong adversative conjunction ἀλλά ("but/rather") which signals a *counter*. Counters are explicit reader (re-)positioning maneuvers,[40] in which a writer attempts to supersede one proposition with another.[41] In fact, Peter's response is three-pronged, which increases its semiotic "punch":[42] "rather, we were eyewitnesses . . . and we heard this voice being conveyed from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain" (1:16, 18).[43] In short, Peter's triple-faceted retort is "we saw it, we heard it, and we were there."[44]

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[33] "Voices" in the Bakhtinian sense, i.e., "points of view." See M. M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, University of Texas Press Slavic Series 1 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 281. See also Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 67.

[34] See Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 73–75.

[35] Remember, contrary to the way the term is used in modern society, the term "myth" does not inherently imply "fake/false." This sort of negative perspective is supplied by context, and in this case by the perfect (stative aspect) passive adjectival participle σεσοφισμένοις ("having been cleverly contrived").

[36] In my notations, I indicate positive legitimations with a '+ve' and negative legitimations (delegitimations) with '–ve.'

[37] Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 171.

[38] Expert authority is based on one's knowledge/understanding of, in this case, the content of the tradition rather than status. Personal authority within a group is based on one's status or role in the group, in this case the Jesus group. See the discussion in Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 94–95.

[39] See Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 33–36. See also the helpful model presented by Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, "Conflict in Luke-Acts: Labelling and Deviance Theory," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 97–122.

[40] See J. R. Martin, "Reading Positions/Positioning Readers: Judgment in English," *Prospect* 10 (1995): 27–37.

[41] Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 74–75. See Martin and White, *Language of Evaluation*, 121.

[42] See Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 86–90 (esp. 89) on Graduation.

[43] Ἀλλ᾽ ἐπόπται γενηθέντες τῆς ἐκείνου μεγαλειότητος . . . καὶ ταύτην τὴν φωνὴν ἡμεῖς ἠκούσαμεν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐνεχθεῖσαν σὺν αὐτῷ ὄντες ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ ὄρει.

[44] Compare this to 1 John 1:1–4.

Certainly this is a move to reclaim his legitimacy as an expert authority, but the actual legitimation strategy Peter puts to work appears to be a hybrid. On the one hand, "we saw, we heard, and we were there" amount to credentials and, thus, constitute claims to expert authority.[45] However, the intertextual reference to the Transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17)[46] adds an element of [+ve RATIONAL LEGITIMATION: THEORETICAL: explanation + scientific]. "Scientific rationalizations" are legitimations based on "differentiated bodies of knowledge" that form "comprehensive frames of reference" that, in turn, undergird institutional roles and practices.[47] The reference to the Transfiguration operates as a kind of shorthand that functions to underscore the point that Peter's teaching stems from the "right" body of knowledge. This is confirmed by what he writes at 1:19, "We have the prophetic message, which is more reliable."[48] Moreover, Peter goes on to assure the readers that this body of knowledge is not made up or the result of "one's own [creative] interpretation" (ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως)[49] or brought about by human will or intention (οὐ . . . θελήματι ἀνθρώπου ἠνέχθη προφητεία) (1:20–21).[50]

Following his own counterattack on the behavior and character of the ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι, which is notably comprised of the three characteristic components of a deviance process (2:1–3),[51] Peter specifically labels his opponents' teaching not as mere

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[45] Van Leeuwen, "Legitimation," 94–95.

[46] I.e., "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased" (1:17) and "on the holy mountain" (1:18). See the discussion in Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 205–12, 217–22.

[47] Van Leeuwen, "Legitimation," 104; Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 94–95.

[48] ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον. I take the comparative adjective, βεβαιότερον, to be in a predicate relationship with the nominal group τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον, since the adjective precedes the nominal group and is not under the control of an article.

[49] The term ἐπίλυσις is related to ἑρμηνεία in that both have to do with interpretation/explanation. However, the two terms differ in perspective in that ἑρμενεία (from which derives the term "hermeneutics," the general sphere of human understanding) and the verbal cognate ἑρμηνεύω tend to communicate the use of known principles to make sense of something complex, whereas ἐπίλυσις and cognate verb ἐπιλύω tend to communicate the idea of explaining/solving something complex more creatively or freely. It is important to remember that, in and of themselves, neither one of these words is inherently positive or negative in terms of evaluation. I.e., it could be acceptable to "creatively solve/explain" some problem or issue or difficulty. However, at 2 Peter 2:20, because of the co-text (note the bookend with v. 16), ἐπίλυσις is imbued with negativity or given a negative "spin." Peter was up against a value position/point of view that, to his way of thinking, allowed too much "creativity." He was in the midst of arguing that he (and others) were eyewitnesses to Jesus, so his value position/point of view is to be adopted rather than others' points of view. Note, too, that ἐπίλυσις is defined by the adjective ἰδίας ("one's own"), which implies the ignoring of tradition regarding the interpretation of the "prophecy of scripture."

[50] Note that vv. 20 and 21 each contain denials ("every prophecy of scripture did *not* [οὐ] come about by one's own interpretation" and "prophecy was *not* [οὐ] brought about by human will/intention"), and v. 21 contains a counter ("*but* [ἀλλ'] humans being led by the Holy Spirit spoke from God").

[51] (1) He interprets their behavior as deviant; (2) he explicitly defines the false teachers (and their followers) as deviants; (3) he describes the treatment he considers to be appropriate for such deviants. See Malina and Neyrey, "Conflict," 102, on the deviance process.

σεσοφισμένοις μύθοις ("cleverly contrived myths") as his message had been labeled by them but as something even worse—as πλαστοῖς λόγοις ("fabricated messages"). It is they who have no legitimate authority, and this is borne out by the fact that they have no legitimate body of knowledge.[52] According to Peter, they have only "plastic" words.

Thus, in this initial engagement with the false teachers, Peter argues in order to reclaim his status as a personal and expert authority ("we saw it, we heard it, we were there") and to reaffirm that the body of knowledge, the tradition that he received in a special manner and that he has passed on to his addressees is far more legitimate than the fabricated, exploitative, "plastic" words of the false teachers.

In Defense of God's Honor (2 Peter 2:4–10a)

At 2 Pet. 2:1, Peter accuses the false teachers of "denying the master who bought them" (τὸν ἀγοράσαντα αὐτοὺς δεσπότην ἀρνούμενοι). Both Neyrey and Bauckham see mirrored in both of the denials in v. 3[53] a snapshot of the false teachers' perspective that divine judgment is "idle" and "inactive."[54] This is supported by Peter's response in 2:1–10a, as well as the apparent quotation of the false teachers found at 3:4.[55] Peter takes their denials to be "a challenge to God's honor, which he in turn is honor bound to defend as God's agent."[56] Thus, 2:4–10a qualifies as a theodicy.

Grammatically, 2:4–10a comprises a rather robust first class conditional structure (see Fig. 1). From an ideational perspective,[57] first class conditional constructions make assertions about (social) reality for the sake of argument, assuming that the asserted condition(s) is valid.[58] More important for the purpose of this article is the interpersonal

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[52] Witness the emphasis in 2 Peter on "knowledge" (lexemes built on the γνο root appear 14x in the letter).

[53] "For whom the long-ago judgment is *not* idle and their destruction is *not* inactive" (οἷς τὸ κρίμα ἔκπαλαι οὐκ ἀργεῖ καὶ ἡ ἀπώλεια αὐτῶν οὐ νυστάζει).

[54] Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 126, 199; Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 247. Both Elliott and especially Neyrey point out that this perspective aligns quite well with popular Epicurean thought in the first century. See Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 122–28; Elliott, "I–II Peter/Jude," 127–28. See also deSilva, *Introduction*, 876.

[55] Ποῦ ἐστιν ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ; ἀφ᾽ ἧς γὰρ οἱ πατέρες ἐκοιμήθησαν, πάντα οὕτως διαμένει ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως ("Where is the promise of his appearance? For since the ancestors died, everything continues in the same manner as from the beginning of creation").

[56] Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 199–200.

[57] In SFL, the ideational metafunction (a.k.a., [re]presentational metafunction) refers to the linguistic resources that language users put to use to portray reality in terms of unfolding processes, including the participants involved and any circumstances attendant to those processes (Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 15). In short, ideational meaning describes "who's doing what to whom, where, when, why and how and the logical relation of one going-on to another" (Martin and White, *Language of Evaluation*, 7).

[58] See Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed., Biblical Languages: Greek 2 (London: Continuum, 1994), 254–67 on conditional structures.

perspective,[59] which explains how conditionals are used for the purpose of intersubjectively positioning the readers.[60] Notably, the first pair of protases are comprised of denial–counter dyads (οὐκ . . . ἀλλά ["not . . . but"]). As noted previously, denials allow alternative points of view into the dialogue to set them up for rejection. The subsequent counters replace the rejected propositions with the writer's points of view; he is portrayed as a "corrector" who points out erroneous value positions

Figure 1. The Conditional Structure of 2 Peter 2:4–10a

Hypotheses / Conditions (Protases)	

Εἰ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς
      ἀγγέλων ἁμαρτησάντων <u>οὐκ</u> ἐφείσατο
      <u>ἀλλὰ</u> … παρέδωκεν εἰς κρίσιν …
 	
καὶ
      ἀρχαίου κόσμου <u>οὐκ</u> ἐφείσατο <u>ἀλλ᾿</u> …
      Νῶε … ἐφύλαξεν …
καὶ
      πόλεις Σοδόμων καὶ Γομόρρας
      καταστροφῇ κατέκρινεν …
καὶ
      … Λὼτ … ἐρρύσατο …
	For ***if*** God
	      did <u>not</u> spare the angels who sinned
	      <u>but</u> … handed them over for
	      judgment …
	and [if]
	      he did <u>not</u> spare the ancient world
	      <u>but</u> protected Noah …
	and [if]
	      he condemned to destruction the
	      towns of Sodom and Gomorrah …
	and [if]
	      he rescued Lot …

Consequent (Apodosis)	
οἶδεν κύριος εὐσεβεῖς ἐκ πειρασμοῦ ῥύεσθαι, ἀδίκους δὲ εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως κολαζομένους τηρεῖν ….	[***then***] the Lord knows to rescue the godly from trial and to keep the unrighteous for being punished on the day of judgment ….

and subverts them with more appropriate "correct" ones. This has the instrumental effect of imbuing the counterpoint with a sense of "truth." The second pair of conditions are endorsements, which are "formulations by which an author construes some externally sourced proposition as 'correct, valid, undeniable, or otherwise maximally warrantable,' as well as authoritative and relevant to the context of situation."[61] Both denial-counter

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59 The interpersonal metafunction (a.k.a., [re]orientational metafunction) describes the linguistic resources that are utilized for "organizing and enacting social relationships and interactions among the participants in a given communicative context" (Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 15).

60 See Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 80–82 (including n. 141).

61 Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 70–71 quoting Martin and White, *Evaluation in English*, 126.

pairs and endorsements are dialogically contractive,[62] which signals that each of the conditions in this structure act to silence any voice that does not align with Peter's—and that there are four such colloquy-curtailing conditions intensifies the silencing effect.[63] Finally, the apodosis itself is a proclamation that endorses—again dialogically contractive—the traditional apocalyptic view that God does and has intervened in history not only to rescue the godly but also to condemn the wicked. Linguistically, it is quite obvious that with this conditional construction Peter is attempting to realign his readers to his point of view.

In terms of the legitimation model, two main observations are in order. First, note that each of the conditions are anchored intertextually to known tradition in contemporary Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism.[64] As such, they are instances of mythopoesis. At a more delicate level, the first and third references (i.e., "sinning angels" and Sodom and Gomorrah) realize *cautionary tales* that, despite such brief references, convey what happens to those who "deny the master who bought them": they are not spared but are committed to judgment. The second and fourth references realize *moral tales* in which the protagonists (Noah and Lot), because of their faithful piety, are "protected" or "rescued" from the destruction and/or debauchery around them. Thus the conditional elements in the structure alternate between invocations of [+ve MYTHOPOETIC LEGITIMATION: cautionary tale] and [+ve MYTHOPOETIC LEGITIMATION: moral tale].

However, there is again a bit more to the story. Finally, as noted earlier, 2:4–10a is a defense of God's honor, and Peter's apologetic strategy is to draw on several key narratives in the tradition in support of his defense. This at the very least betokens if it does not outright inscribe [+ve AUTHORITY LEGITIMATION: CUSTOM: tradition]. Furthermore, when this stretch of text is considered in light of surrounding co-text, especially 2:1–3 and 2:10b–22, it becomes clear that the theodicy is also intended to serve the larger purpose of (negative) moral evaluation of the false teachers (–ve MORAL LEGITIMATION: evaluation). Such negative evaluation paints them as people not to be trusted.

The Promise Still Stands and Will Be Fulfilled (2 Peter 3:1–18)

In the final stretch of text to be covered here, Peter more pointedly addresses a specific value position maintained by the ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι. It reflects the "Epicurean" denial of a provident deity[65] that was popular in the first century CE and, consequently, any sort

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[62] Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 69.

[63] Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 86–87.

[64] See the discussion in Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 248–49 and Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 202.

[65] A transcendent deity, yes; a provident deity, no. The first of Epicurus's Sovran Maxims reflects this (Diog. Laert., *Lives* 10:139): Τὸ μακάριον καὶ ἄφθαρτον οὔτε αὐτὸ πράγματα ἔχει ἄλλῳ παρέχει, ὥστε οὔτε ὀργαῖς οὔτε χάρισι συνέχεται· ἐν ἀσθενεῖ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον ("The blessed and immortal [being] neither has troubles

of divine intervention and judgment.[66] Peter brings this value position into the text by way of attribution,[67] placing it on the lips of the false teachers: "Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers died, everything continues in the same way from the beginning of creation" (v. 4).[68] Peter clearly distances himself from their point of view by labeling its promoters as "mockers/scoffers" (ἐμπαῖκται) who operate in accordance with their own desires (κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν πορευόμενοι) (v. 3). This last bit is significant. In an obvious counter-hegemonic move, Peter *de*legitimates the false teachers in regards to the personal authority they presume to possess and in so doing renders their claim vacuous. As noted above, personal authority is *vested* authority, granted to persons by a particular group or institution. However, Peter depicts the false teachers as operating *according to their own desires* rather than by the core values of the ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Moreover, by labeling the false teachers as "mockers/scoffers," Peter further depicts them not only as placing their own agenda above that of Peter and other trusted leaders in the Jesus group but also as those who belittle or perhaps even "poke fun" at the traditional apocalyptic value held by followers of Jesus (–ve AUTHORITY LEGITIMATION: CUSTOM: tradition), viz. God is provident, and at his discretion and timing he will break into history to set things in the order he desires by making all things new (3:10–13).[69] As if that is not enough, Peter adds an additional deligitimating strike, this time in regards to any expert status they may have presumed to possess (–ve AUTHORITY LEGITIMATION: AUTHORIZATION: COMMENDATION: expert), viz. "in maintaining this, *it escapes them* that . . ." (λανθάνει . . . αὐτοὺς τοῦτο θέλοντας ὅτι . . .) (v. 5a). As understated as it may seem to modern Western readers, this would certainly have been seen as social sortie aimed at the false teachers, for it strongly suggests that they are and

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nor causes trouble to another; accordingly, he is concerned with neither punishment nor favor, for every such thing [entails] weakness").

[66] See now Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 122–28; Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 154–57. According to Neyrey (*2 Peter, Jude*, 123), Epicurus and his followers opposed the notion of a provident Deity on the basis of four arguments: (1) in terms of cosmology, the world was made not by a rational or divine power but as the result of chance interactions between elements; (2) in terms of freedom (a core value in Epicurus's thought), the notion of a providential God destroys freedom and moral self-determination; (3) in regards to unfulfilled prophecy, since the κόσμος comes about by chance, divination and foretelling are impossible; (4) as regards injustice, justice is delayed such that the just do not prosper, and the wicked are not punished. See Diog. Laert., *Lives* 10.93–114, 133, 135; Plutarch, *Def. orac.* 434D; Plutarch, *Sera*, 549B, 548C–D. I put quotation marks around "Epicurean" because, as Neyrey notes, Jewish and Greek sources alike demonstrate that as Epicurus's antitheodicy argument spread it became something of a "generalized popular statement" and was "no longer formally identified as 'Epicurean'" (Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 124; see 124–27 for discussion and examples).

[67] See Dvorak, *Interpersonal Metafunction*, 77–80.

[68] ποῦ ἐστιν ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ; ἀφ' ἧς γὰρ οἱ πατέρες ἐκοιμήθησαν, πάντα οὕτως διαμένει ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κτίσεως.

[69] On apocalypticism and apocalyptic worldview, see David E. Aune, Timothy J. Geddert, and Craig A. Evans, "Apocalypticism," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 45–58.

remain ignorant[70]—the opposite of "wise," hence resulting in the loss of honor in their context.[71] Peter connects their ignorance back to the claim that the false teachers operate on the basis of their own desires (note the lexical semantic connection between θέλοντας [v. 5] and ἐπιθυμίας [v. 3]—both terms of desideration).[72]

Peter justifies his riposte to this "Epicurean" antitheodicy with references to tradition (+ve AUTHORITY LEGITIMATION: AUTHORIZATION: CUSTOM: tradition) in the content clause (ὅτι κτλ.) where he fills out what has escaped the false teachers' notice. Elliott concisely sums up the intertextual references:

> The dynamic word (v. 5) by which God created the heavens and earth (see Gen. 1:6–10) and controlled the water (v. 6) which eventually deluged an evil world (see Gen. 6:5—7:24, recalled in 2:5) is the same word (v. 7) by which the present heavens and earth are stored up for fire at the end of time and kept until the day of judgment and destruction.[73] The imagery (water, fire), cosmic scope (heavens, earth, humans) and temporal perspective (end time resembles primordial time) is that of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic (teaching regarding God's final self-revelation). To refute the novel rationalism of the opponents, the author appeals to the venerable traditions in which the idea of God's coming among his creatures was first formulated.[74]

Peter additionally responds to the false teachers' "Epicurean" argument that the delay (βραδύνω, βραδύτης, v. 9) of any sort of divine intervention and punishment of the wicked must be taken as clear evidence against the providence of God.[75] In yet another

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[70] Cf. Kelly, *Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 357.

[71] Bruce J. Malina, "Honor and Shame," in *Handbook of Biblical Social Values*, 3rd ed., Matrix 10 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 90: "Honor is associated with a value cluster that includes: strength, courage, daring, valor, generosity, and wisdom. Weakness, cowardice, and lack of generosity indicate lack of honor, hence are despised" (ignorance/lack of wisdom belongs on the despised list, too).

[72] Louw and Nida, 289–90 (domain 25). Even if Kelly (*Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 357) and Bauckham (*Jude, 2 Peter*, 297), who cites and follows Kelly, are correct to interpret θέλοντος as meaning something like "maintaining a value position contrary to the truth of the matter" (a meaning that Kelly supports with references to Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.19.12; Pausanias, *Descr. Graec.* 1.4.6; and Herodian, *Ab ex. d. Marci* 5.19.12), the sense of desideration is not lost. In fact, the crux of Peter's attack is that the false teachers maintain this particular value position on the basis of their desires. Thus, the semantic connection remains intact.

[73] See Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 233 regarding the similarity between Peter's perspective and Philo's theology as it relates to God's creative/dynamic and executive powers.

[74] Elliott, *I–II Peter/Jude*, 153. On p. 154, Elliott helpfully shows how Christian tradition and Peter specifically used the language once used by Jewish people to describe God's coming or "day of God/the Lord": (1) the entrance into the kingdom (1:11); (2) the dawning of light (1:19) as prefigured in the transfiguration (1:17–18); (3) the announcement of the coming (*kerygma* in Greek) through a herald (*keryx*, 2:5); (4) the day of judgment (2:9; 3:7) when the righteous would be vindicated and the ungodly destroyed (2:3, 4–9, 12, 17; 3:7, 9, 11); (5) the dissolution of the universe (3:7, 10, 12); and (6) the inauguration of new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (3:13).

[75] Cf. Neyrey (*2 Peter, Jude*, 239) who illustrates the contemporaneity and popularity of this notion

deny-counter maneuver, Peter supplants this argument: "The Lord of the promise does *not* (οὐ) delay, as some think about the extended time; *rather* (ἀλλά) he extends patience to you, not wanting any to perish, but all to move on to repentance" (v. 9).[76]

It is likely that Peter has carefully chosen his words here. Both verbs βραδύνω and μακρουθμέω share the semantic domain "Duration of Time with Reference to Some Point of Time."[77] This domain expresses the semantics of "extending time" with the implication of delaying or being slow.[78] However, μακροθυμέω also realizes the semantics of "Patience, Endurance, Perseverance" and has to do with exhibiting the attitude of patience/forbearance.[79] This attitude, when exhibited by humans, is essentially the attitude of resignation, i.e., acknowledging God's ultimate authority and power and trusting ("waiting in/for") that God will judge, vindicate, punish, or reward.[80] When attributed to God, patience refers to his compassion, generosity, and generativity, albeit frequently portrayed as a limited tolerance for rebellion.[81] Thus, God's patience may be thought of as his gracious extension of time—however long that extension may turn out to be (that is his prerogative)—so as to allow opportunity for rebellious persons to repent and submit to his authority (cf. 3:15). The characterization of God that Peter presents is connected intertextually to the tradition regarding YHWH's self-disclosure (Exodus 34:6–7 NRSV; cf. Psalm 78:38; Sir. 2:11):[82]

> The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.

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through quotations of the characters in Plutarch's *On the Delays of the Divine Vengeance*: "The delay [βραδυτής] and procrastination of the Deity in punishing the wicked appears to me the most telling argument by far" (*Mor.* 548C); "[the Deity's] slowness destroys belief in providence" (*Mor.* 549B).

[76] οὐ βραδύνει κύριος τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, ὥς τινες βραδύτητα ἡγοῦνται, ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς μὴ βουλόμενός τινας ἀπολέσθαι ἀλλὰ πάντας εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι. Contra OpenText.org, I take κύριος τῆς ἐπαγγελίας as a single word group in which κύριος is the head term of which τῆς ἐπαγγελίας is a qualifier. The "Lord of the promise" functions as the subject of the intransitive verb βραδύνει ("he/she delays"). See Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 306–10 for discussion regarding whether and to what extent this text quotes or alludes to Psalm 90:4 and whether or not "day" (ἡμέρα) means "1000 years"; see also Reese, *2 Peter & Jude*, 167–69; Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 238.

[77] Louw and Nida, 1.645.

[78] Louw and Nida, 1.646. Remember that positive or negative attitude toward the extension of time or slowness must be determined contextually, which Peter acknowledges in his comment "as some consider delay/slowness/extensions of time" (v. 9).

[79] Louw and Nida, 1.307–8.

[80] See Mark McVann, "Patience," in *Handbook of Biblical Social Values*, 3rd ed., Matrix 10 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 130.

[81] McVann, "Patience," 130.

[82] Reese, *2 Peter & Jude*, 169; Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 312; Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 241–42.

Here, then, is another realization of [+ve AUTHORITY LEGITIMATION: AUTHORIZATION: CUSTOM: tradition].

For Peter, as Elliott notes, "the coming day of the Lord and the cosmic dissolution it entails has present moral implications."[83] These implications become more explicit in 3:10–18, as indicated by the rather sudden appearance of verbs in the imperative mood.[84] A clearer and more prominent signal of these moral implications comes at 3:11–12, which also serves as an excellent illustration of Peter's discursive hegemonic efforts: "Given that all these things [will] be destroyed in this manner, for you to be the sort [of persons who are] on holy and godly paths of living, [who are] eagerly awaiting and hastening the coming of the day of God—on account of which [coming] the skies, being burned up, will dissolve and the elements, being burned, will melt—is necessary."[85] At the risk of being excessively technical (and loquacious), there are two linguistic elements in these four clauses that are worthy of note because they make prominent the point that Peter is making.

First, the clause complex begins with a so-called genitive absolute (τούτων οὕτως πάντων λυομένων). Genitive absolutes—or, better, genitive constructions—function "to draw the reader's attention to certain background information with more prominence than other circumstantial participles do."[86] Some grammarians claim that genitive constructions function as a "switch reference," indicating a transition from one topic (or scene) to another;[87] others assert that they simply fulfill the same function as circumstantial participles.[88] Although genitive constructions do tend to occur at "hinge points" in discourse and although they do to some extent overlap in function with circumstantial participles, they achieve a semantic purpose greater than merely changing topics/scenes or simply providing the details of attendant circumstances. As Dow cogently argues, "The information in the [genitive construction] acts as an essential frame in which to interpret the information of the main clause, or of an even larger discourse,"[89] and this is precisely the case here. With the genitive construction, Peter summarizes into a salient point what he has just described in regards to the forthcoming cosmic

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[83] Elliott, "I–II Peter/Jude," 155.

[84] There are two imperatives in chapter 1 (1:5, 10); there are five imperative forms in chapter 3 (3:8, 14, 15, 17, 18).

[85] Τούτων οὕτως πάντων λυομένων ποταποὺς δεῖ ὑπάρχειν ὑμᾶς ἐν ἁγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς καὶ εὐσεβείαις προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας δι' ἣν οὐρανοὶ πυρούμενοι λυθήσονται καὶ στοιχεῖα καυσούμενα τήκεται.

[86] Lois K. Fuller Dow, "The 'Genitive Absolute' in New Testament/Hellenistic Greek: A Proposal for Clearer Understanding," *JGRChJ* 3 (2006): 142–67.

[87] E.g., David L. Mathewson and Elodie Ballantine Emig, *Intermediate Greek Grammar: Syntax for Students of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 221.

[88] E.g., James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Washington: University Press of America, 1979), 137.

[89] Dow, "Genitive Absolute," 151.

conflagration, transforming it into a prominent frame of reference—information to be taken as a "given"—that he expects his readers to invoke as motivation for conducting their lives in a manner befitting followers of Jesus. Rhetorically, it sets the stage for the value position he is about to assert, and, along with the repeated reference to the dissolution of the skies and the melting of the elements at the end of verse 12, it helps to imbue this moment in the colloquy with an amplified sense of seriousness and urgency. For this reason, it is probably best to render the construction as above: "*Given that* all these things [will] be destroyed . . ."[90]

The second linguistic characteristic worth noting pertains to the somewhat obfuscated syntax of the primary clause in this complex (i.e., the second clause in the complex).[91] Several things make this clause interesting: it opens with a qualitative interrogative pronoun (ποταπούς), but the clause is not a question (contra NRSV, NET); the main verb is the impersonal δεῖ ("it is necessary"); and the subject of the impersonal verb is a rankshifted/embedded infinitival clause. Further, the nuance of the prepositional phrase ἐν ἁγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς καὶ εὐσεβείαις ("in holy and godly ways of living") is a bit tricky to pin down. To begin with, the impersonal verb δεῖ is typically followed by an infinitive (or infinitival clause, as here); however, regardless of word order, the infinitive (clause) often functions as the subject of the verb.[92] That is the case here; what "is necessary" (δεῖ) is for "you" (ὑμᾶς, i.e., the readers) "to be" (ὑπάρχειν) "what sort [of persons]" (ποταπούς). Here we see that the interrogative qualitative pronoun in this instance functions more like its cousin ὁποῖος, the qualitative relative pronoun ("such").[93] The prepositional phrase ("in holy and godly ways of living") is probably best read in its basic or local sense ("in, in the realm of, on"). Mathewson and Emig note that when ἐν takes a plural object (as here), it conveys the notion "within" or "among."[94] Given Peter's use of the common metaphor of a way/path for living/conduct/behavior (ἀναστροφή, "way[s]/path[s] of living, trajectory[ies] of life"), "on" is an appropriate rendering of ἐν. Such living is then defined as "holy" (ἁγίαις) and "godly/pious" (εὐσεβείαις).

All of this is significant because it demonstrates the prominence or emphatic nature of Peter's message in this clause complex. For Peter, it is important that his readers

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[90] Please note the intentional avoidance of both temporal ("when, while") and causal ("since, because") interpretations of the genitive absolute, which better reflects the framing function it is intended to serve.

[91] The entire clause complex runs the whole length of vv. 11–12 and consists of four ranking clauses (i.e., standalone as opposed to embedded): (1) the genitive construction (τούτων . . . λυομένων), which is semantically dependent (but not grammatically connected, hence "absolute") upon clause 2; (2) a primary clause (ποταπούς . . . ἡμέρας), which itself is made up of one predicator and three rankshifted/embedded clauses; (3) a relative clause (δι' ἥν . . . λυθήσονται), which is dependent upon clause 2; and (4) one last clause (καὶ . . . τήκεται) that is paratactically related to and extends clause 3 (together they enhance clause 2).

[92] Mathewson and Emig, *Intermediate Greek Grammar*, 195. An example in English might be, "To drink coffee is necessary."

[93] See Porter, *Idioms*, 134.

[94] Mathewson and Emig, *Intermediate Greek Grammar*, 101.

understand that what God will do when—not if—he appears again should, indeed, have a direct impact on the kind of lives they live as followers of Jesus. Here Peter makes a connection between "what will be" and "must"—what will happen when God breaks into history again and how the readers must respond to it now.[95] He draws upon his expert understanding of tradition and his knowledge of the character of God to justify his value position. He knows how God has acted in the past, and he trusts that God will act similarly again, since his character has not changed. Thus, the legitimation strategy here is [+ve RATIONAL LEGITIMATION: THEORETICAL: prediction + scientific].

Conclusion

In conclusion, it must be said that the above claims regarding Peter's legitimation strategies are tentative and must be subjected to further research and testing. One area that needs much greater attention, for example, is to work out in much greater detail and specificity the various grammatical and syntactical realizations in Greek that indicate (probabilistically not deterministically) the kind(s) of legitimation strategies that are instantiated. Further, as van Leeuwen points out, "a decontextualized study of legitimation is not possible";[96] thus, much more work remains to be done by social-scientific critics (including cultural anthropologists, social-psychologists, and especially sociolinguists) in building a model of legitimation theory that is consonant with the sociocultural world of the New Testament.

Nevertheless, what even the cursory work offered above makes apparent is that Peter relies heavily upon the Jesus tradition for his justifications. Further, although he defends himself and his own teaching within the Jesus tradition, he appears to be much more concerned to base his justifications on the very character of God, such as his faithfulness and patient compassion.

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[95] Cf. Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 99.

[96] Van Leeuwen, "Legitimation," 92.

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