Suffering in Ancient Worldview:

A Comparative Study of Acts, Fourth Maccabees, and Seneca

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

Brian Jordan Tabb

Middlesex University

Supervised at London School of Theology

September 2013

Abstract

Brian J. Tabb, "Suffering in Ancient Worldview: A Comparative Study of Acts, Fourth Maccabees, and Seneca."
PhD thesis, London School of Theology/ Middlesex University, July 2013.

This thesis analyzes how suffering functions in the worldviews of the Roman Stoic Seneca, the Jewish author of 4 Maccabees, and the Christian historian Luke. Acts 17:17–18 invites such a comparison by presenting Paul's Christian missionary activity in direct engagement with Hellenistic Judaism and popular Greco-Roman philosophy, including Stoicism. Chapters 1, 3, and 5 offer close readings of representative texts from Acts, 4 Maccabees, and Seneca's essays and letters with a view to highlighting the authors' treatments of suffering. Chapters 2, 4, and 6 utilize heuristic worldview questions to clarify and synthesize how each writer accounts for suffering, vis-à-vis their perspectives on God, humanity, the world's problem and its solution, and the future. Chapter 7 presents an ancient conversation between these three authors modeled after Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*.

This thesis makes at least three significant contributions to scholarship. First, this is the only extended comparison of Seneca, Luke, and 4 Maccabees. The value and importance of studying early Christianity alongside Stoicism and Hellenistic Judaism is well known, but previous studies have focused on Paul, not Luke, who is typically compared with Josephus, not 4 Maccabees. Second, building on N. T. Wright's work, this study demonstrates that worldview questions offer a fruitful method for comparing different authors and groups. This study does not attempt to prove literary or intellectual dependence but to compare these authors at the worldview level. Third, this thesis contributes to the important and often neglected theme of suffering in Luke-Acts, 4 Maccabees, and Seneca's writings. This is the first *systematic* treatment of suffering in Seneca's thought and in 4 Maccabees. This study builds on Cunningham's and Mittelstadt's recent monographs on suffering in Luke-Acts and advances the discussion by offering clear definitions of suffering and persecution, illustrated by first-century examples, and by an extended worldview comparison of Luke with other authors. In Luke-Acts, God is not "outside suffering" as Seneca argues but acts *through* the suffering of Jesus and his followers to set the world of sin and suffering right again, in fulfillment of his ancient promises.

Acknowledgments

"I stand to this day, having experienced help from God" (Acts 26:22). It is a tremendous privilege and a daunting task to complete a PhD thesis, which would not have been possible without the remarkable faithfulness of God and the constant support and prayers of many people.

I am particularly grateful to my supervisor Prof. Steve Walton. He has been a wise, attentive, and encouraging supervisor, as well as a model of excellent Christian scholarship and godly character. Additionally, I acknowledge the excellent feedback offered by my PhD examiners, Prof. N. T. Wright and Dr. Conrad Gempf, as well as by Prof. Catharine Edwards, who generously read and commented on several chapters.

I am very grateful for the tremendous support offered by my colleagues at Bethlehem College and Seminary, including Dr. Tim Tomlinson, Dr. John Piper, Rev. Tom Steller, Mr. Jason Abell, Dr. Jason DeRouchie, Mr. Ryan Griffith, Dr. Jason Meyer, Mr. Travis Myers, Dr. Andy Naselli, Mr. Joe Rigney, Dr. Rick Shenk, Dr. John Beckman, Mr. Johnathon Bowers, and Mr. Matt Crutchmer. I acknowledge my teaching assistants Mickey Sheu and Zach Howard, who helped with proofreading portions of the thesis and scanning articles, as well as Dr. Antoine Fritz, Neil Schindler, and Shalomie Lamphere, who assisted with French and Italian translation.

Thanks are due to the excellent library staffs at Bethlehem College and Seminary (Greg Rosauer), London School of Theology (Alan Linfield), Luther Seminary (Karen Alexander, Bruce Eldevik, and Judy Stone), and North Central University (Melody Windingland). Thanks also to Simon Sykes and others at Tyndale House, Cambridge, which offered superb facilities and a wonderful community of scholarship.

Many others have been supportive in various ways throughout my PhD studies. I thank my father, Professor Murray Tabb, for reading and commenting on the thesis. He and my mother, Diane Tabb, along with my parents-in-law, Hardi and Debbie Rosner, offered constant encouragement as well as prayer, financial, and practical support. Thanks also to Dr. Dan Gurtner, Alex Kirk, David McCollough, and many others from Bethlehem Baptist Church, Eden Baptist Church, London School of Theology, and Tyndale House for their advice, encouragement, and friendship at different times through my PhD studies.

I dedicate this work to my wife, Kristin, and to my children, Jeremiah and Julia. They have offered me constant support, balance, and encouragement, and have sacrificed in many ways to make this PhD possible. Kristin remarkably made time as a busy mother to read and comment on my thesis and graciously endured many conversations about my research. “The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance” (Psalm 16:5–6). To God be all the glory!

Abbreviations

Abbreviations not listed below follow Alexander, Patrick H. et. al., *The SBL Handbook of Style*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999.

א	Codex Sinaiticus
B	Codex Vaticanus
AevumAnt	*Aevum antiquum*
Auctor	The anonymous author of 4 Maccabees
BDAG	Bauer, Walter, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
CEB	*Common English Bible*. Nashville: Common English Bible, 2011.
CFCL	Cuad. Filol. Clás. Estudios Latinos
DDD	Toorn, Karel van der, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, eds. *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible.* 2nd ed. Leiden/Grand Rapids: Brill/ Eerdmans, 1999.
DNTB	Evans, Craig A. and Stanley E. Porter, eds. *Dictionary of New Testament Background.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
EDEJ	Collins, John J. and Daniel C. Harlow, eds. *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
EDSS	Schiffman, Lawrence H. and James C. VanderKam, eds. *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
ESV	*English Standard Version Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments with Apocrypha*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009; Wheaton: Crossway, 2001.
FS	*Festschrift*
HCSB	*Holy Bible: Holman Christian Standard Bible*. Red-letter text edition ed. Nashville: B&H, 2003.
JVG	Wright, N. T. *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 2. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997.
Göttingen	*Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum*, Göttingen, 1931–present.
GR	*Greece & Rome*
HRCS	Hatch, Edwin and Henry A. Redpath. *A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books)*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon 1906. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
Muraoka	Muraoka, T. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*. Revised ed. Leuven: Peeters, 2009.
LCL	Loeb Classical Library (Harvard University Press)
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick McKenzie, eds. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

NA28	*Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*. 28th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.
NET	*NET Bible: New English Translation*. Revised ed. Spokane, Wash.: Biblical Studies, 2003.
NETS	Pietersma, Albert and Benjamin G. Wright, eds. *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
New Pauly	Cancik, Hubert, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, eds. *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World*. 16 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2002–10.
NGÜ	*Bibel der Neue Genfer Übersetzung: Neues Testament und Psalmen*. Romanel-sur-Lausanne: Genfer Bibelgesellschaft, 2011.
NIDB	Sakenfeld, Katharine D., ed. *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006–10.
NIV11	*Holy Bible: New International Version*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.
NTPG	Wright, N. T. *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 1. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.
OLD	Glare, P. G. W., ed. *Oxford Latin Dictionary.* 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 2012.
OTP	*Charlesworth, James H., ed. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.* Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983–85.
OWC	Oxford World Classics (Oxford University Press)
PHI	Packard Humanities Institute Classical Latin Texts. Online: http://latin.packhum.org/index.
Rahlfs	Rahlfs, Alfred and Robert Hanhart, eds. *Septuaginta*. Revised ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006.
Schlachter	Schlachter, Franz E. *Die Bibel*. Geneva: Genfer Bibelgesellschaft, 2000.
SEP	Zalta, Edward N., ed. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford: Stanford University 2012 (Winter). Online: http://plato.stanford.edu/
Swete	Swete, Henry B. *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930.
TLG	*Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (University of California, Irvine). Online: http://www.tlg.uci.edu.

Contents

Introduction

1. An "Ancient Conversation" about Suffering

Let us imagine an ancient conversation in a private home between three prominent first-century authors: the Roman Stoic Seneca, the Hellenistic Jew who wrote 4 Maccabees, and the Christian historian who penned the Third Gospel and Acts. The topic under consideration is one that has interested and vexed humanity for ages, namely how to account for the persistent presence of suffering in this world. The three participants were very likely contemporaries of one another, though it is doubtful whether they had any formal acquaintance.[1] Each author wrote much about suffering, though from varied perspectives and with different emphases and audiences. Through their writings, first penned in Greek or Latin on hide or parchment and providentially preserved for modern readers for nearly two millennia, we may inquire about their understanding of suffering.

The reader may object that the "ancient conversation" proposed here is somewhat absurd, as all the participants are long dead and thus may not speak freely or undergo cross-examination. George Caird, whose "conference table approach" to NT theology serves as an inspiration to this study's organization, offers a ready answer to this objection.[2] Caird writes, "The study of the New Testament, like any other historical exercise, entails a descent into the world of the dead."[3] He notes further, "The past is not accessible to us by direct observation, only through the interrogation of witnesses…. [A]ll historical sources are, in the last analysis, persons with whom to the best of his or her ability the historian must engage in conversation."[4] Therefore, we will closely examine Seneca's writings, Acts, and 4 Maccabees to understand how suffering functioned in these first century authors' worldviews.[5]

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[1] However, Acts 18:12–17 records that in Corinth Paul appeared before Seneca's older brother Junius Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia. On Gallio, see Seneca, *Vit. beat. 1.1; Nat.* 4A, Pref. 10; 5.11.1; *Ep.* 104.1; K. Haacker, "Gallio," *ABD* 2:901–3.

[2] G. B. Caird and L. D. Hurst, *New Testament Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 18–26.

[3] Ibid., 19. See also the creative approach to historiography by Keith Hopkins, *A World Full of Gods: The Strange Triumph of Christianity* (New York: Free, 2000).

[4] Caird and Hurst, *Theology*, 20.

[5] The important terms suffering and worldview are discussed below, §3–4.

Seneca and 4 Maccabees are rarely compared with "the first Christian historian,"[6] known from the second century as Luke.[7] However, Luke presents Paul in dialogue with both Diaspora Jews and Stoic and Epicurean philosophers in Athens: "So he was reasoning (διελέγετο) in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to converse (συνέβαλλον) with him" (Acts 17:17–18).[8] Paul's Areopagus speech in 17:22–31 suggests Luke's awareness of and engagement with "the broader philosophical debates concerning providence."[9]

In ancient and modern times, parallels between Paul and Seneca have been much discussed,[10] evidenced not least by the apocryphal correspondence between Paul and Seneca "read by many" according to Jerome (*Vir. ill*. 12).[11] However, discussions of Stoicism and early Christianity often overlook Acts, the only NT book to mention Stoics directly.[12] Likewise many studies have explored 4 Maccabees' possible influence on Paul's view of the atonement.[13] However, the only recent

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[6] Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the 'Acts of the Apostles'* (trans. Richard Bauckham; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[7] On authorship and dating, see ch. 5 §1.1–2.
[8] Unless otherwise noted, translations of NT, OT, and LXX are the author's own and translations of Seneca and other classical writers are from the Loeb Classical Library (LCL).
[9] John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 72.
[10] Joseph B. Lightfoot, "St Paul and Seneca," in *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (6th ed; London: Macmillan, 1913), 270–328; Jan N. Sevenster, *Paul and Seneca* (Leiden: Brill, 1961); Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (London: T&T Clark, 2000). For a survey of scholarship, see Marcia L. Cornish, "Stoicism and the New Testament: An Essay in Historiography," in *ANRW II 26.1* (ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase; New York: de Gruyter, 1992), 334–79.
[11] For introduction and translation of these fourteen letters, see J. K. Elliott and M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 547–53.
[12] For example, Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg, *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2010). One recent exception to this neglect is Tim Brookins, "Dispute with Stoicism in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus," *JGRChJ* 8 (2011–12): 34–50.
[13] Sam K. Williams, *Jesus' Death as Saving Event: The Background and Origin of a Concept* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1975); Warren Joel Heard, "Maccabean Martyr Theology: Its Genesis, Antecedents and Significance for the Earliest Soteriological Interpretation of the Death of Jesus" (Ph.D. thesis, Aberdeen University, 1987); David Seeley, *The Noble Death: Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul's Concept of Salvation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990); J. W. van Henten, "The Tradition-Historical Background of Romans 3.25: A Search for Pagan and Jewish Parallels," in *From Jesus to John: FS M. de Jonge* (ed. Martinus C. de Boer; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 101–28; Daniel P. Bailey, "Jesus as the Mercy Seat: The Semantics and Theology of Paul's Use of *Hilasterion* in Romans 3:25" (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1999); Jarvis J. Williams, *Maccabean Martyr Traditions in Paul's Theology of Atonement: Did Martyr Theology Shape Paul's Conception of Jesus's Death?* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2010). Cf. Brian J. Tabb, "Review of J. Williams, *Maccabean Martyr Traditions in Paul's Theology of Atonement*," *Them* 36 (2011): 112–14.

extended comparisons of 4 Maccabees and Acts have analyzed the theme of piety and the use of Abraham language in the two works.[14]

Lucius Annaeus Seneca (hereafter Seneca) is a fitting conversation partner with Luke. First, Seneca was the most prolific philosopher in the first century CE, a proponent of late or Roman Stoicism,[15] arguably the most influential philosophical tradition in the NT period.[16] Most studies comparing Stoicism and the NT depend largely on Cicero, Diogenes Laertius, and Stobaeus for their understanding of Stoic ethics; thus, "none of the sources normally consulted expresses actual thoughts and teachings of Stoics in the Christian era."[17] Therefore, "If we want to read a Stoic author directly then we must turn to Seneca as by far the most important Stoic author whose works survive."[18] Second, Seneca writes considerably about his own and others' suffering and he relates suffering to larger questions of divine Providence, virtue, and ethics.

The author of 4 Maccabees (hereafter Auctor) is included in this ancient dialogue with Seneca and Luke for several reasons. First, Auctor addresses the "everyday situation" of first-century Diaspora Judaism, which was faced with the challenge of assimilation.[19] Second, Auctor is clearly educated in Greek language and philosophical thought, particularly Stoicism.[20] At the outset, Auctor exhorts his readers to "eagerly attend to this philosophy" concerning devout reason's mastery over the passions (1:1). Third, while suffering is an important theme in many

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[14] Sung Kun Park, "The Influence of 2 and 4 Maccabees for the Concept of Piety in Luke-Acts" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992); Turid K. Seim, "Abraham, Ancestor or Archetype? A Comparison of Abraham-Language in 4 Maccabees and Luke-Acts," in *Antiquity and Humanity: FS H. Betz* (ed. Adela Y. Collins and Margaret M. Mitchell; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 27–42.

[15] For the designation Roman Stoicism, and Seneca's important contribution, see Runar M. Thorsteinsson, *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism: A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 20.

[16] Cf. J. C. Thom, "Stoicism" in *DNTB*, 1139–42, citing 1139.

[17] Thorsteinsson, *Christianity*, 6. His comparison of Romans, 1 Peter, and 1 Clement with Stoic authors from the first and early second centuries CE (Seneca, Musonius, Epictetus) is a positive development.

[18] John Sellars, *Stoicism* (Chesham: Acumen, 2006), 12.

[19] Cf. David A. deSilva, *4 Maccabees* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 25, 42–44; Hans-Josef Klauck, *4. Makkabäerbuch* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1989), 664. On the dating and occasion of 4 Maccabees, see ch. 3 §1.2–3.

[20] Cf. Robert Renehan, "The Greek Philosophical Background of Fourth Maccabees," *Rh. Mus.* 115 (1972): 223–38; deSilva, *Guides*, 13, 51; Tessa Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 112–13.

intertestamental Jewish writings,[21] 4 Maccabees stands out for its extended reflection on the graphic suffering of nine faithful Jews and the significance of their deaths.[22]

1.1. Central Research Question

"Whenever humanity records its voice, then it always speaks of suffering," according to Iain Wilkinson.[23] John Bowker writes, "[W]hat a religion has to say about suffering reveals, in many ways more than anything else, what it believes the nature and purpose of existence to be."[24] In ancient and modern societies, suffering and death have prompted deep reflection concerning God (or the gods), the world, and the meaning and purpose of life. The Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl asserts, "If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete."[25]

To these modern assessments, we could add some ancient perspectives on suffering. For example, Seneca writes, "You *must* (*oportet*) suffer pain, and thirst, and hunger, and old age too, if a longer stay among men shall be granted you; you must be sick, and you must suffer loss and death" (*Ep.* 91.18). Auctor exhorts his Jewish audience to master sufferings from within and without through devout reason (4 Macc 18:1–2). In Acts 14:22, Paul and Barnabas encourage and strengthen the churches with their message, "through many afflictions we must enter God's kingdom." Paul's personal experience of suffering matches his proclamation (14:19; cf. 9:16). Luke employs the first-person plural when narrating Agabus' prophecy of Paul's suffering (21:10, 12, 14), Paul's fateful trip to Jerusalem (21:15–17) and his tumultuous sea voyage to Rome (27:1–16), which suggests his up-close familiarity with suffering.[26] Similarly, Seneca refers to himself as "a sick man" (*Ep.* 68.9) and records his various ailments and personal hardships, including exile and loss of wealth (*Ep.* 96.1; *Helv.* 6.5). Thus, suffering was not simply a matter of abstract theorizing but of concrete experience for these authors and their associates.

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[21] For recent surveys, see J. W. van Henten, "Martyrdom," and Randal Argall, "Persecuted Righteous Person," in *EDEJ* 917–19, 1045–45; James Charlesworth, "Suffering," *EDSS* 2:898–901.
[22] See ch. 3 §1.4.
[23] Iain Wilkinson, *Suffering: A Sociological Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 1.
[24] John Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 2. Similarly Walter Brueggemann, "A Shape for Old Testament Theology: 1, Structure Legitimation; 2, Embrace of Pain," *CBQ* 47 (1985): 28–46, esp. 44.
[25] Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (3rd ed; Boston: Beacon, 1984), 88.
[26] On the "we" passages in Acts, see ch. 5 §1.1.

Therefore, this thesis seeks to answer the question: *How does suffering function in the worldviews of Seneca, Auctor, and Luke?* To answer this question, a three-fold strategy of exegesis, synthesis, and comparison will be employed. First, representative texts from Seneca's essays and letters, 4 Maccabees, and Acts will be carefully analyzed with a view to highlighting the various aspects of suffering that emerge in these texts (chs. 1, 3, 5). Second, a common set of "worldview" questions will be posed to the three authors to synthesize each one's view of suffering in relation to God, humanity, the world's problem and its solution, and expectations about the future (chs. 2, 4, 6).[27] Finally, Chapter 7 will offer an "ancient conversation" about suffering between Seneca, Auctor, and Luke. We will imagine, for example, how the Jewish and Christian authors will respond to Seneca's arguments that suffering is not inherently evil and that God is exempt from suffering. Further, what might Seneca and Auctor think of Luke's insistence on the necessary suffering of God's Son as the key means by which God acts to set the world right again?

Before going further, three matters of *prolegomena* must be addressed. First, we will briefly outline modern scholarly discussion concerning the suffering motif in Seneca, 4 Maccabees, and Luke-Acts. Second, we will define *suffering* and *worldview*, terms basic to our research question. Finally, we will delineate the aims and approach of this thesis.

2. Brief Survey of Scholarship

2.1. Suffering in Seneca

Though "Seneca's name has been traditionally yoked with the concept of adversity,"[28] there exists no systematic study of suffering in Seneca's thought. The most substantial contributions to the topic are Catharine Edwards' essay on pain in Seneca's letters,[29] Motto and Clark's essay on Seneca's paradox of adversity,[30] and Dionigi's article comparing Seneca's notion of *patientia* with that of later Latin Christians Tertullian

[27] See §4.3.2.
[28] Anna L. Motto and John R. Clark, "Seneca and the Paradox of Adversity," in *Essays on Seneca* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 65–86, citing 67.
[29] Catharine Edwards, "The Suffering Body: Philosophy and Pain in Seneca's Letters," in *Constructions of the Classical Body* (ed. James I. Porter; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 252–68. See also her *Death in Ancient Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
[30] Motto and Clark, "Paradox," 65–86.

and Augustine.[31] Recently, Holowchak has offered a popular-level treatment of Seneca and other Stoics on "Equanimity in Adversity."[32]

Edwards notes that Seneca "redeploys with characteristic linguistic bravura the complex of meanings mapped onto the body in pain in Roman culture."[33] Bodily suffering functions as an analogy for mental weakness in Seneca's writing. Elsewhere, the philosopher depicts the sufferings of Roman *exempla* and his own ailments to motivate readers to maintain proper perspective on sufferings as "indifferent" things and to display virtue in adversity.[34]

According to Motto and Clark, Seneca's writings highlight the "paradox of adversity," which surprises readers and runs against the grain of popular opinion.[35] Seneca's embattled personal life no doubt supplied much philosophical fodder, since "[t]he recurrence of ill health, of public and private tragedy, were, needless to say, sufficient cause to keep the paradox of adversity ever before his eyes."[36] Seneca insists that adversity is more beneficial than good fortune; indeed, "afflictions and sorrows are rather a species of good fortune when they fall to the lot of good men. They generate good deeds."[37]

Dionigi claims that the subject of *patientia* is a "watershed" (spartiacque) between Latin pagan and Christian writings.[38] Seneca differs from later Christian authors such as Tertullian in three primary ways. First, for Seneca and other Stoics, God is *extra patientiam*, outside of suffering, while the sage overcomes suffering, a stark contrast to the suffering God of Christianity, whose adherents suffer in imitation of Christ.[39] Second, *patientia* for Seneca is a display of the human virtue fortitude, while for Latin Christians *patientia* expresses faith in God.[40] Third, Seneca's *present* focus on virtue in *patientia* contrasts with the Christian view of *patientia* where present endurance is buttressed by *future* hope.[41]

Holowchak writes, "Stoicism offers itself as a curious sort of remedy for human suffering. It promises not to remove suffering, but to help one bear suffering

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[31] Ivano Dionigi, "La patientia: Seneca contro i cristiani," *AevumAnt* 13 (2000): 413–29.
[32] Mark Holowchak, *The Stoics: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2008), 122–56.
[33] Edwards, "Suffering," 253.
[34] Ibid., 254, 257.
[35] Motto and Clark, "Paradox," 65.
[36] Ibid., 70.
[37] Ibid., 78.
[38] Dionigi, "La patientia," 413.
[39] Ibid., 426.
[40] Ibid., 426–27.
[41] Ibid., 427.

through fundamentally changing one's attitude toward it."[42] For Seneca and other Stoics, adversities are "inconveniences" that should not be feared but overcome through endurance.[43]

2.2. Suffering in 4 Maccabees

James Dumke argues that while 4 Maccabees does not explain *why* the righteous suffer, Auctor concurs with other intertestamental Jewish writers that a "wicked element in the world" tempts people to apostasize and is thus the true reason why the righteous suffer.[44] The righteous suffer in solidarity with Israel at the hands of the wicked, yet ultimately under God's sovereignty.[45] Dumke writes, "Faithful endurance may bring death, but it also brings victory; the traditional confidence in reward and punishment is ultimately affirmed."[46]

According to Chris Smith, 4 Maccabees presents suffering as an "environmental hazard" of life in an evil world and as "divine chastisement" for Israel's sin.[47] At the same time, 4 Maccabees suggests some positive aspects to suffering, such as training, testing, and particularly the redemptive function of the martyrs' deaths.[48]

While there is no full-length treatment of suffering in 4 Maccabees, many scholars have considered certain *aspects* of suffering, such as martyrdom, atonement, and the martyrs' hope of life after death. Jan van Henten and David deSilva have made the most substantial recent contributions on 4 Maccabees. In his seminal monograph, van Henten discusses the theological, political, and philosophical aspects of the martyrdoms in 2 and 4 Maccabees.[49] He concludes, "The author of 4

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[42] Holowchak, *Stoics*, 122–23.
[43] Ibid., 123–26, 151.
[44] James A. Dumke, "The Suffering of the Righteous in Jewish Apocryphal Literature" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1980), 134.
[45] Ibid., 128, 134. Similarly Heard, "Maccabean," 166.
[46] Dumke, "Suffering," 135.
[47] Chris M. Smith, "Suffering and Glory: Studies in Paul's Use of the Motif in the Light of its Early Jewish Background" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1988), 40.
[48] Ibid., 40–41. Cf. 10:10 (παιδεία); 15:16 (πειράζω); 17:22 (τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου τοῦ θανάτου αὐτῶν).
[49] J. W. van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 299. Cf. idem, "Maccabees, Fourth Book of," *EDEJ* 909–10; idem, "Datierung und Herkunft des Vierten Makkabäerbuches," in *Tradition and Re-Interpretation in Jewish and Early Christian Literature: FS J. Lebram* (ed. J. W. van Henten, et al.; Leiden: Brill, 1986), 136–149; "Romans 3.25; idem, "A Jewish Epitaph in a Literary Text: 4 Macc 17:8–10," in *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy* (ed. J. W. van Henten and P. W. van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 44–69; idem, "Martyrdom and Persecution Revisited: The Case of 4 Maccabees," in *Märtyrer und Märtyrerakten* (ed. Walter Ameling; Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002), 59–75; idem, "Jüdisches Märtyrertum und der Tod Jesu," in *Judaistik und neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (ed. Lutz Doering, et. al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 146–172.

Maccabees formulates the idea of the martyrs' atoning and substitute death in more explicit terms than the epitomist [of 2 Maccabees]. The description of the martyrs' sacrificial death continues the biblical notions of non-cultic atonement as well as Graeco-Roman ideas about sacrificial death."[50]

DeSilva's work on 4 Maccabees includes a monograph,[51] a major commentary,[52] and numerous articles.[53] He suggests that Auctor addresses the everyday problem of assimilation and presents the martyrs as examples of true honor and piety who remain loyal to God and his Law.[54] Auctor's graphic portrayal of the martyrs' sufferings serves his rhetorical aim, "to allow the audience to understand that there is in fact no passion, no pain, no feat that the pious-minded person cannot overcome if he or she keeps the eyes fixed on his or her duty to God and on God's promise to the faithful."[55]

2.3. Suffering in Acts

Paul House writes, "Many writers briefly mention suffering or persecution in Acts. Very few, however, explain its significance at length."[56] Others have already completed fine literature surveys,[57] so the selective overview here will focus on the most recent contributors.

In his seminal study, Conzelmann argues that Luke responds to the Parousia's delay by writing an account of salvation history in which the period of the church is

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[50] van Henten, *Martyrs*, 299.
[51] deSilva, *Guides*.
[52] David A. deSilva, *4 Maccabees: Introduction and Commentary on the Greek Text in Codex Sinaiticus* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).
[53] David A. deSilva, "Maccabees, Fourth Book of," *NIDB* 3:746-50; idem, "The Noble Contest: Honor, Shame, and the Rhetorical Strategy of 4 Maccabees," *JSP* 13 (1995): 31–57; idem, "'...And Not a Drop to Drink': The Story of David's Thirst in the Jewish Scriptures, Josephus, and 4 Maccabees," *JSP* 16 (2006): 15–40; idem, "The Sinaiticus Text of 4 Maccabees," *CBQ* 68 (2006): 47–62; idem, "The Perfection of 'Love for Offspring': Greek Representations of Maternal Affection and the Achievement of the Heroine of 4 Maccabees," *NTS* 52 (2006): 251–68; idem, "Using the Master's Tools to Shore up Another's House: a Postcolonial Analysis of 4 Maccabees," *JBL* 126 (2007): 99–127; idem, "Jewish Martyrology and the Death of Jesus," in *The Pseudepigrapha and Christian Origins: Essays from the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* (ed. Gerbern S. Oegema and James H. Charlesworth; New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 51–67; idem, "An Example of How to Die Nobly for Religion: The Influence of 4 Maccabees on Origen's Exhortatio ad Martyrium," *JECS* 17 (2009): 337–355; idem, "The Human Ideal, the Problem of Evil, and Moral Responsibility in 4 Maccabees," *BBR* 23 (2013): 57–77.
[54] deSilva, "Contest," 56–57; idem, *Guides*, 25.
[55] deSilva, *Commentary*, 216 (on 14:9–10). Cf. idem, "Example," 345.
[56] Paul R. House, "Suffering and the Purpose of Acts," *JETS* 33 (1990): 317–330, citing 319.
[57] For fuller treatments of scholarship of Luke's theology in general and his theology of persecution in particular, see respectively François Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-five Years of Research (1950-2005)* (2nd ed; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006); and Scott S. Cunningham, *"Through Many Tribulations": The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 23–41.

"a situation conditioned by persecution."[58] Luke's primary concern is "the Christian's behaviour in persecution" in this time when the church is called to suffer for Jesus' sake.[59] Conzelmann raises questions concerning methodology, eschatology, and ethics, with which subsequent scholars have grappled. First, how should Luke's "theology" of suffering be ascertained? Second, how is the church's suffering related to God's plan and the expectation for Jesus' (delayed) Parousia? Third, what is the relationship between the suffering of Jesus and his followers?

Braumann follows Conzelmann's redactional approach and salvation-historical paradigm. However, he contends that the community's persecution (*not* the delayed Parousia) serves as the motivating factor for Luke's writing.[60] Schütz argues that the church's position in the world "de facto durch θλίψεις bestimmt ist," and he stresses that the church experiences "Leiden in Jesu Nachfolge."[61] Dehandschutter claims that Luke transforms persecution from a sign of the end times to an opportunity for witness in the context of the church's life.[62]

House asserts, "Acts has no purpose, no plot, no structure, and no history without suffering."[63] He notes that suffering plays a crucial role in Luke's presentation of the gospel's expansion, his defense of Christianity, his portrayal and defense of Paul, and the strengthening of the early Church's foundations.[64]

Richard Pervo acknowledges that readers of Acts must reckon with the "sheer number of adventure stories," by which he means incarcerations, persecutions, martyrdoms, plots, conspiracies, trials, and the like.[65] However, Pervo contends, "Suffering does not really exist in these tales," which are literary opportunities for Luke to express his entertaining and edifying theology of glory.[66]

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[58] Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (trans. Geoffrey Buswell; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 209–10.
[59] Ibid., 232.
[60] G. Braumann, "Das Mittel der Zeit," *ZNW* 54 (1963): 117–45, citing 145.
[61] Frieder Schütz, *Der leidende Christus* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1969), 11, 112.
[62] Boudewijn Dehandschutter, "La persécution des chrétiens dans les Actes des Apôtres," in *Les Actes des Apôtres* (ed. J. Kremer; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979), 541–46, citing 545.
[63] House, "Suffering," 321. Contra Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 82.
[64] House, "Suffering," 321–29. Cf. John Kilgallen, "Persecution in the Acts of the Apostles," in *Luke and Acts: FS E. Rasco* (ed. Gerald O'Collins and Gilberto Marconi; New York: Paulist, 1991), 143–60, 245–50.
[65] Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 18, cf. 14–17.
[66] Ibid., 27. Contra Pervo (24–26), "The data of persecution are merely mentioned in Acts. Hardly any attempt is made to embellish the details and to work out a martyrological history or a hagiographical portrait of nascent Christendom." Ernst Bammel, "Jewish Activity against Christians in Palestine

The most significant treatment to date of suffering and persecution in Luke's writings is Scott Cunningham's monograph, *"Through Many Tribulations": The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts*. Cunningham argues that Luke "uses the literary theme of persecution as a vehicle in pursuit of his theological agenda."[67] He discerns six theological functions of the persecution motif in Luke-Acts:

> (1) Persecution is part of the plan and providence of God.
>
> (2) Persecution is understood as the rejection of God's agents by those who are supposedly the people of God.
>
> (3) The persecuted people of God stand in continuity with God's prophets of old.
>
> (4) Persecution is an integral consequence of following Jesus.
>
> (5) Persecution is the occasion of the Christian's perseverance.
>
> (6) Persecution is the occasion of divine triumph.[68]

Cunningham's study builds upon the contribution of David Moessner,[69] who argues that Luke presents Jesus' followers, particularly Stephen and Paul, as following in the footsteps of Jesus, the persecuted prophet like Moses.[70] In Moessner's view, Jesus suffers and dies according to God's plan and achieves forgiveness of sins and eschatological atonement.[71] "Jesus' resurrection or enthronement forms the hinge which unites the suffering-crucified one to the suffering-exalted one who preaches through his suffering apostles-witnesses to the ends of the earth."[72]

In the other major monograph on suffering in Luke-Acts, Martin Mittelstadt focuses on the relationship between suffering and the Spirit's empowerment of witnesses in Luke-Acts and its implications for Pentecostal theology. He largely

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according to Acts," in *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting* (ed. Richard Bauckham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 357–64, citing 361.

[67] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 337.

[68] Ibid., 14. Cunningham's thesis is restated and affirmed by Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 326 n. 27.

[69] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 38–39.

[70] David P. Moessner, "'The Christ Must Suffer': New Light on the Jesus-Peter, Stephen, Paul Parallels in Luke-Acts," *NovT* 28 (1986): 220–56. Cf. idem, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), esp. 297–307, 322–25.

[71] Moessner, *Lord*, 323; idem, "'The Christ Must Suffer, The Church Must Suffer': Rethinking the Theology of the Cross in Luke-Acts," *SBLSP* 29 (1990): 165–95; idem, "Suffering, Intercession and Eschatological Atonement: An Uncommon Common View in the Testament of Moses and in Luke-Acts," in *Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation* (ed. James H. Charlesworth and Craig A. Evans; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 202–227.

[72] David P. Moessner, "The 'Script' of the Scripture in the Acts of the Apostes: Suffering as God's 'Plan' (βουλή) for the World for the 'Release of Sins'," in *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* (ed. Ben Witherington III; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 218–50, citing 249.

affirms Cunningham's conclusions and argues that Luke's account "is not merely a narration of persistent triumph, but one of consistent conflict, opposition and persecution of God's agents."[73] Mittelstadt clearly demonstrates that in Luke-Acts, the Spirit-empowered witness of Jesus and his church brings about persecution and ironically advances amidst this opposition.

Alan Thompson asserts that Luke intends to "reassure" his readership by drawing attention to "the sobering truth concerning the inevitability of suffering in this 'not yet' phase of the kingdom."[74] For Thompson, the inaugurated (but not yet consummated) kingdom of God helps to explain suffering's intimate relation to two leitmotifs in Acts: the advancement of God's Word and the growth of local churches.[75]

Cunningham, Mittelstadt, and others[76] offer helpful treatments of suffering and persecution as literary motifs in Luke's narrative, but they often tread upon similar turf. Few studies give serious attention to the question of definition—what *is* suffering and what did it *look like* in the first century CE?[77] A notable exception to this critique is Rapske's study which discusses "what it was like in the Roman world to be put through custodial deliberations; what it was like to experience imprisonment, bonds and prison culture; and what would have been the psychological and social impact of such an experience upon relationships to individuals and the community at large 'on the outside.'"[78] This thesis intends to consider the suffering motif holistically and relate it to the worldviews of Luke, Seneca, and Auctor.

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[73] Martin W. Mittelstadt, *The Spirit and Suffering in Luke-Acts: Implications for a Pentecostal Pneumatology* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 130.
[74] Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 61.
[75] Ibid., 55. Cf. Brian J. Tabb, "Review of A. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*," *BBR* 23 (2013): 126–28.
[76] Important older studies include David R. Adams, "The Suffering of Paul and the Dynamics of Luke-Acts" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1979); R. J. Miller, "Prophecy and Persecution in Luke-Acts" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1986); Charles A. Estridge, "Suffering in Contexts of the Speeches of Acts" (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 1991); Charles H. Talbert, *Learning Through Suffering: The Educational Value of Suffering in the New Testament and in its Milieu* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1991), 75–90. More recently, see James A. Kelhoffer, *Persecution, Persuasion and Power: Readiness to Withstand Hardship as a Corroboration of Legitimacy in the New Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 265–352. For summary and critique, see Brian J. Tabb, "Review of J. Kelhoffer, *Persecution, Persuasion and Power*," *RBL* (2012). Accessed 18 September 2012. Online: http://www.bookreviews.org/BookDetail.asp?TitleId=8391.
[77] See §3.1–2.
[78] Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 423.

3. Suffering in Ancient Context

Thus far, we have introduced Seneca, Auctor, and Luke as participants in our ancient conversation about suffering and have summarized scholarly discussion on each author. Sections 3–4 will define key terms—suffering, persecution, and worldview—and will delineate this study's approach.

3.1. Toward a Definition of Suffering

Suffering is difficult to define, because it is rooted in painful real-life experiences of persons and communities.[79] Thus some treatments avoid definitions and move immediately to examples and explanations of suffering.[80] For example, Simundson writes, "We will not attempt a philosophical definition or analysis of what we mean by suffering … People know when they are suffering. Suffering is a personal experience."[81] Others balk at attempts to define or quantify human suffering, claiming that this would broach upon the sacred ground of "unspeakable" personal experience and serve to compound sufferers' misery.[82] Still others contend that there is no satisfactory resolution to "the problem of suffering," which "amounts to a 'terminal aporia' for human thought and moral behavior."[83] Despite these objections, a working definition of suffering is necessary to bring direction and focus to the present investigation.

3.1.1. Suffering and Pain

Suffering is typically defined vis-à-vis pain. Some explain suffering *as* pain. For example, Harrington writes, "To suffer is to feel pain or distress; to sustain injury, disadvantage or loss; or to undergo a penalty."[84] Similarly, suffering has been defined as "the pain, misery, or loss experienced by a person who suffers," or "the state or an instance of enduring pain."[85] Other scholars, in the intellectual tradition of Descartes, have distinguished *pain*, an "objective" bodily sensation that should be controlled, from *suffering*, a "'subjective' matter of moral conscience, cultural outlook and

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[79] Wilkinson, *Suffering*, 16.
[80] Cf. Daniel J. Simundson, "Suffering" *ABD* 6: 219–25; Mittelstadt, *Spirit*.
[81] Daniel J. Simundson, *Faith under Fire: Biblical Interpretations of Suffering* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 13-14.
[82] For bibliography and discussion, see Wilkinson, *Suffering*, 18-19.
[83] Ibid., 19, drawing upon Paul Ricoeur.
[84] Daniel J. Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer? A Scriptural Approach to the Human Condition* (Franklin, Wisc.: Sheed & Ward, 2000), 1.
[85] "Suffering," in *Collins English Dictionary* (ed. Jeanette Kuether; 6th ed; San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2003). Accessed 4 May 2013. Online: www.thefreedictionary.com/suffering.

personal psychology."[86] Wilkinson notes that, while suffering involves an *element* of physical pain, it is always much more than pain and "may all at once be physical, psychological, social, economic, political, and cultural."[87]

3.1.2. Working Definition of Suffering

It is noteworthy that the English term "suffer" derives from the Latin *sufferre*, *to bear* or *endure*. The Oxford English Dictionary offers the summary definition "to undergo, endure" for the verb *suffer*.[88] Suffering entails some weight or burden that one must endure. It is a holistic reality that in a sense "engulfs the whole person,"[89] and suffering may take the form(s) of loss, illness, violence, conflict, fear, drudgery, and/or failure.[90] Thus, we propose the following working definition of suffering: *the individual or group experience of bearing physical, psychological, economic, and/or social pain, distress or loss.*

Before moving on, two qualifications or potential limitations of this working definition should be noted. First, this definition focuses on *human* suffering, and thus does not directly address animal suffering or possible divine suffering. Second, ancient explanations of suffering are accessible to modern interpreters only *indirectly*, and our study will be limited to analysis of three authors' *literary* portrayals of suffering and will not consider in detail other historical records such as art or archaeological artifacts.

3.1.3. Suffering and Persecution

Persecution, an important subset of suffering, has been defined as "suffering, hardship, or danger which accrues to someone because of his beliefs or teachings,"[91] or as "the violation of anyone's property or physical person because of the victim's identification with a religious group."[92] Such definitions of persecution place the

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[86] As noted by Wilkinson, *Suffering*, 21-22, who rejects this dichotomization.
[87] Ibid., 16–17.
[88] "Suffer," in *OED Online* (2010). Accessed 10 September, 2010 at www.oed.com. This entry lists eighteen subcategories under the initial definition, "to undergo, endure."
[89] Joseph A. Amato, *Victims and Values: A History and a Theory of Suffering* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 15.
[90] Erhard Gerstenberger and Wolfgang Schrage, *Suffering* (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 22-101. Cf. R. S. Wallace, "Suffering" *NBD* 1136.
[91] Miller, "Prophecy," 219. Unfortunately, the studies of Cunningham and Mittelstadt do not clearly define what is meant by the terms "suffering" or "persecution." Estridge explains that suffering "relates to any occurrence of opposition, hardship, or difficulty involved in the exercise or proclamation of one's religious faith." "Suffering," 251 n. 16. However, this definition is more fitting for persecution than suffering, particularly since a number of Estridge's own examples possible suffering, such as church conflicts and natural adversity, do not fit his definition.
[92] M. Reasoner, "Persecution" *DLNT* 907–14, citing 907.

stress on the inflicting of actual or threatened *physical* harm. However, as modern sociologists stress and as classical writers also affirmed, suffering is broader and more holistic than simply bearing physical pain.[93] Fourth Maccabees 18:2 draws a distinction between pains from within (τῶν ἔνδοθεν) and pains from without (τῶν ἔξωθεν πόνων).[94] If *suffering* is the experience of bearing physical, psychological, economic or social pain, distress or loss, then *persecution* is defined as suffering which is (1) deliberately inflicted by another person or group (2) because of one's distinctive beliefs, ethnicity, or practices.

3.2. Approaching Suffering Holistically

Our study of Seneca, Auctor, and Luke will attempt to treat suffering as a multifaceted experience of bearing *physical*, *psychological*, *economic*, and/or *social* pain, distress or loss. In this endeavor we acknowledge that all suffering has a degree of "cultural contingency."[95] That is, suffering is interpreted in light of an individual or group's worldview. Additionally, experiences of pain, distress or loss may be exacerbated by one's cultural expectations and by the response of others in that culture to the sufferer. For example, in societies that highly value a woman's bearing and raising children, the suffering of infertility is immense. An infertile woman may be divorced by her husband and shunned by her community, leaving her economically destitute and psychologically dejected.[96] In the first-century Mediterranean world, experiences of suffering would have been interpreted in the light of the deeply rooted cultural values of honor and shame.[97]

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[93] For bibliography, see Wilkinson, *Suffering*, 17.
[94] Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 94.17, 24.
[95] Wilkinson, *Suffering*, 30.
[96] Cf. the discussion of Luke 8:43–48 in ch. 6 §1.1 and the vivid discussion of the problem of obstetric fistula in L. Lewis Wall, "Jesus and the Unclean Woman," *CT* 54, January (2010): 48–52. Accessed 5 January 2012. Online: http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/january/17.48.html.
[97] Jerome Neyrey and Bruce Malina assert, "It is truly an understatement to say that the whole of Luke's Gospel, almost every piece of social interaction, should be viewed through the lens of honor and shame," which they assert were "pivotal values of the Mediterranean world." In "Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 25–65, citing 64–65. Recently, Louise Lawrence has critiqued Malina and others who apply an "honor-shame" model to biblical studies, on the grounds of their research methodology, outdated views of culture, and problems of reification. Further, while Malina and others focus on *honor precedence* (worldly honor that validates itself before an evaluative public), they neglect *honor virtue*, which forms a "central element" of her study, *An Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew: A Critical Assessment of the Use of the Honour and Shame Model in New Testament Studies* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 22–34. Additionally, Markus Bockmuehl rightly criticizes Malina for "exaggerated claims for a homogeneous and apparently timeless Mediterranean culture," which pay little or no attention to important distinctive groups such as the Jews. "Review of B. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Third Edition)," *BMCR* 2002.04.19 (2002). Accessed 5 January 2012. Online: http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2002/. For a rejoinder

3.2.1. Illustration: Paul's Imprisonment in Acts 16:22–24

Consider briefly the account of Paul and Silas' Philippian imprisonment recorded in Acts 16:22–24,

> The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore off their garments and gave orders to beat them with rods. And after inflicting many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to guard them securely. Having received this command, he put them into the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

Here Luke offers readers several details of the conditions and circumstances of their imprisonment. This suffering was public, as indicated by the reference to the crowd's attack (16:22; cf. 16:37: δείραντες ἡμᾶς δημοσίᾳ). They were stripped and beaten repeatedly with rods (ῥαβδίζω, 16:22; cf. 2 Cor 11:25). Because no trial proceedings are mentioned, it seems that these beatings were not intended to extract the truth but to humiliate the victims and discourage their followers.[98] Then without a trial or even formal presentation of charges (cf. Acts 16:37), Paul and Silas were thrown into prison. Verse 24 supplies two details of their imprisonment: (1) the jailer put them into the "innermost cell" (τὴν ἐσωτέραν φυλακήν), and (2) he secured their feet into stocks. These actions suggest more than mere concern for the prisoners' security, as the innermost cell would have been oppressively dark and was typically "reserved for dangerous low class felons."[99] Roman stocks were used "in such a way as to cause the utmost discomfort and cramping pain."[100] Luke's presentation suggests that "the accused were considered wrongdoers entirely lacking legal and social merit."[101]

Paul and Silas' suffering at Philippi was not only physically painful, but also psychologically distressing and socially shameful.[102] Strikingly, it is only *after* undergoing this unjust suffering that Paul reveals his Roman citizenship, which would have offered him legal protection from such treatment (16:37). Further, Paul and Silas stay in the prison following the earthquake (16:28) and evangelize the jailor who had abused them (16:31–32). This holistic approach to Acts 16:22–24 illustrates the

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to Lawrence, see Zeba A. Crook, "Method and Models in New Testament Interpretation: A Critical Engagement with Louise Lawrence's Literary Ethnography," *RelSRev* 32 (2006): 87–97.

[98] Ben Witherington, III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 497, n. 119.

[99] Rapske, *Paul*, 126, cf. 196–204.

[100] F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Rev. ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 315. For primary sources and further discussion, see Rapske, *Paul*, 126-27.

[101] Rapske, *Paul*, 127.

[102] Rightly ibid., 432.

multifaceted nature of Paul and Silas' suffering and places their response to this unjust, painful, and shameful treatment into sharp relief.

4. Worldview in Ancient Context

As noted above, this thesis seeks to answer the question: *How does suffering function in the worldviews of Seneca, Auctor, and Luke?* Having offered a working definition of suffering in the previous section, we now turn to explain the term "worldview" and propose an approach to studying and comparing our three authors' perspectives on suffering at the worldview level.

4.1. Toward a Definition of Worldview

In 1790, Kant coined the term *Weltanschauung* (commonly anglicized as "worldview") with the meaning "sense perception of the world."[103] Shortly thereafter, Friedrich von Schelling shifted its meaning from the sensory to the *intellectual* perception of the world.[104] The concept of *Weltanschauung* gained significant and broad traction in the nineteenth century among a range of academic disciplines in and beyond Germany.[105]

In their influential book, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann assert, "Theoretical thought, 'ideas,' *Weltanschauungen* are not *that* important in society," since *Weltanschauungen* are constructed by a limited number of theorists in a society.[106] Berger and Luckmann focus on the pre-theoretical level of knowledge where human societies know and construct "reality."[107] They prefer to speak of the socially constructed "symbolic universe," which functions as an "all-embracing frame of reference," ordering and legitimating individual and collective identity, roles, priorities, and operations.[108] Neyrey explains that people define and order their symbolic universe in six basic areas: "self, others, nature, time, space, and God."[109]

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[103] According to David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 58–59.
[104] Ibid., 60. Cf. Albert M. Wolters, "On the Idea of Worldview and Its Relation to Philosophy," in *Stained Glass* (ed. P. Marshall et. al.; Lanham: University Press of America, 1989), 14–25.
[105] See Naugle, *Worldview*.
[106] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City: Anchor, 1966), 15, emphasis original.
[107] Ibid., 3.
[108] Ibid., 96, 99–100.
[109] Jerome H. Neyrey, "The Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. Jerome Neyrey; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 271–304, citing 273.

While Berger and Luckmann resist equating the symbolic universe and *Weltanschauung*, their description of the symbolic universe seems quite similar to what is often meant by the term worldview.[110] As Naugle argues, if worldview is defined more generally as "an intelligent, coherent, normative perspective that makes sense of things as they are encountered in daily life," then "a 'worldview' becomes precisely what Berger and Luckmann target for sociological understanding."[111]

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "world-view" or *Weltanschauung* means "a set of fundamental beliefs, values, etc., determining or constituting a comprehensive outlook on the world; a perspective on life."[112] As James Olthius writes, "[A] worldview functions both *descriptively* and *normatively*," as "both a sketch of and a blueprint for reality; it both describes what we see and stipulates what we should see."[113] Said another way, a worldview is "the basic stuff of human existence, the lens through which the world is seen, the blueprint for how one should live in it, and above all the sense of identity and place which enables human beings to be what they are."[114] Thus, the term "worldview" will be employed in this study to denote the way that a person or group interprets reality, both as it *is* and *ought* to be.

Wright employs the terms *worldview* for the way a particular *society* interprets reality and *mindset* to denote a worldview held by a particular *individual* within that society.[115] This is a legitimate and even necessary distinction given Wright's particular focus on Jesus' self-understanding. However, the term *worldview* alone will suffice for this study. As noted above, worldviews are both *descriptive* and *prescriptive*. In examining our three authors, we are not interested mainly in their own attitudes or approach to their task but in the blueprint of reality that they presuppose and advocate for their readers to adopt. Thus the question is not what was the mindset adopted by Seneca or the Lukan Jesus or Paul amidst suffering but rather what

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[110] Naugle, *Worldview*, 230–32.
[111] Ibid., 232. In fact, on p. 99 of *Construction*, the authors alternate between symbolic universe and *Weltanschauung* with no apparent difference in meaning. N. T. Wright claims that his use of worldview is close to Berger and Luckmann's usage of "symbolic universe," in *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 123 n. 5.
[112] "World-view," in *OED Online* (2011). Accessed 20 December 2011. Online: http://www.oed.com.
[113] James Olthuis, "On Worldviews," *CSR* 14 (1985): 153–64, 156, emphasis original. The dual focus of worldviews as descriptive and normative is noted also by Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 31–32; Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 93.
[114] Wright, *NTPG*, 124.
[115] *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 137–38.

understanding of suffering do these authors seek to instill in their audience or community through their writings.

4.2. Worldview and NT Studies

4.2.1. Contribution of N. T. Wright

A number of studies have applied comparative worldview assessment to modern discussions of the biblical or Christian worldview over against other religious and philosophical systems.[116] In *The New Testament and the People of God,* Wright successfully applies "worldview" thinking to NT studies, and his contribution serves as our starting point in assessing the place of suffering in our three authors' worldviews.

Wright asserts that worldviews "form the grid through which humans, both individually and in social groupings, perceive all of reality."[117] Further, worldviews include "an irreducible narrative element" and "emerge into explicit consciousness in terms of human *beliefs* and *aims.*"[118] Worldviews characteristically do four things:

> First, …worldviews provide the *stories* through which human beings view reality…. Second, from these stories one can in principle discover how to answer the basic *questions* that determine human existence: who are we, where are we, what is wrong, and what is the solution? … Third, the stories that express the worldview, and the answers which it provides to the questions of identity, environment, evil and eschatology, are expressed … in cultural *symbols*…. Fourth, worldviews include a *praxis*, a way-of-being-in-the-world.[119]

Wright assesses the worldviews of first-century Jews and Christians by considering their questions and answers, cultural symbols, praxis, and especially stories. He explains that Judaism's four defining *symbols* ("Temple, Land, Torah, and racial identity") are dramatically altered in early Christianity, whose central symbol by Justin Martyr's time is undoubtedly the cross.[120] Jewish *praxis* was marked by the celebration of prescribed festivals and the study and practice of Torah. In contrast, world mission, sacrament, worship of God with reference to *Jesus*, and (of obvious

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[116] Cf. James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog* (3rd ed; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997); Ninian Smart, *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs* (2nd ed; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1995); Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989); Walsh and Middleton, *Vision*. For an earlier example, see Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943).
[117] Wright, *NTPG*, 32.
[118] Ibid., 38, emphasis original.
[119] Ibid., 123-24, final italics added.
[120] Ibid., 224–30, 365–69.

interest to this study) a particular approach to suffering and death characterized early Christianity.[121]

4.2.2. Contribution of Robert Doran

In *Birth of a Worldview*, Robert Doran explains, "[T]he early Christians interacted with older societies in which questions of the structure of the universe and of suffering had been answered in varying ways."[122] He aims "to treat early Christianity as a worldview, a religion" and considers how early Christianity was influenced by Platonic and Stoic philosophers on the one hand and the Hebrew Scriptures on the other.[123]

Both Wright and Doran attempt a broad assessment of the worldview(s) of nascent Christianity in its historical context, drawing upon many ancient authors. Doran's study is primarily *diachronic* and extends to the fifth century CE, with substantial treatment of Jerome and Augustine and only one passing reference to Acts.[124] Wright focuses primarily on the first and second centuries CE, and he sketches the early Christianity's worldview based largely on the works of Paul, Ignatius, Aristides, and Justin Martyr (ch. 12), before considering early Christianity's stories told by Luke and the other Evangelists (ch. 13).[125]

4.3. Suffering in Ancient Worldview: Aims and Methodology

4.3.1. Distinctive Approach of this Study

The present investigation differs in two fundamental ways from these previous studies. First, we will focus on *one* representative first-century author from three distinct perspectives, considering a Roman Stoic (Seneca), a Hellenistic Jew (Auctor), and finally a Christian (Luke). This limitation will afford space for both detailed exegesis and extended synthesis of each author's writings. This approach will provide depth to complement the breadth of Wright's and Doran's work and will substantiate, sharpen, and at times challenge their conclusions about the worldview(s) of early Christianity.

Second, we will concentrate specifically on the place of *suffering* in their worldviews. Wright calls "the regular Christian attitude to suffering and death" a "striking feature of [early Christian] praxis" when compared with the martyrs of

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[121] Ibid., 359–65.
[122] Robert Doran, *Birth of a Worldview: Early Christianity in its Jewish and Pagan Context* (Boulder: Westview, 1995), 3.
[123] Ibid., 4, 6.
[124] Ibid., 4–5.
[125] Wright, *NTPG*, 370. Luke is discussed alongside Josephus (372–84).

paganism and Judaism.[126] Further, Doran opens his book by noting that every religion or worldview must account for "pain, suffering, and death."[127] Berger and Luckmann add, "[The] legitimation of death is … one of the most important fruits of symbolic universes."[128]

Each author featured in this study was motivated to write because of suffering and death. Seneca's essay "To Lucilius on Providence" opens with the theodicy question, "why, if a Providence rules the world, it still happens that many evils befall good men" (*Prov*. 1.1). Fourth Maccabees demonstrates its philosophical thesis concerning reason's preeminence over the passions by appealing to the martyrs' example. In Luke-Acts, the main characters all experience suffering, including imprisonment and beatings (Peter and other apostles, Paul and his associates), stoning (Stephen, Paul), and crucifixion (Jesus). Indeed, House suggests "persecution, hardships, troubles, martyrdom, and disputes between Christians and non-Christians (sometimes even between Christians and Christians) provide the theological and literary framework for Acts."[129]

4.3.2. Worldview Questions concerning Suffering

This thesis will utilize worldview questions as a heuristic tool for analyzing suffering's place in the worldviews of our ancient authors for several reasons. First, a clear set of questions is uniquely suitable for *summarizing* and *synthesizing* their respective views.[130] These questions account for and distill each author's distinctive stories, symbols, and praxis and then make apparent their similarities and differences. Second, worldview questions provide a common standard for analyzing authors and their texts penned for different readerships, prompted by various concerns, utilizing different genres.[131] As Thorsteinsson acknowledges, "a comparative study of the ancient sources is always subject to the interests of the scholar who plans and performs it."[132] The use of worldview questions is one valid method for analyzing these ancient authors' views on suffering.

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[126] Ibid., 364.
[127] Doran, *Birth*, 1, cf. 3, 7, 143, 158.
[128] Berger and Luckmann, *Construction*, 101.
[129] House, "Suffering," 320.
[130] Cf. Wright, *NTPG*, esp. 123, 243, 369–70.
[131] These matters are further discussed in ch. 1 §1.1, 3.1; ch. 3 §1.1, 3; ch. 5 §1.1–3.
[132] Thorsteinsson, *Christianity*, 9.

Building on and adapting Wright's work, we will pose the following worldview questions to Seneca, Auctor, and Luke:[133]

(1) Who is God and how is God involved in our suffering?

(2) How does suffering relate to our nature, task, and purpose in the world?

(3) How does suffering clarify the world's basic problem?

(4) How does suffering relate to the solution for the world's problem?

(5) How does present suffering relate to our expectations for the future?[134]

We begin with the crucial question of divine involvement with human suffering. One's understanding of the nature and activity of God or the gods certainly shapes his or her entire worldview.[135] Precisely this subject occupies Seneca in his essay *De Providentia*, which is examined in Chapter 1 (§2).

Some writers use the term "worldview" essentially synonymously with "religion" or "theology" to denote a person or group's "fundamental beliefs."[136] Others clearly distinguish between theology and worldview, with the former as a more theoretical reflection on the latter.[137] However, especially when studying ancient writers, we should not drive a wedge sharply between theology and worldview, as one's view of the world is profoundly shaped by beliefs about divine identity, actions, and purposes. Wright asserts,

> "[T]heology" highlights what we might call the god-dimension of a worldview … It provides an essential ingredient in the stories that encapsulate worldviews; in the answers that are given to the fundamental worldview questions; in the symbolic world which gives the worldview cultural expression; and in the practical agenda to which the worldview gives rise.[138]

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[133] Cf. Wright, *NTPG*, 123; idem, *JVG*, 138. These questions are adapted from Walsh and Middleton, *Vision*, 35. For alternative worldview questions, see Olthuis, "Worldviews," 156; Sire, *Universe*, 17–18; Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 24.

[134] While this investigation omits Wright's question *where are we?*, questions 2–4 address this question of "location" by referencing the world.

[135] The terms "God-view" and "world-view" are employed interchangeably by N. T. Wright, "How Can the Bible be Authoritative?," *Vox Evangelica* 21 (1991): 7–32, esp. 22, 25, 28. Cf. Olthuis, "Worldviews," 155; Sire, *Universe*, 17.

[136] Olthuis, "Worldviews," 155. Cf. Hans Boersma, "The Relevance of Theology and Worldview in a Postmodern Context," in *Living in the Lamblight: Christianity and Contemporary Challenges to the Gospel* (ed. Hans Boersma; Vancouver: Regent, 2001), 1–13, esp. 1–2; Smart, *Worldviews*, 2; Doran, *Birth*, 1–2.

[137] See Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 29–30. Cf. Berger and Luckmann, *Construction*, 92–128, esp. 95–96, 110–11.

[138] Wright, *NTPG*, 130.

Thus, the initial question concerning God's identity and involvement in human suffering will make explicit this "god-dimension" of our authors' worldviews.

Second, we ask, *how does suffering relate to our nature, task, and purpose in the world?* This question does not mainly address *humanity's* common experience of suffering, though Seneca does reflect on this more than Auctor and Luke.[139] Rather, the pronouns *we* and *our* highlight the way that suffering clarifies for these authors and their implied readers their distinctive identity and vocation in the world and what it means to belong to their subgroup (whether Law-adherent Jews, "the Way," or true philosophers) within a dominant culture with competing values and commitments.[140] Does suffering legitimate or undermine one's identity, role, or membership in a given community?

Third, we ask, *how does suffering clarify the world's basic problem*? Is the fundamental trouble external or internal to the author's subgroup? For example, in 4 Maccabees is Israel's suffering owing ultimately to foreign oppression, corrupt leadership, the people's sin against God's covenant, or some combination? For Seneca, is suffering inherently evil or indifferent to one's true happiness?

The fourth question follows directly on the third: *how does suffering relate to the solution for the world's basic problem?* Is suffering punitive or disciplinary? Is it *educational* in some sense? How do our authors understand vicarious suffering of a representative individual or group? Is such suffering atoning or redemptive in any sense?

Fifth and finally, *how does present suffering relate to our expectations for the future?* Seneca, Auctor, and Luke agree that present suffering is temporally conditioned and will end at some future point. How do these authors' future hopes inform and motivate the present response to suffering they advocate? What should sufferers anticipate after death? Do these authors expect future divine intervention in the form of judgment of the wicked or vindication of the righteous?

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[139] On the Stoic doctrine of universal humanity, see Thorsteinsson, *Christianity*, 16–17, 39. However, Thorsteinsson overstates the similarity of Roman Christian and Stoic morality and ethics, as well as their differences regarding universal love (summarized on 209).

[140] David deSilva explores the "rhetoric of minority cultures," with a particular focus on honor and shame, in *Despising Shame: Honor Discourse and Community Maintenance in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995), 80–144. See ch. 2 §1; ch. 4 §1; ch. 6 §1.

5. Summary and Plan

To sum up, the central question of this thesis is: *how does suffering function in the worldviews of the Roman author Seneca, the Jewish author of 4 Maccabees, and the Christian author of Acts?* To answer this question, the ensuing chapters will adopt a three-fold approach of exegesis, synthesis, and comparison.

The study will commence as follows. We begin in Chapters 1–2 with Seneca's writings for three reasons. First, he is the most prolific of the three authors; second, Seneca writes as a cultural "insider," as one of the Roman political and social élite; third, 4 Maccabees and Acts both engage with Stoic philosophy, which he advocates. Next, Chapters 3–4 address suffering in 4 Maccabees. Auctor writes as an acculturated diaspora Jew, who both draws upon and critiques the popular philosophy of his day, including Stoicism, while promoting the Jewish worldview governed by Torah. Luke's writings are considered last in chapters 5–6. Luke demonstrates awareness of and engagement with both Stoic philosophy and Diaspora Judaism, while presenting an alternative worldview profoundly shaped by the fulfillment of God's saving plan in Jesus' suffering and vindication. Finally, Chapter 7 will bring together the three authors for an "ancient conversation," styled after Cicero's famous theological dialogue, *De Natura Deorum*. In the postscript, we will consider the function of symbols in each author's worldview, compare and contrast their respective views of suffering, and summarize our contribution to scholarship.

So now let us consider these ancient texts which are rarely read together, in hopes that this "ancient conversation" between Seneca, Auctor, and Luke will prompt new discoveries and questions about the realities of and responses to suffering in the first century. Perhaps this study of the ancients may also illuminate the quandaries and quagmires of our own pluralistic world indelibly marked by suffering.

Chapter 1: Suffering in Seneca's Writings: Exegesis

1. Introduction

The next two chapters will focus on the Roman Stoic philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca, the first participant in this study's ancient conversation about suffering. Chapter 1 will first provide a brief orientation to Seneca's life and writings (§1.1) and survey the theme of suffering in his letters and essays (§1.2). Then this chapter will examine two texts in which suffering features prominently: *On Providence* (§2) and *Epistle* 67 (§3). After laying this exegetical foundation, Chapter 2 will summarize suffering's function(s) in Seneca's worldview.

1.1. Introduction to Seneca's Life and Thought

Seneca was a prolific philosopher who considered himself a proponent of the Stoic school of philosophy (cf. *Ep.* 13.4; 33.4; 59.1).[1] Unlike fellow Stoics Musonius Rufus and Epictetus, Seneca wrote in Latin, though like other Roman intellectuals he was comfortable in Greek.[2] He was born between 4 BCE and 1 CE in Corduba, the namesake of Seneca the Elder, a wealthy equestrian and prominent rhetorician.[3] Seneca the Younger rose to the rank of senator and eventually consul and "became the most renowned citizen of his time: the greatest living writer in prose and verse," who amassed "one of the greatest fortunes of his age" following the ascendancy of Nero, his former pupil.[4] He fell out of favor with the erratic emperor and died in 65 through forced and protracted suicide, the same fate as his brothers Gallio and Mela and his nephew Lucan.[5] As "the most prominent literary figure of his generation,"[6] Seneca "occupies a central place in the literature on Stoicism at the time, and shapes

[1] On Seneca's philosophical education, see *Ep.* 108; cf. Miriam T. Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics* (revised ed; Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 37–42.
[2] See Brad Inwood, "Seneca in His Philosophical Milieu," *HSCP* 97 (1995): 63–76. Cf. John Henderson, *Morals and Villas in Seneca's Letters: Places to Dwell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5.
[3] On Seneca's birth and family, see Griffin, *Seneca*, 29–36; Paul Veyne, *Seneca: The Life of a Stoic* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 1–2.
[4] Veyne, *Seneca*, 9–10.
[5] On his death, see Griffin, *Seneca*, 367–68. Cf. Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.62-64.
[6] Brad Inwood, *Seneca: Selected Philosophical Letters: Translated with Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xi.

the understanding of Stoic thought that later generations were to have."[7] Thus, Lactantius lauds him as "the keenest Stoic of the Romans,"[8] a sentiment shared by many interpreters.[9]

Stoics traditionally deny the importance of pain, or any other bodily state; however, Seneca pays close attention to the body and the subject of pain and suffering.[10] For example, according to Sevenster *Epistle* 78 is "a letter entirely devoted to the endurance of illness."[11] Seneca openly acknowledges his departure from Stoic protocols as he writes to Lucilius, "For it is our Stoic fashion to speak of all those things, which provoke cries and groans, as unimportant and beneath notice; but you and I must drop such great-sounding words, although, Heaven knows, they are true enough" (*Ep.* 13.4).[12]

Miriam Griffin writes, "Throughout his life he suffered from various illnesses … Although he may sometimes have used ill health to excuse a retreat from difficult political situations, there is no reason to doubt that he really had a weak constitution which made these stories credible."[13] Indeed, Seneca's sparse autobiographical references in his *Moral Epistles* often relate to his own poor health. For example, he remarks that his recurring bouts with "shortness of breath" (i.e. asthma) are more troublesome than "all the ills and dangers of the flesh," as he is with each gasp, "practising how to die" (*meditationem mortis*, *Ep.* 54.1–2). He calls himself "a sick man" (*aeger*) suffering from a painful ulcer (68.9). Elsewhere he writes, "I am ill; but that is a part of my lot. My slaves have fallen sick, my income has gone off, my house is rickety, I have been assailed by losses, accidents, toil, and fear; this is a common thing" (96.1). Seneca presents his chronic ill health as an impetus for his interest in philosophy and as an illustration of his personal application of philosophical principles to daily life.[14]

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[7] Katja Vogt, "Seneca," *SEP* (Winter 2012). Accessed 4 May 2013. Online: http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/seneca.
[8] *Inst.* 1.5 (*ANF* 7:25); similarly at 2.9 (*ANF* 7:110).
[9] Cf. Lightfoot, "Seneca," 277; Richard Gummere in Seneca, *Epistles 1-65*, ix.
[10] Edwards, "Suffering," 254.
[11] Sevenster, *Paul*, 20. *Ep.* 78 is discussed by Edwards, "Suffering," 260–63.
[12] On Lucilius, see notes 37 and 91.
[13] Griffin, *Seneca*, 42.
[14] *Ep.* 78.3–4; 96.1–2; cf. 61.1; 65.1; 104.1–3, 6; Thorsteinsson, *Christianity*, 24. Griffin remarks, "[I]t was a combination of ill health and the attractions of ascetic preachers that first drew Seneca to philosophy." *Seneca*, 177.

1.2. Suffering in Seneca's Writings: An Initial Overview

In the Introduction (§3.1.2), suffering was defined as *the individual or group experience of bearing physical, psychological, economic, and/or social pain, distress or loss.* This definition accurately conveys Seneca's portrayal of suffering. In Seneca's thought, suffering is real, painful, and afflicts everyone in some way (*Ep.* 13.4; 96.1). The philosopher frequently notes individual and corporate experiences of suffering (67.2; 78.1–2; 83.3; 91.1–3, 18). He acknowledges the excruciating physical pain of suffering, as well as the fear and mental struggle associated with suffering (14.3–6; 24.3–5, 14). The economic hardship and social aspect of suffering are evident in *Prov.* 4.5, which mentions "poverty … disgrace, ill fame, and public hatred." Suffering may result from natural calamity, from sickness and bodily deterioration, from interpersonal violence and torture, from war and political upheaval (*Ep.* 14.3; 67.3–4; 91.8), or from oppressive tyrants, as Seneca experienced firsthand (*Tranq.* 5.1; *Clem*. 1.12.1–2; cf. Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.60).[15] Suffering may involve loss of one's wealth, home, social standing, loved ones, and even one's own life (*Prov.* 6.1–2). Though suffering is commonly considered to be *malum*, Seneca stresses that it is not inherently evil but *indifferent* to humanity's true happiness, which consists in living according to Nature and pursuing virtue (*Prov.* 1.1; 3.1; 6.1; *Ep.* 82.10–17).[16] Though from a human perspective hardships appear to come by Fortune's whims, Seneca insists that suffering happens according to Fate's orderly decrees and serves the ultimate good of those afflicted (*Ep.* 85.26; 99.32; *Prov.* 3.1–2; 5.6–8). In fact, though virtue may be shown in pleasant and adverse circumstances alike (*Ep.* 66.14–20), Seneca emphasizes that unfavorable circumstances are necessary for exhibiting virtues such as bravery, long-suffering, and steadfastness (*Ep.* 67.6, 10; *Vit. beat.* 7.1; 15.6–7; 25.6).

2. Exegesis of *On Providence*

2.1. Introduction

We begin our analysis of suffering in Seneca's worldview with a focused treatment of *De Providentia,* which was written either during Seneca's exile (41–49 CE)[17] or,

[15] Cf. Austin Busch, "Dissolution of the Self in the Senecan Corpus," in *Seneca and the Self* (ed. Shadi Bartsch and David Wray; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 255–82, esp. 255.
[16] See §2.2; 3.3; ch. 2 §4.1.
[17] René Waltz, *Vie de Sénèque* (Paris: Perrin, 1909), 100–7. Seneca's describes his exile to Corsica in *Helv.* 6.5.

more likely, early in his retirement (62–65 CE).[18] This essay addresses the nature and purposes of human suffering perhaps more clearly and directly than Seneca's other writings.[19] He presents *On Providence* as a response to his friend's theodicy question: "You have asked me, Lucilius, why, if a Providence rules the world, it still happens that many evils befall good men" (1.1).[20] Basore suggests that Seneca's own trials may have prompted Lucilius' question and the philosopher's response.[21] Motto and Clark call this essay "his single-minded treatment of adversity," in which Seneca unexpectedly "elects to defend both providence and misfortune."[22] Seneca argues that suffering is not intrinsically evil but when properly understood serves to test, harden, and fit the good person for divine service (1.6; 3.1).

Some have detected little logical coordination in Seneca's philosophical writings,[23] though Motto and Clark remark that *On Providence* is "rigorously organized" and illustrates "a mixture of seriousness, irony, wit, and art woven together into significant form."[24] In fact, Seneca's argument progresses "by the deliberate advancement of paradoxes."[25] Theron maintains that ch. 6 demonstrates "various carefully developed lines of thought," which address different facets of the theodicy question.[26]

Pierre Grimal argues that the essay aims above all to be an oratorical work,[27] exhibiting a clear rhetorical scheme: *exordium* (ch. 1), *narratio* (ch. 2), *propositio* (3.1a), *divisio* (3.1b), and *confirmatio* (3.2–6.9).[28] For Abel, the dialogue unfolds in three parts as typical of writings of consolation ("Trostschriften"): introduction

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[18] See Seneca, *Dialogues and Essays* (trans. John N. Davie and Tobias Reinhardt; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xxi, xxxiii; Earl G. Delarue, "Lucii Annaei Senecae De Providentia: A Commentary" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1974), xlv–li. For a balanced assessment, see Griffin, *Seneca*, 395–401.

[19] Lactantius lauds *On Providence* as being written "wisely, and almost with divine inspiration," in *Inst.* 5.23 (*ANF* 7:355).

[20] *Ep.* 74.10 echoes the opening question of *Prov.* 1.1.

[21] Seneca, *Moral Essays I*, xii.

[22] Motto and Clark, "Paradox," 78.

[23] For examples, see Louise Theron, "Progression of Thought in Seneca's 'De providentia' c. VI," *AClass* 13 (1970): 61–72, esp. 61.

[24] Anna L. Motto and John R. Clark, "Dramatic Art and Irony in Seneca's De Providentia," *AC* 42 (1973): 28-35, citing 28–29.

[25] Motto and Clark, "Paradox," 79.

[26] Theron, "Progression," 71.

[27] "Le *De Prouidentia* veut avant tout être un ouvrage oratoire…" Pierre Grimal, "Le Providentia," *REA* 52 (1950): 238–57, citing 239.

[28] Ibid., esp. 247–48; cf. Annrose Niem, *Seneca, De Providentia: ein Kommentar* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2008), 7–10. Similarly Ivano Dionigi, "Il 'De Providentia' di Seneca fra lingua e filosofia," in *ANRW II 36.7* (ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase; New York: de Gruyter, 1994), 5399–5414, esp. 5404.

(*prooemium*, chs. 1–2), main body ("Hauptteil," 3.1–6.5), and epilogue (6.6-9).[29] Abel considers the *propositio* in 1.6 crucial to Seneca's argument about the divine education of the *bonus vir*: God tests (cf. 3.2–4.8), hardens (4.9–16), and fits him for his own service (5.1–6.5).[30]

Delarue considers *On Providence* to be a deliberative discourse written for the purpose of persuasion.[31] With Grimal, Delarue labels ch. 1 the *exordium*, which gains the reader's attention, ch. 2 the *narratio*, a statement of facts foundational for the argument, and 3.1 the *propositio*.[32] However, these scholars differ in their assessment of Seneca's principal emphasis in the dialogue. For Grimal, Seneca demonstrates that ethical practice verifies his theoretical conclusion that supposed evils are not really *mala* (3.1).[33] Conversely, Delarue contends that Seneca cogently answers Lucilius' question in 1.1 and explains that hardships are divinely intended as a "test of virtue" (cf. 1.6; 3.3).[34]

Lucilius' opening question is reiterated in various ways throughout *On Providence*:[35]

> You ask, "Why do many adversities come to good men?" (2.1)
>
> Why is it that God afflicts the best men with ill health, or sorrow, or some other misfortune? (4.8)
>
> "But," you say, "it is unjust that a good man be broken in health or transfixed or fettered, while the wicked are pampered and stalk at large with whole skins." (5.3)
>
> "Why, however," do you ask, "was God so unjust in his allotment of destiny as to assign to good men poverty, wounds, and painful death?" (5.9)
>
> "But why," you ask, "does God sometimes allow evil to befall good men?" (6.1)
>
> "Yet," you say, "many sorrows, things dreadful and hard to bear, do befall us." (6.6)

Thus, Seneca's essay is presented as a conversation, in which Seneca's interlocutor shows remarkably little progression from his initial question.[36]

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[29] Karlhans Abel, *Bauformen in Senecas Dialogen. Fünf Strukturanalysen: dial. 6, 11, 12, 1 und 2* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1967), 106.
[30] Ibid., 107.
[31] Delarue, "Commentary," xxxvi.
[32] Ibid., xli. For Quintilian, a *propositio* commences the proof in forensic speech (*Inst.* 4.4.1; cf. 3.9.1).
[33] Grimal, "Providentia," 240–41.
[34] Delarue, "Commentary," xlii–xliii. See §2.3.2.
[35] Cf. Theron, "Progression," 62; Abel, *Bauformen*, 98–99, who also includes 6.3. In *On Providence*, the designation "good man" (*bonus vir*) is employed throughout as equivalent to the Stoic *sapiens*, referenced in *Prov.* 5.1 (*sapiens vir*) and throughout Seneca's *Epistles*. Cf. Delarue, "Commentary," 2; Niem, *Providentia*, 110.

Seneca further clarifies the nature of the problem in 1.4–5, "[Y]ou do not lack faith in Providence but complain of it (*non dubitas de providentia sed quereris*). I shall reconcile you with the gods, who are ever best to those who are best."[37] Seneca asserts that good persons should not complain (*queror*) about Fate (2.4) but offer themselves to it (5.8). In 5.5, he quotes his friend Demetrius whose only complaint is that he did not understand God's will sooner. Finally, Seneca summons Lucilius to contemplate *God* saying, "What possible reason have you to *complain* (*queri*) of me, you who have chosen righteousness?" (6.3).[38] "By a shrewd series of inversions, Seneca moves from defending the gods to a point where God offers a defense of man."[39] Thus Lucilius' complaint about Providence proves unfounded.

Both 1.5–6 and 3.1 serve as complementary distillations of Seneca's response to the question in 1.1. In 1.5–6, Seneca takes up the first part of Lucilius' question and delineates the nature of Providence's governance of the world.[40] He summarizes the divine design for the *bonum virum*, who "is God's pupil, his imitator, and true offspring" (1.5). It follows that God, like a strict father, does not spoil the good person but "tests him, hardens him, and fits him for his own service" (1.6). Seneca returns to first stage of divine education ("testing," *experior*) in 3.4, noting how Fortune assailed, tested, and discovered great exemplars.[41] The second stage ("hardening," *induro*) is developed beginning in 4.7. The final stage, readying for divine service (*sibi illum parat*), is taken up particularly in 5.6–8 and 6.3.

In 3.1, Seneca focuses on a second facet of Lucilius' opening question: "I shall show how the things that seem to be evils (*mala*) are not really so."[42] In the remainder of 3.1, Seneca summarizes his argument in five parts.[43] First (*primum*), so-called hardships are "for the good of the persons themselves to whom they come,"

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[36] Motto and Clark, "Dramatic Art," 33–34. Quintilian discusses the use of imaginary dialogues in *Inst.* 9.2.31–32.
[37] Some scholars take 1.4 to imply a later date for the essay, as it assumes Lucilius has already been convinced by Stoicism. Cf. Delarue, "Commentary," 20; Niem, *Providentia*, 120. Griffin considers Lucilius' philosophical development in the Moral Epistles to be "a literary fiction" and thus dismisses *Prov.* 1.4 as evidence for the essay's dating. *Seneca*, 401.
[38] In both 5.5 and 6.3, Seneca employs the rhetorical technique of personification (*prosopopoeia*), which is intended to rouse the emotions according to Quintillian, *Inst*. 6.1.25. Cf. Theron, "Progression," 69–71.
[39] Motto and Clark, "Paradox," 80.
[40] See §2.3.
[41] Cf. 5.10, "Fire tests (*probat*) gold, misfortune brave men."
[42] See §2.2. Cf. Niem, *Providentia*, 6, 145–49.
[43] Following Dionigi, "Providentia," 5405. In contrast, Grimal discerns three parts to the *divisio* (3.1b), essentially points one, two, and five in Dionigi's outline. "Providentia," 245–48.

which he develops in 3.2–4.16.[44] Second (*deinde*), "they are for the good of the whole human family (*pro universis*)," which Seneca explains in 5.1 and 6.3.[45] Third (*post hoc*), good people "are willing (*volentibus*) that these things should happen," which he argues in 5.4–6a. Fourth (*his adiciam*), Seneca asserts that "these things happen thus by destiny (*fato*)," the topic of focus in 5.6b–11.[46] Finally, he seeks to persuade (*persuadebo deinde*) Lucilius "never to commiserate a good man," who may be called miserable but cannot truly be so (3.1), to which Seneca returns in 6.1–5.

Thus far, we have seen that *On Providence* is organized around the opening question in 1.1, which is restated in various ways at 2.1; 4.8; 5.3; 5.9; 6.1; and 6.6. Lucilius does not doubt but rather complains about Providence (1.4), and Seneca argues (from the divine perspective) that such complaining is unfounded (6.3). He first clarifies Providence's purpose toward the good person (1.6), then he corrects Lucilius' claim that evils befall good people (3.1).

Now we turn to Seneca's portrayal of suffering in *On Providence*. Our analysis will be essentially structured around Seneca's summary responses to Lucilius in 1.6 and 3.1, which will be considered in reverse order. First, Seneca's view of suffering not as "evil" but "indifferent" will be explained. Second, Seneca's understanding of suffering's providential purpose and educational value will be explored.

2.2. Suffering Is not Evil but Indifferent

Essential to Seneca's response to the question in 1.1 is his challenge to Lucilius' assumption that many evils befall good people. Seneca aims to "show how the things that seem to be evils are not really so" (3.1).[47] This is further clarified in 5.1, "It is God's purpose, and the wise man's as well, to show that those things which the ordinary man desires and those which he dreads are really neither goods nor evils." Seneca follows the conventional Stoic teaching that all things are good (*bona*), bad (*mala*), or indifferent (*indifferentia*) (*Ep.* 117.9).[48] Only virtue is truly good, for it cannot be increased or diminished (71.8). Likewise, Seneca defines evil in strictly moral terms: "Evil of every sort (*omnia mala*) he keeps far from them—sin and crime,

[44] Cf. Abel, *Bauformen*, 112.
[45] The link back to 3.1 in 5.1 and 6.3 is also noted by Niem, *Providentia*, 177, 194.
[46] Note the two references to *fatum* in 5.7–8.
[47] Cf. *Ep.* 85.24–27.
[48] See ch. 2 §4.1; Malcolm Schofield, "Stoic Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (ed. Brad Inwood; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 233–56.

evil counsel and schemes for greed, blind lust and avarice intent upon another's goods" (*Prov.* 6.1). However, "adversities" (*adversa*), which Lucilius has considered *mala* (1.1; 2.1), are not evils (*mala*) but externals (*externa*), and the good person scorns externals (*externa contemnunt*), both pleasant and unpleasant (6.1).[49] Misfortunes, like favorable circumstances, are "external" or "indifferent" in that they do not necessarily make a person better or worse and contribute nothing to one's happiness or misery.[50]

In 5.1, Seneca makes a crucial distinction between the shared purpose (*propositum*) of God and the sage on the one hand, and the desires and dreads of the common person (*vulgus*) on the other. His correspondent is portrayed throughout the essay as adopting the perspective of the *vulgus*, but Seneca urges a reoriented outlook. The wise person who endures suffering demonstrates that mental and physical pain is "indifferent," not intrinsically good or bad but a means to virtue.[51]

2.2.1. Suffering Serves the Individual's Good

We observed earlier (§2.1) that Seneca offers five arguments for his claim that "the things that seem to be evils are not really so" (3.1). In 3.2–4.16, he expounds his statement that hardships are for the good of the individuals who experience them (3.1).[52] Seneca devotes by far the most attention to this first proposition, which he considers "the most difficult" (*difficillimum*).[53]

The philosopher employs "misfortune" (*incommodum*, 3.2) and "adversity" (*adversum*, 2.2; 3.1) synonymously as general terms for human troubles. Though these misfortunes are commonly called "evils" (*mala*), they are not truly evils but *externals*.[54] To these expressions could be added "hardships and difficulties" (*dura ac difficilia*, 2.4), "toil" (*opus*, 2.6), "pain" (*dolor,* 2.6), "suffering" (*patientia*, 3.10; 6.6; cf. *patior*, 4.8), "loss" (*damnum*, 2.6), "injury" (*iniuria,* 2.6), "calamity" (*calamitatas*,

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[49] For similar use of *contemno*, see 4.13; 6.5–6 (5x).
[50] *Ep*. 85.30; cf. Cicero, *Fin.* 3.50; Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.9.15; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 7.101–4.
[51] Following Gregor Maurach, "Die Gottes-Vorstellung in Senecas 'De Providentia'," in *Antike Weisheit und moderne Vernunft: FS H. Boeder* (ed. Arnim Regenbogen and Martin Zubiria; Osnabrück: Rasch, 1996), 117–21, 118.
[52] Crysippus' view that some goods pertain only to the gods and not to humanity represented the more widely embraced Stoic solution to theodicy. In contrast, Seneca argues, "There are no goods beyond human goods that are promoted by human suffering," according to Rory B. Goggins, "Divine Benevolence, Human Suffering: Providence and the Problem of Evil in Early Stoicism" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2005), 134.
[53] Abel observes, "Die Behandlung des ersten Punktes der partitio (3,2–4,16) ist mehr als doppelt so umfangreich wie die der vier übrigen zusammengenommen (5,1–6,5)." *Bauformen*, 112.
[54] Cf. *Prov.* 6.1; Delarue, "Commentary," 23.

2.7; 4.6), "hardship" (*asper*, 3.1), "accursed" things (*abominanda*, 3.1), and "difficulty" (*difficultate*, 4.5). In 3.2, Seneca notes specific examples of misfortunes (*incommoda*): exile, want, the death of a loved one, public disgrace, and illness, at which individuals "shudder and tremble." Though this catalogue of misfortunes is a "rhetorical commonplace,"[55] these tribulations may recall Seneca's own experience of exile and loss during Claudius' reign.[56] In 4.5, Seneca offers further examples of difficulty (*difficultate*), highlighting economic and social dimensions of suffering, including poverty, disgrace, ill fame, public hatred, and the loss of children. Such fearsome things are applied like "spurs … to our souls" (*stimulos admovent animis*) by the immortal gods, and the wise person recognizes that "[d]isaster is Virtue's opportunity" (4.6).

Seneca illustrates his thesis that hardships are for the individual's good using three analogies. First, he explains that in surgery the sick are cured through painful means: "[F]or the sake of being cured the sick sometimes have their bones scraped and removed, and their veins pulled out, and that sometimes members are amputated which could not be left without causing destruction to the whole body" (3.2).[57] The implication is that God, like a skilled physician, takes drastic measures to ensure that his "patient" is "cured" of vice and ignorance.

Second, Seneca considers the gladiator who knows that there is no glory in battle without danger. "The same is true of Fortune. She seeks out the bravest men to match with her" (3.4).[58] Thus, it is only by facing disasters and terrors that one has opportunity to gain true self-knowledge and to demonstrate one's true worth (4.1). A good person matched against adversity is a "spectacle" (*spectaculum*) worthy of

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[55] Ibid., 45. Cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* 5.10.29; John T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988); Paul Ellingworth, "'Nobody Knows de Trouble I Seen': Hardship Lists in Paul and Elsewhere," in *New Testament Theology in Light of the Church's Mission: FS I. Howard Marshall* (ed. Jon Laansma, et al.; Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2011), 317–26.

[56] See *Prov.* 6.2; *Helv.* 2.5; 6.5. Cf. Motto and Clark, "Paradox," 81; Waltz, *Vie*, 107 n. 4. As Elaine Fantham observes, in his consolations written from exile (*Helv.*, *Polyb.*), "Seneca avoids any clear reference to the circumstances that had led to his banishment." "Dialogues of Displacement: Seneca's Consolations to Helvia and Polybius," in *Writing Exile: The Discourse of Displacement in Greco-Roman Antiquity and Beyond* (ed. Jan F. Gaertner; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 173–92, citing 175.

[57] In these analogies, Seneca may have been inspired by Plato, "…do you not give such instances as physical training, military service, and medical treatment conducted by cautery, incision, drugs, or starvation, and say that these are good, but painful?" (*Prot.* 354A LCL). Cf. Delarue, "Commentary," 45–46. However, Seneca's interest in medicine may be due to his own chronic ailments (e.g. *Ep.* 54.1–3; 61:1); cf. Griffin, *Seneca*, 41.

[58] On this gladiator imagery, see Edwards, *Death*, 75.

divine notice, for one's true character is revealed not by applause but hardship (2.9; 4.5).[59]

Third, the philosopher compares great persons (*magni viri*) with valiant soldiers, who focus on the goal and not on the suffering that may be required (4.4). Far from being unfortunate, the soldier wounded in battle demonstrates his courage and glory. Thus, "God … is showing favour to those whom he desires to achieve the highest possible virtue whenever he gives them the means of doing a courageous and brave deed, and to this end they must encounter some difficulty in life" (4.5).

As is his custom elsewhere, Seneca appeals to stock illustrations of those who are assailed by Fortune and shown to be great exemplars of moral virtue.[60] In 3.4 he writes, "Mucius she tries by fire, Fabricius by poverty, Rutilius by exile, Regulus by torture, Socrates by poison, Cato by death. It is only evil fortune that discovers a great exemplar" (*Magnum exemplum nisi mala fortuna non invenit*). Asmis explains,

> Traditionally, Romans earned glory by fighting for their country; and the greatest heroes were those who resisted the enemy with the greatest courage. Seneca takes these traditional *exempla* and transforms them into fighters against fortune…. Seneca's heroes do not merely conquer fortune: they assert their superiority by embracing the harm inflicted by it.[61]

Seneca stresses that these persons are certainly not "unfortunate" (*infelix*, 3.5, 6, 7) or "ill-used" (*male ... iudicas*, 3.12). Rather, they are revered for their loyalty, endurance, and greatness, which are consistently exhibited amidst their great suffering and hardship. Thus Seneca says of Regulus, his penultimate exemplar: "the greater his torture is, the greater shall be his glory" (*quanto plus tormenti tanto plus erit gloriae*). As Maurach puts it, the great person's dignity and glory depends on the power and performance of suffering ("Leidenskraft … Leidensleistung").[62]

2.2.2. Suffering Serves the Common Good

Seneca's second argument in defense of his thesis is that hardships are *pro universis* (3.1). In the *Epistles*, Seneca claims that the wise person that endures trials benefits collective humanity in at least three ways: instruction in the truth (64.8-9; 90.34; 109.3), encouragement (24.9; 94.46), and modeling (66.3).[63] He develops this second

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[59] Elizabeth Asmis, "Seneca on Fortune and the Kingdom of God," in *Seneca and the Self* (ed. Shadi Bartsch and David Wray; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 115–38, esp. 123.
[60] Cf. *Ep.* 24.4; 64.10; 67.7; 98.12, 14; 104.22; *Con.* 2.1. See §3.2.3.
[61] Asmis, "Fortune," 132.
[62] Maurach, "Gottes-Vorstellung," 118.
[63] See ch. 2 §5.3.

argument in *Prov.* 5.1: "[I]t is for the common good (*pro omnibus*), to have the best men become soldiers (*militare*), so to speak, and do service." The best (*optimum*) freely choose to labor and put themselves in harm's way for the others' benefit. But it is not until 6.3 that Seneca clarifies *in what sense* the *bonus vir* serves the common good by facing his troubles. "Why do they suffer certain hardships? It is that they may teach (*doceant*) others to endure them; they were born to be a pattern (*nati sunt in exemplar*)." Thus, Seneca's primary stress in *De Providentia* is on the good person's *example* of enduring hardship, which inspires and instructs others to follow the same virtuous course.[64]

2.2.3. Hardships Should Be Faced Willingly

Seneca's third proposition to support his thesis that adversities are not *mala* is that good people "are willing that these things should happen" (*volentibus accidere*, 3.1). Seneca stresses the ideal sage's *willingness* to embrace hardships brought by Fortune through the five-fold repetition of *volo* in 5:4–6a. He introduces this proposition in 5.4: "Toil summons the best men (*optimos*)," and they "labour, spend, and are spent, and *withal willingly* (*volentes*)." Demetrius' reported statement illustrates this radical readiness to face and endure suffering for the sake of the divine purpose *(propositum deo*, 5.1):[65]

> Immortal gods ... *Do you wish* (*vultis*) to take my children?—it was for you that I fathered them. *Do you wish* (*vultis*) to take some member of my body? —take it … *Do you wish* (*vultis*) to take my life?—why not?… *With my free consent* (*volente*) you shall have whatever you may ask of me.… Yet even now you will not take it by force, because nothing can be wrenched away from a man unless he withholds it. (5.5–6)

Seneca's Cynic friend (cf. 3.3) powerfully conveys that preferred things typically considered good—including children, health, or life itself—are indifferent or external. Their presence or absence does not affect a person's true happiness or moral goodness. In his remarkable willingness to lay aside things so desirable *before* they are taken by Fortune, Demetrius embodies for Seneca's readership the true inner freedom and unshakeable commitment to virtue that is required of the great *exemplars* (3.4–16).[66]

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[64] Neim writes, "Der Nutzen des *vir sapiens* für die Welt liegt in dem Beispiel, das er der Welt gibt." *Providentia*, 194.

[65] Seneca commends the Cynic philosopher Demetrius for his plain living and wise sayings (*Ep.* 20.9; 62.3; 67.14; 91.19; *Ben.* 7.1.3; 7.2.1; 7.8.2–3). For discussion, see Mark P. Morford, *The Roman Philosophers: From the Time of Cato the Censor to the Death of Marcus Aurelius* (London: Routledge, 2002), 163–64.

[66] On Seneca's notion of *libertas*, see Brad Inwood, *Reading Seneca: Stoic Philosophy at Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 302–21.

2.2.4. Suffering Happens by Fate

Fourth, Seneca argues that "the things that seem to be evils are not really so" because they happen "by destiny (*fato*), and they rightly befall good men by the same law which makes them good" (3.1). He develops this line of thought in 5.6–11. Following traditional Stoic teaching, Seneca claims that Fate *guides* (*ducunt*) humanity according to predetermined causes and times (5.7). For Stoics, even the gods are subject to Fate's fixed laws.[67] Seneca writes, "One unchangeable course bears along the affairs of men and gods alike. Although the great creator and ruler of the universe himself wrote the decrees of Fate, yet he follows them" (5.8). Thus, *Fate* is the law that makes hardships good (3.1). Because hardships are part of one's destiny, it does no good to complain or chafe (5.8). Rather, Seneca counsels the good person to "offer himself to Fate" (*praebere se fato*) and endure (*patiendum*) everything with fortitude (5.7–8).

2.2.5. The Good Person Cannot Be Unhappy

Seneca appeals to Lucilius "never to commiserate a good man," because the *bonus vir* is *unable* to be miserable (*miser ... non potest esse*, 3.1). This point serves as a fitting climax to his argument that hardships are not *mala*. Seneca takes up this proposition in 6.1–5, but he anticipates it in his earlier appeal to the *exempla,* which are not "unfortunate" (*infelix*, 3.5, 6, 7).[68] Rather, they illustrate Demetrius' reported saying: "No man … seems to me more unhappy than one who has never met with adversity" (3.3). Thus, those who endure the greatest agony may be, paradoxically, the most happy and fortunate of all, as they have had the opportunity to test themselves and demonstrate their greatness.

According to 6.1, the *bonus vir* cannot be unhappy because, as Grimal summarizes, "All the real evils (the moral evils) are distant from him."[69] Evil (*malum*) for Seneca and the Stoics is strictly a *moral* category.[70] Seneca restates Lucilius' opening question and takes issue with it at a basic, definitional level: "'But why does God allow something bad to happen to men who are good?' He absolutely does not. He keeps apart from them all manner of evil…" (6.1 OWC). The good person

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[67] Cf. ch. 2 §2.2; 3.1; Delarue, "Commentary," 88.
[68] Dionigi understands this final argument to be developed in 6.1–2. "Providentia," 5405. However, the verbal link between 6.4 (*miseri sunt*) and 3.1 (*miserearis ... miser*) suggests that Seneca's fifth argument extends through 6.5, into the divine *prosopopoeia* (6.3–9).
[69] "Tous les maux véritables (le mal moral) sont éloignés de lui." Grimal, "Providentia," 248.
[70] See ch. 2 §4.2.

"despises externals" (*externa contemnunt*) and thus does not succumb to common vices such as greed, lust, and avarice. One's happiness and true good consist in possession of virtue alone and not in these externals.

Seneca stresses further that good people should not be commiserated since they sometimes choose certain hardships for themselves: taking their own lives or the lives of their sons or being voluntarily exiled from their homeland (6.2). Thus, the wise do not shudder at death with the common lot. Rather, they are exhorted to "scorn death," to view it as a path to freedom (*ad libertatem*), and, if need should arise, to hasten it along as did Seneca's hero Cato (6.6–7; cf. 2.10; 3.14).[71]

Beginning in 6.3, Seneca calls upon the deity to address his interlocutor's question. "Lucilius, like Job, has simply been too dull to follow the course and stream of the argument. Only God, it is implied, can placate and intervene, and so permit the *dénouement*."[72] God has surrounded some "with unreal goods" (*bona falsa*) such as riches. But though commonly regarded as fortunate externally, such people are in fact truly miserable (*miseri sunt*; 6.3–4). In contrast, God has given the good person "the true and enduring good" (*bona certa, mansura*), and thus he or she is no longer subject to Fortune's whims (6.5).

2.2.6. Summary

In this section, we have seen how Seneca responds to Lucilius' initial assumption that *multa bonis viris mala acciderent* (1.1). In 3.1, Seneca summarizes his argument that misfortunes are not *evils* but *externals*. Adversities are intended for the good of individuals. Their suffering is also for the good of collective humanity, which benefits from the example and instruction of those who have endured adversity with virtue. Additionally, misfortunes are not *mala* because they happen according to Fate. Therefore, the good person faces hardships willingly, knowing that true happiness resides not in unreal external goods but in virtue within, which cannot be injured.

2.3. The Divine Design in Suffering

We will now consider Seneca's response to the first half of Lucilius' inquiry in 1.1 (*si providentia mundus regeretur*). Lucilius does not doubt but *complains* about Providence (1.4). Seneca responds by highlighting suffering's educational value when seen in light of the divine purpose: God "does not make a spoiled pet of a good man;

[71] Cf. Inwood, *Reading*, 307–8; Edwards, *Death*, 100–9.
[72] Motto and Clark, "Dramatic Art," 34.

he tests him, hardens him, and fits him for his own service" (*experitur, indurat, sibi ilium parat*, 1.6).[73]

2.3.1. Divine Friendship and Education

Seneca founds his claim that suffering serves the divine purpose upon his view of the relationship between the good person and God. In 1.5, Seneca explains that good people share with the gods "a friendship brought about by virtue" and even more, "a tie of relationship and a likeness, since, in truth, a good person differs from God in the element of time only." With his reference to divine-human "friendship" (*amicitia*), Seneca here "reaches new extremities of intimacy, and of likeness," though such intimacy and likeness entails suffering.[74]

Seneca likens God to an "all-glorious parent," who rears his child, the *bonus vir*, with much strictness (1.5) We find the same analogy in 2.6: "Toward good men God has the mind of a father, he cherishes for them a manly love, and he says, 'Let them be harassed by toil, by suffering, by losses, in order that they may gain true strength.'"[75] In 4.11–12, Seneca likens the gods' treatment of humanity to harsh Spartan fathers who lash their children in public and summon them "to keep offering their wounded bodies to further wounds."[76] God's intention is not his children's greatest pleasure and comfort but their greatest good, namely virtue. To that end, the Divine Father "allots to them a fortune that will make them struggle" (2.7). The curriculum for the good person's school of suffering includes three stages: testing, hardening, and preparation for God (1.6).

2.3.2. Diving Testing

First, God *tests* (*experior*) the good person (1.6). In this essay Seneca consistently employs *experior* with the meaning "to make trial of, put to the test, try out."[77] In 3.4, Seneca illustrates this initial stage of divine education by noting how great exemplars including Cato and Socrates were tested (*experior*) by Fortune. Using a different term, he writes, "Fire tests gold, misfortune brave men" (*Ignis aurum probat, miseria fortes viros*, 5.10). Human beings demonstrate their *virtus*—that is, their "strength of mind"

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[73] In addition to Providence (*providentia*), Seneca in this essay references God and the gods (*deus*), Jupiter (*Iuppiter*), Fate (*fatum*), Chance (*fortuna*), and Nature (*natura*). Seneca employs these various names to highlight different functions of deity. See ch. 2 §2.1.

[74] G. O. Hutchinson, *Latin Literature from Seneca to Juvenal: A Critical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 224–25. Cf. Maurach, "Gottes-Vorstellung," 117. Cf. ch. 2 §2.4.

[75] The connection between 1.6 and 2.5 is observed also by Abel, *Bauformen*, 110.

[76] Cf. Hutchinson, *Literature*, 226.

[77] *OLD* 712 §1. Cf. *Prov.* 1.6; 3.3, 4; 4.8, 11.

(*vis animi*)—only by facing adversities (4.2–5). Delarue calls divine testing of virtue "the most important theme found in the dialogue," which amounts to the fundamental reason why the good person encounters hardships.[78]

Seneca likens the good person's testing to a battlefield, an Olympic contest, and a storm before a ship pilot (4.2, 4–5). The tempest reveals the truly skilled pilot, the bloody battle line proves the gallant warrior, and only the Olympian who competes is crowned.[79] Great people "rejoice oft-times in adversity," since it is the appointed means by which they might "achieve the highest possible virtue" (4.4–5).[80] Seneca writes, "For my part, I do not wonder if sometimes the gods are moved by the desire to behold great men wrestle with some calamity" (2.7). A *bonus vir* facing off against adversity is a "spectacle" (*spectaculum*) worthy of divine notice, since suffering uniquely tests and reveals one's true character (2.9; 3.3–4; 4.5).[81]

2.3.3. Divine Hardening

Second, God *hardens* (*induro*) the good person (1.6). Seneca employs the verb *induro* metaphorically with the sense "to make robust, toughen,"[82] as in *Con*. 5.4, where virtue is depicted as "inviolable, unmoved, unshaken, so *steeled* (*indurat*) against the blows of chance." Similarly, he explains, "Constant misfortune brings this one blessing, that those whom it always assails, it at last *fortifies*" (*indurate*, *Helv.* 2.3). Seneca takes up this second phase of divine education beginning in 4.7: "In like manner God hardens (*indurat*), reviews, and disciplines those whom he approves, whom he loves."[83] Adversities serve to strengthen and fortify the *bonus vir*, who is made to resemble a battle-tested soldier (4.7–8).

2.3.4. Divine Service

Third, God prepares the good person for divine service (*sibi illum parat*, 1.6). Seneca explains this final stage of divine education in 5.6–8 and 6.3.[84] Delarue calls 5.6–7 "a

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[78] Delarue, "Commentary," xviii.
[79] *Marc.* 5.5: "[A] quiet sea and a favouring wind do not show the skill of a pilot … some hardship must be encountered that will test his soul." Cf. Motto and Clark, "Paradox," 75–76. Similarly, 4 Maccabees likens Eleazar to "a noble athlete" 6:10; cf. 17:15) and "a most skillful pilot" (7:1).
[80] Cf. Asmis, "Fortune," 115-38.
[81] On Seneca's portrayal of death as "spectacle," see Edwards, *Death*, 75–77. James Ker writes, "The text effectively concretizes *pro-videntia*'s visual metaphor, in conjunction with the beneficial aspect implied in *pro-*, and invites the reader to share the providential view." *The Deaths of Seneca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 78.
[82] *OLD* 977 §2.
[83] Cf. 4:12. At 4.7, Seneca's thought comes close to Heb 12:6 and Prov 3:11–12.
[84] Here our analysis differs somewhat from Abel, who concludes that the third point of 1.6 (*sibi illum parat*) is the subject of the rest of the middle section (5.1–6.5) *Bauformen*, 115.

complete summary of Seneca's outlook toward Providence," which redirects the reader's focus from the various examples "toward the principal ideas of which Seneca is trying to convince him."[85] The good person does not obey under compulsion but *willingly* approves of and follows Fate.[86] This seems to be the sense of *servio deo sed assentior* in 5.6, rendered "I am not God's slave but his follower" (LCL) or "I follow God, not as his slave, but as his pupil" (OWC). *Assentior*, which means, "to agree in opinion, assent, approve,"[87] occurs also at *Ep*. 80.1, "I am not a slave to them [my predecessors], although I give them my approval (*no servio illis, sed assentior*)."[88] In willingly obeying the unchangeable course of Fate, the good person imitates *God*, who always follows his own decrees (*Prov.* 5.8).

In 6.2–3 Seneca explains that the good person suffers certain hardships (*quaedam dura patiuntur*) so that "they may teach others to endure them (*alios pati doceant*); they were born to be a pattern (*exemplar*)." In this the divine education of the good person reaches its goal. The sage tested and hardened by suffering now serves God's purposes by teaching and embodying the virtuous life for others to follow, following the pattern set by former great exemplars such as Cato and Socrates (cf. 3.4–14). By enduring dreaded and difficult things with fortitude, one may "outstrip" (LCL) or "surpass" (OWC) God (*hoc est quo deum antecedatis*), for "he is exempt from enduring evil, while you are superior to it" (*ille extra patientiam malorum est, vos supra patientiam*, 6.6).[89] As Seneca writes in *Ep.* 124.14, while "Nature perfects the Good" for God, "pains and study do so" for humans. Thus, when one considers even the most terrible sufferings and calamities, he or she may discern therein a fortuitous opportunity for moral improvement. Human hardships are divinely designed to bring about testing, hardening, and ultimately fitness for divine service, as one despises externals and grasps hold of virtue, the true good that cannot be taken away.

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[85] Delarue, "Commentary," lxxx.
[86] *Ep.* 107.9–12 develops similar themes to *Prov*. 5.6–8, such as the determined course of events, the sage's submission to Nature's law, and Fate's guidance.
[87] *OLD* 204 §1.
[88] Cf. *Ep.* 96.2, "[W]hen everything seems to go hard and uphill, I have trained myself not merely to obey God, but to agree with His decisions (*non pareo deo, sed adsentior*)." See Susanna E. Fischer, *Seneca als Theologe: Studien zum Verhältnis von Philosophie und Tragödiendichtung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 201.
[89] Cf. ch. 2 §3.2; Aldo Setaioli, "Seneca and the Divine: Stoic Tradition and Personal Developments," *IJCT* 13 (2007): 333–368, esp. 366; Dionigi, "La patientia," 426.

2.3.5. Summary

In response to Lucilius' question and complaint (1.1, 4), Seneca clarifies *how* Providence governs the world and outlines the divine purpose for sending hardships upon good people (1.6). God is likened to a father and the good person is "God's pupil, his imitator, and true offspring" (1.5). Because of this divine-human relationship, the good person's suffering is said to have educational value and purpose. The person faced with suffering should not complain (1.4; 6.3) but rather discern the divine design of these adversities and endure them with fortitude. Through virtuous endurance of suffering, one is able to benefit others and even surpass God, who unlike the good person is virtuous by nature and exempt from suffering (6.6).

3. Exegesis of *Epistle* 67

3.1. Introduction

Seneca's Letters to Lucilius were likely written during retirement in the final years of his life (62–65 CE).[90] Sørensen writes, "The Epistles to Lucilius are Seneca's most thorough attempt to fashion the mind and the spirit: they are a gradual introduction to Stoic thought… they emphasise that Stoicism is not merely a matter of understanding correctly, but also of acting correctly and in particular adopting the correct attitude."[91] As Marcus Wilson notes, the surviving collection of one hundred and twenty-four letters is "predominantly introspective, concerned much more with ideas than with events," and evidently intended for publication.[92]

This section will focus on *Epistle* 67 as a complement to the previous analysis of *De Providentia.* Suffering is an important theme in *Epistles* 14, 24, 54, 67, 78, 96, and 104 (among others), though no one letter captures the full scope of Seneca's analysis of suffering. However, *Epistle* 67 has been selected as somewhat representative of Seneca's thought for the following reasons. First, Seneca opens the letter by drawing attention to his own suffering in "old age" (67.2; cf. 83.3). Second,

[90] Vogt, "Seneca." Griffin prefers a shorter chronology (63–64 CE) and dates *Ep*. 67 to spring 64. *Seneca*, 353, 396, 400.

[91] Villy Sørensen, *Seneca: The Humanist at the Court of Nero* (trans. W. Glyn Jones; Edinburgh: Canongate, 1984), 190. The *Moral Epistles*, as well as *On Providence* and *Natural Questions* are addressed to Lucilius, a student of philosophy who himself wrote prose and poetry (cf. *Ep.* 8.10; 24.21). *Nat.* 4A, pref. 14–18 offers some personal details concerning Seneca's correspondent. Cf. Anna L. Motto, *Seneca Sourcebook: Guide to the Thought of Lucius Annaeus Seneca in the Extant Prose Works* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1970), 24–26.

[92] Marcus Wilson, "Seneca's Epistles to Lucilius," in *Seneca* (ed. John G. Fitch; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 59–83, citing 61. On Seneca's complex self-presentation in his letters, see Catharine Edwards, "Self-Scrutiny and Self-Transformation in Seneca's Letters," *GR* 44 (1997): 23–38.

he acknowledges his familiarity with various philosophical schools (67.5: "Certain of our school," i.e. the Stoics; 67.15: "Listen to Epicurus"), though he also asserts his independence and freedom in disagreeing with others in the Stoic tradition (67.5: *Ego dissentio*).[93] Third, Seneca mentions various sorts of suffering, including torture and illness (67.3–4), and a number of examples of those who demonstrate virtue amidst great suffering, such as Regulus, Cato, Rutilius, and Socrates (67.7, 12–13; cf. 98.12–14). Fourth, as in *De Providentia*, Seneca clearly approaches hardships such as torture and illness as *indifferentia*, "those things that do not affect one's capacity for living a good life,"[94] and he clarifies how adversities rightly understood provide opportunities to display virtue, which alone is truly good and desirable (67.4–6; cf. *Prov.* 4.6).

Though many have treated Seneca's *Epistles* as in Griffin's words "dialogues with an epistolary veneer,"[95] Wilson has cogently argued that these texts are best read "as epistles, not essays; collectively, not selectively."[96] Richardson-Hay notes, "Each letter is a new and different entity with its own argument and philosophical centre, but also its own inter-epistolary interest and function."[97] Mary Beard's assertion regarding Cicero's letter collections applies also to Seneca's corpus: "the internal ordering of these letter-books deserves to be taken seriously."[98] The 124 extant letters are addressed to Seneca's friend Lucilus and "create an atmosphere of interpersonal philosophical exchange" over time.[99]

Seneca's letters frequently highlight Lucilius' improvement through philosophical study.[100] For example, in 4.3, Seneca exhorts, "Only make progress" (*Profice modo*, own translation). In the next letter, Lucilius is commended for his persistent studies and effort "to become a better man" (5.1). In 16.2, Seneca writes, "I know that you have made great progress (*multum te profecisse*)…. Examine yourself;

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[93] For examples of Seneca's intellectual independence and occasional variance from Stoic teachings, see *Otio* 3.1; 8.1; *Ep.* 13.4; 117.1. Cf. John M. Rist, "Seneca and Stoic Orthodoxy," in *ANRW II 36.3* (ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase; New York: de Gruyter, 1989), 1993–2012; P. A. Brunt, *Studies in Stoicism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 311.
[94] Edwards, "Suffering," 254.
[95] Griffin, *Seneca*, 419.
[96] Wilson, "Lucilius," 72. Cf. D. Teichert, "Der Philosoph als Briefschreiber—Zur Bedeutung der literarischen Form von Senecas Briefen an Lucilius," in *Literarische Formen der Philosophie* (ed. Gottfried Gabriel and Christiane Schildknecht; Stuttgart: Metzler, 1990), 62–72, esp. 72.
[97] Christine Richardson-Hay, *First Lessons: Book 1 of Seneca's Epistulae Morales–A Commentary* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), 11.
[98] Mary Beard, "Ciceronian Correspondences: Making a Book out of Letters," in *Classics in Progress: Essays on Ancient Greece and Rome* (ed. T. P. Wiseman; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 103–44, citing 120.
[99] Inwood, *Letters*, xii.
[100] Griffin, *Seneca*, 351–52; Inwood, *Letters*, xv.

scrutinize and observe yourself in diverse ways." Lucilius can become a good person if only he continues steadily in his task (34.4). Seneca returns to this theme in 35.1, "Try to make progress…" (*profice*, own translation). At the same time, Seneca often highlights his own inadequate moral progress (87.4–5), and presents himself not as a physician but a sick man (68.9). He himself is a learner struggling to heed his own exhortations (71.30; cf. 26.7; 27.1). Thus Edwards writes, "In the Letters, Seneca and Lucilius make progress together."[101]

Epistle 67 is the fifth letter of Book 7 (*Ep.* 63–69)[102] and develops several themes previously introduced. For example, Seneca's passing reference to his infirmities (67.2) recalls similar, more specific comments about his ill health in 65.1. Further, the guiding question in 67.3 concerning whether every good is desirable (*Quaeris an omne bonum optabile sit*) seems to follow directly from Seneca's teaching in 66.5 regarding the desirability of first-order goods that accord with nature (joy, peace, safety) and second-order goods which are contrary to nature (endurance of torture and self-control when seriously ill). There Seneca writes, "We will wish the former goods for ourselves unconditionally and the latter only if necessary" (*Illa bona derecto optabimus nobis, haec, si necesse erit*).[103] In fact, Lucilius' three examples of apparent but undesirable goods in 67.3 (bravery under torture, a stout heart at the stake, endurance of illness) are each discussed in the previous letter as second order goods (66.36–40, 47).

The structure of *Epistle* 67 is rather straightforward. Seneca begins with "a commonplace remark" about the weather and then invites Lucilius to "together investigate the nature of this problem of yours" (67.1–2). Seneca summarizes Lucilius' question in 67.3:

> You ask me whether every good is desirable (*optabile*). You say: "If it is a good to be brave under torture, to go to the stake with a stout heart, to endure illness with resignation, it follows that these things are desirable (*optabilia*)." But I do not see that any of them is worth praying for.

Seneca's thesis follows in 67.4: "The conclusion is, not that hardships are desirable, but that virtue is desirable, which enables us patiently to endure hardships" (*Ita non incommoda optabilia sunt, sed virtus, qua perferantur incommoda*).

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[101] Edwards, "Self-Scrutiny," 32.
[102] Cf. Seneca, *Selected Letters* (trans. Elaine Fantham; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 104.
[103] Translation by Inwood, *Letters*, 15–16. Cf. 66.29, 52–53.

Seneca clarifies his position vis-à-vis the typical Stoic teaching that "a stout heart is not desirable" (*fortem tolerantiam non esse optabilem*, 67.5), concluding that brave endurance even under torture is virtuous and thus desirable (67.6). Lucilius' reported question in 67.7 effectively restates the initial one in 67.3: "'But,' you say, 'who ever desired (*optavit*) such a thing for himself?'" Seneca then explains that he and others have prayed for things such as endurance (*patientia*) that are necessary for an honorable life (67.7–10). He then restates and elaborates his position from 67.4–6 and exhorts his friend to a revised picture of virtue (67.12). Seneca's conclusion in 67.16 is two-pronged. First, he asserts that torture is desirable only "because it does not overcome me." Second, he praises virtue for its unsurpassed excellence and beauty and concludes, "[W]hatever we do in obedience to her orders is both good and desirable."

3.2. Suffering in Perspective: Examples of Suffering

We now turn to consider Seneca's perspective on suffering as illustrated in *Epistle* 67. First, we will discuss references to torture, illness, and other examples of suffering in *Ep.* 67. Second, we will explain Seneca's view that suffering is desirable not in itself, but as an occasion for demonstrating virtue.

3.2.1. Torture

In *Epistle* 67, Seneca discusses suffering under two main headings: torture and illness.[104] We begin with torture, which Seneca elsewhere calls "our greatest terror" (*Ep.* 14.5). Lucilius' reported question (67.3) includes four references to some form of torture. He begins by inquiring "if it is a good to be brave under torture, to go to the stake with a stout heart" (*si bonum est … fortiter torqueri et magno animo uri*). First, the term *torqueo* generally refers to twisting or winding up, but in 67.3 it refers to twisting a person through torture, "to afflict with physical suffering, torment, rack."[105]

In 67.3, the summary term *torqueo* is followed by a specific example of violent suffering, *uro* (burning), which here denotes "torture by fire."[106] Elsewhere Seneca asks, "Is there a worse fate that any man may fear than being burned (*uratur*)

[104] War (*bellum*) is also mentioned in 67.4 but is not discussed elsewhere in the letter.
[105] *OLD* 2150 §4. Cf. *Ep*. 71.5, "Torture (*torqueri*), if only, as you lie suffering, you are more calm in mind than your very torturer (*torquente*)…"
[106] *OLD* 2323 §3b. Fantham's translation "be noble when suffering surgery" (OWC) varies considerably from Gummere's (LCL). No major textual variants in 67.3 are noted by L. D. Reynolds, ed., trans., *Seneca, Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 1:194.

or being killed?" (24.3).[107] He elsewhere references the burning to which gladiators are sometimes subjected (7.5; 37.2), and he counsels that one should cherish the body but be prepared "to deliver it even to the flames (*ignes*)" (14.2).

Two further varieties of brutal torture are enumerated in 67.3: being "cut to pieces by the rod" (*flagellis caesus esset*) and being "made taller by the rack" (*eculeo longior factus*). *Flagellum,* rendered "the rod" (LCL) or "lashed" (OWC), denotes a whip or scourge, a severe form of punishment that would leave the victim "wounded and half-dead" (*Prov.* 4.11). Scourging is particularly associated with the punishment of slaves (*Ira* 3.24.1; 3. 35.2),[108] though Seneca notes examples of Lacedaemonian children and Senators enduring this punishment (*Prov.* 4.11; *Ira* 3.18.3; 3.19.1). The term *equuleus* here denotes an instrument of torture, probably a rack,[109] so called because of its horse shape.[110]

The whip and rack are mentioned together in *Ep.* 24.14: "Why do you lay out whips and racks (*flagella et eculeos*) for torture with a great display?" (OWC). Earlier Seneca summons Lucilius, "Picture to yourself (*cogita*) … the prison, the cross, the rack (*eculeos*), the hook, and the stake," which come like a violent parade (14.4–5). These two texts illustrate the philosopher's penchant for graphic rhetorical presentation of suffering. Edwards comments, "The idea of spectacle and display is central to Seneca's approach.… He instructs his reader to imagine the torturer's instruments one by one. The mind of the reader becomes the arena in which horrific sights are put on display."[111] Seneca vividly portrays torture in this way not to promote fear but to fortify his readers' minds (*confirmabis animum*, 24.24) and to urge them to "take refuge in philosophy" (14.11).

In 67.4, Seneca responds to Lucilius, "I should prefer to be free from torture (*tormenta abesse a me velim*); but if the time comes when it must be endured, I shall desire that I may conduct myself therein with bravery, honour, and courage (*fortiter, honeste, animose*)." Seneca elsewhere uses *tormentum* as a general summary term for life's hardships (*vitae tormenta*, 4.5), though the context here suggests that *tormentum*

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[107] Cf. 4 Macc 14:10, discussed in ch. 3 §2.5.
[108] Cf. G. Fagan Garrett, "Torture, Roman," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome* (ed. Michael Gagarin; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Cited 22 April 2013. Online: http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195170726.001.0001/acref-9780195170726-e-1269. The gradation of Roman beatings is discussed by A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 27.
[109] *OLD* 643 §2.
[110] Thus Fantham renders 67.3, "stretched out on the Horse" (OWC).
[111] Edwards, "Suffering," 258.

in 67.4 refers to *torture*, not general hardships or pains.[112] Seneca reiterates this response to Lucilius at the close of the letter: "I am tortured, but bravely; it is well. I perish, but bravely; it is well…. I am burned, but unbeaten: how could this not be desirable?—not that fire burns me, but that it does not beat me."[113] Thus, the very examples of grotesque, formidable suffering introduced earlier by Lucilius (67.3) become poignant illustrations of Seneca's thesis. Torture is not inherently desirable, but is desirable insofar as one displays virtue's invincibility and goodness.

3.2.2. Illness

Throughout his writings, Seneca refers specifically to various diseases, including asthma (*Ep.* 54.1–2, 6), catarrh (78.1), fever (95.17), and epilepsy (*Ira* 3.10.3).[114] He also notes "there are countless kinds of fever" and "other innumerable diseases" (*Ep.* 95.17). In 67.2–3, Seneca briefly mentions his own suffering and refers generally to enduring illness with resignation and specifically to the suffering of gout, which will be considered in turn.

Seneca periodically mentions his own or others' bouts with illness.[115] He writes,

> That you are frequently troubled by the snuffling of catarrh and by short attacks of fever which follow after long and chronic catarrhal seizures, I am sorry to hear; particularly because I have experienced this sort of illness myself, and scorned it in its early stages…. But I finally succumbed, and arrived at such a state that I could do nothing but snuffle, reduced as I was to the extremity of thinness. I often entertained the impulse of ending my life then and there. (78.1–2)

Similarly, in 67.1–2, Seneca's "commonplace remark" about the weather is followed by a mention of his current condition:

> I spend most of the time bundled up; and I thank old age for keeping me fastened to my bed (*Ago gratias senectuti, quod me lectulo adfixit)*. Why should I not thank old age on this account? That which I ought not to wish to do, I lack the ability to do.

This initial reference to Seneca's own suffering anticipates both Lucilius' reported question (67.3) and his own response beginning in 67.4.

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[112] Cf. *Ep*. 85.29; 117.16; Cicero, *Phil.* 11.5.
[113] Own translation, following Reynolds, *Epistulae Morales*, 1:197. *Torqueor, sed fortiter: bene est…. Occidor, sed fortiter: bene est…. Uror, sed invictus: quidni hoc optabile sit?—non quod urit me ignis, sed quod non vincit*.
[114] For other examples, see Motto, *Sourcebook*, 66–67.
[115] See §1.1; Griffin, *Seneca*, 42–43.

In 67.3, Lucilius mentions "enduring illness with resignation" (*patienter aegrotare*). *Aegroto* means "to be physically ill or sick," though may also denote an unhealthy moral condition.[116] However, Seneca uses *aegroto* consistently for physical illness, and that is clearly the meaning here.[117] Gummere (LCL) renders the adverb *patienter* "with resignation" at 67.3 and "patient endurance" in 67.6. Elsewhere, the cognates *patior* and *patientia* feature prominently in *Ep.* 67. According to Dionigi, *patientia* is used in two ways in the Latin period: in a positive and active sense, "(capable of) endurance, resistance, patience," or in a negative and passive sense, "suffering" or "passion."[118] Both uses are reflected in Seneca's writings, though the first usage is predominant in *Ep.* 67.[119] In his opening comment about the weather, he mentions the need to *endure* (*patior*) both heat and cold (67.1). Later, Seneca stresses the desirability not of "mere endurance of torture" (*pati tormenta*) but "brave endurance" (*pati fortiter*, 67:6; cf. 67.5: *fortis patientia*). He then explains the integral relationship of *patientia* ("endurance") to *fortitudo* ("bravery"), *perpessio* ("resignation"), *tolerantia* ("long-suffering"), and all the other virtues (67.10).

In *Ep.* 14.3, Seneca summarizes humanity's fears under three headings: fear of want, sickness, and violence. Using common parlance, he calls sickness and want "natural evils" (*naturalia mala*) that "steal upon us silently" (14.4). Seneca discerns that in every disease (*omni morbo*), one faces the fear of death, bodily pain, and disruption of normal pleasures (78.6). But the particular trouble with disease is that "it is accompanied by great suffering" (*magnos cruciatus habet morbus*, 78.7). Seneca does not minimize pain; rather, "it is imagined in shocking detail—dramatised even…. Seneca's strategy is to invest pain with meaning."[120]

In §3.2.1, we observed that the initial mention of torture (*torquo*) in 67.3 is followed by references to the stake (*uro*), the rod (*flagellum*), and the rack (*equuleus*). Similarly, the summary reference to enduring illness (*aegroto*) is also followed by a specific mention of one terrible disease, namely gout (67.3). Seneca presents Luculius saying, "I have as yet known of no man who has paid a vow by reason of having been

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[116] *OLD* 70.
[117] Cf. *Ep.* 24.17; 50.4; 54.2; 71.5; 85.9; 91.18; 107.7. In 85.10 Seneca uses the synonym *morbus* to refer to moral "disease."
[118] Dionigi, "La patientia," 414–15.
[119] In Dionigi's assessment, Seneca uses *patientia* 48 times with the original meaning *endurance, resistance, patience* (cf. *Prov*. 2.4; *Con*. 3.2; *Ep*. 67.10), compared with 12 times with second meaning, *suffering* (cf. *Prov.* 3.9, 6.6; *Marc.* 20.6). Both meanings appear together in *Prov.* 4.13 (*Ad contemnendam* patientiam *malorum animus* patientia *pervenit*). Ibid., 416–19.
[120] Edwards, *Death*, 87.

… twisted out of shape by the gout" (*podagra distortus*, 67.3). Seneca's descriptions of gout are quite vivid, including the swelling (53.6) and acute pain in the feet, hands, vertebrae, and nerves, that returns at fixed intervals (*Ep.* 78.9; *Nat.* 3.16.2).[121] Seneca writes in *Ep.* 53.6: "There is pain in the foot, and a tingling sensation in the joints ... and when it begins to swell the ankles also, and has made both our feet 'right' feet, we are bound to confess that we have gout." The use of the first person and the vivid description of gout here and elsewhere may insinuate Seneca's personal affliction with the same.[122]

3.2.3. Moral Exemplars

In *Epistle* 67, as elsewhere in his writings, Seneca appeals to several *exempla* to advance his argument.[123] Mayer writes, "The appeal to exemplary figures was the cornerstone of a Roman's moral training."[124] Seneca explains: "the way is long if one follows precepts, but short and helpful, if one follows patterns (*exempla*)" (6.5).[125] The exemplary figure serves as "living proof that the virtuous life is possible."[126] *Exempla* also provide Roman authors a tool for reconciling "universal executive virtues with the need for situational sensitivity."[127]

Seneca illustrates his claim that "a life of honour includes various kinds of conduct," noting that "it may include the chest in which Regulus was confined, or the wound of Cato which was torn open by Cato's own hand, or the exile of Rutilius, or the cup of poison which removed Socrates from gaol to heaven" (67.7).

First, Seneca refers to Regulus, a Roman hero of the First Punic War who was executed by the Carthaginians.[128] According to Seneca, Regulus was tortured and crucified (*Ep.* 98.12; *Prov*. 3.4, 9; *Tranq.* 16.4). In *Ep.* 67.7 he mentions one additional facet of Regulus' torture, being confined in a chest in Carthage. Seneca records that "Regulus prayed that he might reach Carthage," where he honorably met

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[121] Cf. Motto, *Sourcebook*, 66–67.
[122] Griffin suggests, "Seneca may have had gout even earlier and deliberately failed to mention it because it was believed to be caused by debauchery." *Seneca*, 19 n. 4. Cf. *Ep.* 17.4; 95.16, 21.
[123] For Seneca's appeal to exemplars in *Prov*. 3.4–14, see §2.2.1; ch. 2 §5.3.
[124] Roland G. Mayer, "Roman Historical *Exempla* in Seneca," in *Seneca* (ed. John G. Fitch; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 299–315, citing 301. Cf. Winfried Trillitzsch, *Senecas Beweisführung* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962), 32–34. Quintilian writes, "Above all, the orator should be supplied with plenty of examples (*exemplorum*) both ancient and modern" (*Inst.* 12.4.1 LCL). Cf. *Inst.* 5.11.6.
[125] Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.20.1394A; *Rhet. Her.* 3.5.9; Delarue, "Commentary," xxxvi.
[126] Mayer, "Exempla," 312. Cf. Hildegard Cancik, *Untersuchungen zu Senecas Epistulae morales* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1967), 23–27.
[127] Rebecca Langlands, "Roman *Exempla* and Situation Ethics: Valerius Maximus and Cicero *de Officiis*," *JRS* 101 (2011): 100–122, citing 122.
[128] Cf. *Ep.* 71.17; *Helv.* 10.7; 12.5–7; Cicero, *Off.* 1.39; Horace, *Odes* 3.5; Livy, *Periochae* 18.2.

his gruesome fate (67.12). Thus, Regulus' example of honor amidst horrible suffering serves as an appropriate counter to Lucilius' earlier quip that goods contrary to nature do not seem worth praying for (67.3).

Seneca mentions Cato's self-inflicted "wound" as a second example of a life of honor (67.7). According to Plutarch, upon hearing news of another defeat in the civil war, Cato spurned Caesar's offer of clemency for himself and resolved to die rather than live under Caesar's tyranny (*Cat. Min.* 66.2). Cato unsuccessfully attempted to kill himself with his own sword. Then, after being rescued by his friends and attended to by the surgeon, he tore open the wound with his bare hands and eventually died (*Cat. Min.* 70.5–6).[129] Fischer claims, "im Beispiel Catos das Element der *patientia* fehlt."[130] However, as Edwards observes, "For the philosopher Seneca, Cato's protracted and laborious end offered a perfect example of specifically Stoic endurance of suffering."[131] Seneca counts Cato among his ancient teachers, who have discovered the "cures for the spirit" (*Animi remedia*) and whom he honors and worships (*Ep.* 64.9–10). In 11:10, he counsels his reader: "Choose therefore a Cato … Choose a master whose life, conversation, and soul-expressing face have satisfied you; picture him always to yourself as your protector or your pattern" (*exemplum*).

Cato functions as the climactic illustration of virtuous death in 67.12–13. Seneca exhorts Lucilius to consider the appearance of the most noble and magnificent virtue (*virtutis pulcherrimae ac magnificentissimae speciem*). To that end he says, "Behold (*adspice*) Marcus Cato, laying upon that hallowed breast his unspotted hands, and tearing apart the wounds which had not gone deep enough to kill him!" This dramatic presentation of Cato's suicide is intended to "have a visual impact."[132] Cato's grotesque wound is for Seneca the quintessential "image of virtue" he wishes to offer Lucilius, thereby shattering his assumption that desirable things only come via pleasure and ease (67.11).[133]

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[129] Cf. Catharine Edwards, "Modelling Roman Suicide? The Afterlife of Cato," *Economy and Society* 34 (2005): 200–222, esp. 201–2. For Seneca's recounting of Cato's suicide, see *Ep.* 24.6–8; 104.29–33.
[130] Fischer, *Seneca*, 50.
[131] Edwards, *Death*, 3, cf. ch. 2. Seneca frequently appeals to Cato's example. See *Ep.* 7.6; 11.10; 13.14; 14.12–13; 24.6–8; 25.6; 51.12; 64.10; 70.19, 22; 71.15–17; 82.12–13; 86.10; 87.9; 95.69–72; 97.10; 98.12; 104.22, 29–33; *Prov.* 3.4, 14.
[132] Ibid., 89. Cf. *Ep.* 95.72: "We might picture that last and bravest wound of Cato's, through which Freedom breathed her last."
[133] Cf. Ker, *Deaths*, 286. Similarly, Lactantius cites Seneca as saying, "This is that virtuous person, not distinguished by a diadem or purple, or the attendance of lictors … who, when he sees death at hand … does not inquire what he suffers, but how well" (*Inst.* 6.17 [*ANF* 7:406]).

Seneca's other two examples in 67.7 are "the exile of Rutilius" and Socrates' "cup of poison," both mentioned in *Prov.* 3.4.[134] Rutilius was "a firm Stoic" who went into exile at Smyrna in 92 BCE.[135] Seneca notes that Rutilius endured exile with gladness (*Ep.* 24.4), and that "the hour of his suffering was the hour of his triumph" (79.14).

Epistle 24.9 clearly states the intended effect of these exemplars: "I am not now heaping up these illustrations for the purpose of exercising my wit, but for the purpose of encouraging you to face that which is thought to be most terrible."[136] Similarly, after citing the examples of Mucius, Regulus, Socrates, Rutilius, and Cato, Seneca concludes in 98.12: "let us also overcome something" (*nos vincamus aliquid*). In *Ep.* 67, the *exempla* illustrate Seneca's thesis, "not that hardships are desirable, but that virtue is desirable, which enables us patiently to endure hardships" (67.4). Each of these great men—together with the older and younger Decius (67.9)[137]—endured different tortures (*tormenta*) and manifested different virtues. However, Seneca detects an underlying unity to these illustrations, for "[w]hen one endures torture bravely, one is using all the virtues" (67.10). Edwards writes,

> This bravery in the face of gruesome suffering lives on as spectacle through the medium of Seneca's writing, as an endlessly repeated performance, restaged in the minds of his readers. The memory of great men, for Seneca, is as powerful as their living presence.[138]

3.2.4. Summary

Thus far, we have seen that Seneca discusses two main categories of suffering in *Epistle* 67, torture and illness. He provides specific illustrations of each, sometimes describing suffering in graphic terms, so that readers may forsake cozy associations of virtue with pleasure and ease and develop a refined conception of virtue, wrought through endurance of suffering (67.12).

3.3. Suffering Is Indifferent but Desirable as a Means to Virtue

We now turn to consider Seneca's claim that even in the throes of torture or disease, one may discern something to be desired (67.4). This point rests on two arguments. First, suffering is not inherently good or bad but "indifferent" to one's true happiness.

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[134] Socrates will be discussed in ch. 2 §5.3.
[135] Ernst Badian, "Rutilius Rufus, Publius,"*OCD* 1340.
[136] Cf. ch. 2 §5.3.
[137] See T. Cornell, "Decius Mus, Publius," *OCD* 436 §1–2.
[138] Edwards, "Suffering," 263.

Second, one must necessarily endure undesirable circumstances in order to display certain virtues, such as bravery and fortitude, which *are* desirable.

3.3.1. Suffering Is Indifferent, not Preferred

As noted earlier (§2.2), Seneca follows the typical Stoic classification of virtue as good (*bona*), vice as bad (*mala*), and everything else as indifferent (*indifferentia*) with respect to true happiness. Among the *indifferentia*, riches, freedom, and good health are *commoda* (convenient, suitable, favorable) while poverty, slavery, and sickness are *incommoda* (inconvenient things, misfortunes).[139] So in 67.4, Seneca acknowledges, "I should *prefer* (*velim*) to be free from torture" and war, while he is not "so mad as to crave illness." Hardships are not "desirable" (*optabilis*) in themselves, for only virtue is inherently desirable (67.4). Yet Seneca points out, "There are certain goods whose features are forbidding" (67.11). By this he means that virtues such as *fortitudo*, *patientia*, *prudentia*, and *constantia* are often most clearly seen in times of suffering (67.5–6, 10). As Edwards writes, "Virtue can only be displayed in its dealings with these indifferent things: sickness, pain, poverty, exile, death."[140]

3.3.2. Virtue's Desirability and Suffering's Necessity

As observed in §3.1, *Epistle* 67 is framed as a response to Lucilius' reported question in 67.3 concerning whether things considered good by Stoics, such as bravery under torture, are in fact desirable. Lucilius here observes a disjunction between Stoic logic, such as in 66.5, and his and others' experience of life. In response, Seneca first clarifies what things are "desirable" (*optabilis*).[141] He summons the reader to distinguish between the *circumstances* of torture, war, and illness—which no one sanely prefers to their alternatives—and the *opportunity* in such circumstances to demonstrate virtue, which is desirable and enables one to patiently endure suffering (67.4).

In 67.5, Seneca takes up Lucilius' earlier references to bravery (*fors*, 67.3) and endurance (*patienter*, 67.4):

> Certain of our school think that, of all such qualities, a stout endurance is not desirable (*fortem tolerantiam non esse optabilem*),—though not to be deprecated either,—because we ought to seek by prayer only the good which

[139] *Ep.* 66:19; 92.11; cf. Cicero, *Fin.* 3.50–51; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives,* 7.105–6; ch. 2 §4.2.
[140] Edwards, "Suffering," 254. Cf. *Ep.* 82.11.
[141] The verb *opto* occurs four times in 67.4 and the cognate adjective *optabilis* occurs once.

> is unalloyed (*purum bonum*), peaceful, and beyond the reach of trouble. Personally, I do not agree with them (*Ego dissentio*).

Seneca's rationale for this disagreement with other Stoics is threefold. "First, because it is impossible for anything to be good (*bona*) without being also desirable (*optabilis*)" (67.5). Second, he reasons, "if virtue is desirable (*optabilis*), and if nothing that is good lacks virtue, then everything good is desirable" (*omne bonum optabile est*, 67.5). Third, he claims that mere endurance of torture is not inherently desirable. Rather, the virtue of bravery (*fortitudo*) is desirable, and bravery is only exhibited in the face of danger and suffering (67.5–6). Bravery "does not shrink from the stake, advances to meet wounds, and sometimes does not even avoid the spear" (67.6).

In 67.7, Seneca addresses Lucilius' claim that no one desires for himself (*sibi optavit*) or prays for things such as torture and illness (cf. 67.3). After highlighting several exemplars that demonstrated honor amidst great suffering, Seneca adds a personal note: "Accordingly, in desiring (*optavi*) a life of honor, I have desired (*optavi*) also for those things without which, on some occasions, life cannot be honourable."[142]

What things are necessary for an honorable life? Seneca concludes by exhorting Lucilius, "Form a proper conception of the image of virtue, a thing of exceeding beauty and grandeur; this image is not to be worshipped by us with incense or garlands, but with sweat and blood" (*sudore et sanguine*, 67.12). For Seneca, hardships ("sweat and blood") are necessary to display virtue and are thus required for an honorable life.[143] The alternative, "an easy existence, untroubled by the attacks of Fortune," is called by Demetrius a "Dead Sea" (67.14).[144] Sufferings stir up (*excito*) and provoke (*concito*) a person to virtuous action, and test one's soul (*animi tui temptes*, 67.14). Thus Seneca quotes from his teacher Attalus, "I should prefer that Fortune keep me in her camp rather than in the lap of luxury" (67.15).[145] Hardships are not only inevitable but also *necessary* for a life of honor, to become a living image of virtue (cf. 67.7, 12).[146] In 67.16, Seneca offers a final summary response to Lucilius' question (67.3), claiming that everything done in obedience to virtue "is both good (*bonum*) and desirable (*optabile*)."

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[142] Modified from Gummere's translation (LCL), which renders the two-fold *optavi* "praying for…I have prayed."
[143] Cf. 82.10–12.
[144] Cf. Asmis, "Fortune," 125.
[145] Similarly Musonius Rufus remarks, "I myself would therefore choose to be sick rather than live in luxury" (*Lectures* 20.6).
[146] See ch. 2 §1.1.

3.3.3. Summary

Seneca rigorously responds to Lucilius' initial question in 67.3, clarifying that virtue is truly desirable and good (67.4, 6, 16). He argues that brave endurance is in fact a virtue (67.5) and that he and other exemplars have desired an honorable life themselves, which necessarily entails facing various hardships (67.7). Seneca's essential point in *Epistle* 67 is that while no one prefers or seeks out suffering and hardship, the desire for virtue, the only good, motivates the endurance of such things.

4. Conclusion

How do *On Providence* and *Epistle* 67 contribute to our understanding of the place of suffering in Seneca's worldview? Here we consider four key features of Seneca's thinking about suffering in these texts, each of which will be taken up and developed further in Chapter 2.

First, Seneca, following other Stoics, considers hardships (*incommoda*) to be among the "indifferent" or "middle" things, which are not "preferred" but nevertheless are not inherently good or evil (cf. *Prov.* 6.1; *Ep.* 67.4). He views suffering as an opportunity to display virtue, the only true good.

Second, in *On Providence*, Seneca stresses that suffering is consistent with the divine purpose and serves the individual and common good. God is portrayed as a severe but loving father who through suffering tests, hardens, and fits the good person for his service (1.6). In *Ep.* 67, Seneca does not emphasize the educational value of suffering, but he does mention that unfavorable circumstances are in some sense *necessary* for an honorable life (cf. 67.7). Sufferings serve to rouse a person to virtuous action in a way that reclining in comfort does not (67.14–15).

Third, Seneca stresses that suffering is not inherently desirable, yet because virtue is desirable, one is able to patiently endure whatever hardships may come. He does not counsel his reader to go looking for suffering but to prepare to face whatever hardships may come with brave endurance (cf. 67.4).

Fourth, the image of virtue Seneca commends to his readers is not one of "pleasure and ease" but of "sweat and blood" (67.11–12). Seneca appeals to exemplars such as Regulus and Cato, who demonstrated moral greatness amidst immense suffering. These men were not "unfortunate" but were, paradoxically, particularly favored by the gods and truly happy because of their unshakeable goodness (*Prov.* 3.5–14; 6.5; *Ep.* 67.13). Seneca does not limit himself to polite generalizations concerning suffering but forces readers to imagine the very worst

sufferings in vivid detail. By facing the most fearsome sufferings before they come and forming a right image of virtue, the reader is prepared to submit to the divine will and endure whatever may come and emerge "unbeaten" (*invictus*, 67.16).

Chapter 2: Suffering in Seneca's Worldview: Synthesis

1. Introduction

Chapter 1 analyzed *On Providence* and *Epistle* 67, two representative examples of Seneca's writing on suffering. Chapter 2 will utilize the worldview questions set forth in the Introduction (§4.3.2) to *summarize* and *synthesize* how Seneca's worldview accounts for human suffering. These heuristic questions will also enable a focused worldview comparison of our three ancient authors in Chapter 7. While occasional references will be made to Seneca's *Natural Questions* and *Tragedies*, this chapter will focus attention on his *Essays* and especially the *Moral Epistles*, where Seneca most clearly discusses the nature and purpose of suffering. Here we will first briefly discuss the role of symbols in Seneca's worldview (§1.1) and then analyze how he understands suffering in relation to God (§2), humanity's nature and vocation (§3), the world's problem and solution (§4–5), and his expectations for the future (§6).

As discussed earlier,[1] the first person plurals in the worldview questions highlight the way these authors and their intended readership view (or should view) suffering. Seneca explicitly promotes and develops Stoic teachings and addresses most of his writings to Lucilius and other individual correspondents. However, for Seneca *our* suffering would denote *humanity's* common lot of suffering which comes by Fate's decrees. Likewise the question of *our* nature, task, and purpose concerns *humanity's* divine origin and common vocation to imitate the gods in conformity to Nature. At the same time, Seneca writes to correct popular notions about suffering and other facets of life and to promote true (Stoic) philosophy and right knowledge.[2]

[1] See Introduction §4.3.2.
[2] Cf. Motto and Clark, "Paradox," 77.

1.1. Suffering and Symbols

In studying ancient worldview, it is important to consider cultural symbols that express and maintain a given group's identity and worldview.[3] Seneca's Rome was charged with symbols, particularly expressions of devotion to the gods and the emperor, "the gods' representative on earth" (*Clem.* 1.1.2)[4] and *pater patriae* (1.41.2). The faithful frequented prominent temples to honor Jupiter and Juno (cf. *Nat.* 2.45.1; 7.30.1; *Ep.* 95:47), and the gods' images were ubiquitously displayed on coins, in public spaces and private dwellings.[5] As a member of Rome's élite,[6] Seneca maintained the cultural status quo by participating in traditional worship, and in his stylized death he offered a libation to Jupiter.[7] However, Seneca also criticized popular worship practices such as lighting lamps, scraping flesh, and offering sacrifices and prayers, claiming that the gods do not need humans' service but are worshipped by those who know and imitate them (*Ep.* 95.47–50).[8]

For Seneca, the true symbol of virtue is not the diligent temple patron but the philosopher who endures and overcomes suffering.[9] In 64.9, he suggests that it would be good practice to keep *imagines* of great philosophers who are worthy of respect and honor. He calls Marcus Cato "the living image of virtues" (*virtutium viva imago*), who displayed moral virtue above all in his noble suffering and death (*Tranq.* 16.1). Here Seneca may draw upon the customary practice of Roman office holders leaving their heirs an *imago*, a waxen mask representing his features to be displayed prominently at funerals and in the atrium of the family home.[10] These *imagines* "were powerful symbols in Roman culture, bringing to mind the ancestors with their deeds

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[3] Cf. Introduction §4.2.1; Wright, *NTPG*, 123–24.

[4] Translation Susanna M. Braund, ed., trans., *Seneca, De Clementia: Edited with Translation and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 95.

[5] See Hopkins, *World*, ch. 1.

[6] According to Veyne, Seneca's "social universe" consisted of the six hundred families of senatorial rank, sixty officials of equestrian nobility (including Lucilius), his own slaves and freedmen, and a few philosophers he admired and shared company with. *Seneca*, 19.

[7] Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.64. In this and other ways Seneca deliberately imitates the death of Socrates, whose last recorded statement was, "Crito, we owe a cock to Aesculapius," the god of medicine (Plato, *Phaedo* 118a). Cf. Klaus Döring, *Exemplum Socratis: Studien zur Sokratesnachwirkung in der kynisch-stoischen Popularphilosophie der frühen Kaiserzeit und im frühen Christentum* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979), 37–39.

[8] Augustine (*Civ.* 6.10) quotes from Seneca's now lost treatise *On Superstition* and chides Seneca for worshipping what he censured and practicing what he condemned, following Roman laws and customs and not his philosophical insight. Cf. Tertullian, *Apol.* 12; Lactantius, *Inst.* 1.2; 6.25. See discussion in Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1:217–18.

[9] Cf. 67.12–13; ch. 1 §3.2.3.

[10] Harriet I. Flower, *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 64, 271–73.

and values."[11] Seneca sought to leave his friends an *imago* of his life (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.62.1). Mayer comments, "He had every right to leave a waxen image, but that would not have been good enough. Seneca wanted to be like Cato, a living image of moral virtues."[12]

2. Who Is God and How Is God Involved in our Suffering?

According to Hutchinson, Seneca's "works dwell far more on the divine than any other writer's in prose."[13] However, his *Epistles* and *Essays* vary significantly in their attention to theological concerns, and *De Providentia* is Seneca's only explicitly theological work.[14] Seneca writes in the context of Roman cultural polytheism as both a participant and critic, and he frequently references "the gods" as popularly conceived. However, he is essentially an intellectual monotheist, who acknowledges one Supreme Being (Jupiter) and employs various terms for deity (God, Providence, Fate, Nature, Reason, the gods) to highlight different facets of the divine-human relationship.[15] The Stoic God does not suffer, while the sage must endure and overcome suffering with fortitude (*Prov.* 6.6). As a Stoic, Seneca equates deity with the active principle and efficient cause of the material world. Thus everything, including hardships and suffering, is determined by Fate and transpires according to the divine will (5.7–8). From humanity's perspective, however, suffering is inflicted indiscriminately and whimsically by Fortune (*Ep.* 91.2–8). We shall see that Seneca counsels his readers to *prepare* for Fortune's onslaughts by *anticipating* suffering beforehand, *enduring* suffering with fortitude, and *recognizing* the design in hardships to produce and prove virtue.

2.1. Seneca's Theology and Terminology

In *Ep.* 16.4–5, Seneca acknowledges the ancient philosophical debate over whether the universe is ruled by Fate, by God, or by Fortune.[16] According to Setaioli, Seneca shows familiarity with the Stoic doctrine of πολυωνυμία ("multiplicity of names"), which explained the array of traditional gods by the one God's various functions

[11] Ibid., 35.
[12] Mayer, "Exempla," 315.
[13] Hutchinson, *Literature*, 222.
[14] Fischer, *Seneca*, 11.
[15] For references, see Motto, *Sourcebook*, 45–48, 92–96.
[16] Cf. *Helv*. 8.3; Edward V. Arnold, *Roman Stoicism: Being Lectures on the History of the Stoic Philosophy with Special Reference to its Development within the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 199–215; Anna L. Motto, "Seneca on Theology," *CJ* 50 (1955): 181–82; idem, *Sourcebook*, 92–96; Keimpe Algra, "Stoic Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (ed. Brad Inwood; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 153–178, esp. 170.

using corresponding names.[17] For Seneca and other Stoics, any name for Jupiter is appropriate, including Fate, Providence, Nature, or even the Universe (*Nat.* 2.45.1–3). He claims that divine titles may be as numerous as the divine benefits and concludes, "So now call him 'Nature,' 'Fate,' or 'Fortune': all are names of the same god using his power in different ways" (*Ben.* 4.8.3).[18] Sometimes Seneca also employs the plural "gods" (*dei* or *divina*) to denote planetary bodies and other elements of the universe, which are inferior members and agents of the supreme God (*Helv.* 6.7–8; *Nat.* 7.30.1).[19] Thus, while he employs many epithets for deity, Seneca is essentially a monotheist, whose "god is radically different from the gods of myth and poetry."[20]

Seneca is also a pantheist, who identifies the world with deity, "the efficient cause of the universe … the ubiquitous force, the rational principle that penetrates everything, is present everywhere."[21] His theology is grounded in Stoic physics, which held to two basic principles in the world: the active cause, namely Zeus, and passive matter.[22] In Seneca's thought, all things are formed of matter and cause, the divine active principle, analogous to human beings having both body and mind (*Ep.* 65.2, 23).

Seneca calls Jupiter (*Iovem*) "the controller and guardian of the universe, the mind and spirit of the world, the lord and artificer of this creation" (*Nat.* 2.45.1). Fate (*fatum*) is essentially "a chain of causes," and Seneca explains that God is appropriately called Fate as "the first cause of all, the one on which all the other causes depend" (*Ben.* 4.7.2).[23] Providence (*providentia*) is the creator and ruler of the universe and differs from Fate by emphasizing the divine personal will.[24] According to Arnold, Fortune (*fortuna*) stands for "natural necessity"; it does not exclude a notion of causality "but includes all events which are without meaning from the point

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[17] Setaioli, "Divine," 348. Cf. Hutchinson, *Literature*, 232; Fischer, *Seneca*, 12–13. Diogenes Laertius later echoes this perspective (summarizing Zeno): "The deity … is called many names according to its various powers" (*Lives*, 7.147 LCL).

[18] Translation Miriam Griffin and Brad Inwood, *Seneca, On Benefits* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 90.

[19] Michael Frede, "The Case for Pagan Monotheism in Greek and Graeco-Roman Antiquity," in *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire* (ed. Stephen Mitchell and Peter van Nuffelen; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 53–81, esp. 74. Cf. Lightfoot, "Seneca," 294-95.

[20] Setaioli, "Divine," 349. Cf. Frede, "Case," 70–72.

[21] Motto, "Theology," 181. Cf. *Ep.* 92.30.

[22] Inwood, *Letters*, 138–39. Cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 7.134; A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1:270–72; Sellars, *Stoicism*, 86.

[23] Translation Griffin and Inwood, *Benefits*, 90. cf. *Ep.* 19.6; *Nat*. 2.36.1; 2.45.2

[24] Cf. *Ep.* 58.29; 74.10; 110.8; *Prov.* 1.1; *Nat*. 5.18.5. In Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.58, the Stoic Balbus remarks that the "world-mind" (*mens mundi*) may be appropriately called *prudentia* or *providentia*, equivalent to the Greek πρόνοια.

of view of the individual."[25] Fortune is depicted as destructive, capricious, cruel, severe, unjust, and unassailable.[26] Additionally, Seneca frequently refers to Nature (*natura*), defined as "god and the divine reason which permeates the whole world and all its parts" (*Ben.* 4.7.1).[27]

Scholars debate whether Seneca conceives of God as *personally* concerned with human beings. In *Ep.* 95.50, Seneca explains that the gods "are supreme commanders in the universe, controlling all things by their power and acting as guardians of the human race, even though they are sometimes unmindful of the individual" (*incuriosi singulorum*).[28] Similarly in *Prov.* 3.1 Seneca asserts that the gods "have a greater concern" (*maior ... cura*) for collective humanity than for individuals. On the other hand, *De Providentia* depicts God as a Father showing "manly love" (*fortiter amat)* to his children (2.6; cf. 4.7) and intently observing the good person's contest against ill-fortune (2.8).[29] Setaioli claims that these depictions of God displaying fatherly love "are hardly more than metaphors," since "Seneca's god testing the virtue of humans never acquires an individual face or personality."[30] Similarly Sevenster writes, "Seneca is in the last resort not serious when he speaks of a personal God."[31] However, in his brief treatment of Seneca, Hutchinson observes that the philosopher tends "to present the divine as if endowed with some kind of personality and with quasi-human love. How far this is a matter of presentation, how far of actual feeling or belief, we cannot hope to determine with precision."[32]

2.2. Suffering and Fate

In Stoic thought, Fate (*fatum*) is a fixed, eternal, and necessary chain of causes that provides order and structure to the world.[33] Seneca asserts that he and the Stoics "hold that there is a succession of causes, from which fate is woven" (*Ep.* 19.6). In Stoic

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[25] Arnold, *Stoicism*, 210.
[26] Motto, *Sourcebook*, 45. Cf. *Marc.* 10.6; 26.2; *Ep.* 4.7; 9.12. According to PHI, Seneca employs the term *fortuna* over 500 times.
[27] Translation Griffin and Inwood, *Benefits*, 89. Cf. *Nat.* 2.45.3
[28] However, two of the best manuscripts (*Codices Bambergensis* and *Argentoratensis*) read *curiosi,* in place of *incuriosi*. Cf. Fischer, *Seneca*, 18–19. Note Balbus' affirmation of the gods' concern for individuals in Stoic thought (Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.164) and Cotta's critique of this position (3.93)
[29] See ch. 1 §2.3.1.
[30] Setaioli, "Divine," 347.
[31] Sevenster, *Paul*, 37.
[32] Hutchinson, *Literature*, 232.
[33] Fischer, *Seneca*, 181–82.

theology, God and humanity are subject to the decrees of Fate.[34] Seneca writes, "[E]xternal factors do not force the gods, but their own eternal will takes the place of law for them … gods never repent of their first decision" (*Ben.* 6.23.1).[35] For each person, there is "a limit fixed … just where the remorseless law of Fate has fixed it" (*Ep.* 101.7). Thus, illness and misfortune come "by order, and not by accident" (*decernuntur ista, non accident*, 96.2). Yet it is precisely because adversities are predetermined by Fate that they may be conceived of as serving an ultimately good purpose for the good person (cf. *Prov*. 3.1).

Thus, Seneca advises the good person not to complain about hardships but rather to freely submit to Fate and endure suffering with fortitude (*Prov.* 5.7–8; cf. 2.4). Seneca and the Stoics identify humanity's freedom with its power to willingly acquiesce to Fate's determined course.[36] He writes, "Let Fate find us ready and alert. Here is your great soul—the man who has given himself over to Fate" (*Ep.* 107.12). Asmis writes, "By birth, all humans belong to the kingdom of god; and freedom consists in bearing the hardships of human life in obedience to this monarch."[37] Such willing submission to the divine will constitutes humanity's sacred obligation (*sacramentum*) and true freedom (*libertas*; *Vit. beat.* 15.7).[38]

2.3. Suffering and Fortune

Seneca draws on traditional Roman views of Fortune (*fortuna*) and Chance (*casus*), terms he employs interchangeably. According to Asmis, "The idea of fortune … was entrenched in Roman thought as a powerful presence in daily life, whether viewed as a divine force or simply as the circumstances in which a person finds himself. Seneca reshaped Stoic fate in the mold of this conception."[39] Seneca counsels that philosophy "will encourage us to obey God cheerfully, but Fortune defiantly; she will teach us to follow God and endure Chance" (*Ep.* 16.5). Fate, Fortune, and God represent different perspectives on the same reality.[40] "Fortune" assaults humanity with her "missiles" (85.26; 99.32), bringing seemingly random hardship as well as

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[34] Cf. *Prov.* 5.8; ch. 1 §2.2.4. Sellars explains, "There is a necessary and unalterable order of causes that we call fate; but this necessary order is providentially arranged by God to be the best possible order." *Stoicism*, 101.
[35] Translation Griffin and Inwood, *Benefits*, 151. Cf. *Nat.* 1 pref. 3, "he himself is his own necessity," translation Harry Hine, *Seneca, Natural Questions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 136.
[36] Setaioli, "Divine," 360.
[37] Asmis, "Fortune," 116.
[38] Setaioli, "Divine," 360–62; cf. Inwood, *Reading*, 305; Fischer, *Seneca*, 200–4.
[39] Asmis, "Fortune," 118–19. Cf. Nicholas Purcell, "Fortuna/Fors,"*OCD* 606.
[40] Ibid., 123.

apprehension concerning future suffering (91.2). Seneca stresses *preparation* for whatever troubles Fortune may bring: "We must reflect upon fortune fully and completely," placing before our eyes the most formidable sufferings such as exile, disease, war, and shipwreck (91.8) and then fortifying ourselves for future suffering through Reason (74.20-21).[41] By applying philosophical learning, one may become Fortune's superior (117.33).

For Seneca, "It is only evil fortune (*mala fortuna*) that discovers a great exemplar" (*Prov.* 3.4; cf. 4.1).[42] As Sevenster writes, "For the truly harmonious character, suffering of any kind is only an opportunity to display his inner strength, his *virtus*."[43] Someone is *shown* to be wise, not while looking on as a spectator, but when thrust into the match against Fortune's assaults, for those who wish to truly know themselves must undergo testing (4.2). Those called to suffer should consider themselves "worthy instruments" of the divine purpose (4.8).

2.4. The Divine Design and Purpose of Suffering

Seneca consistently portrays God (*deus*) or Providence (*providentia*) positively as "a just, beneficent, and kind being, one who can neither receive nor inflict injury."[44] The Stoic God is *extra patientiam,* outside of suffering, and thus ἀπαθής, unaffected by suffering (cf. *Prov.* 6.6).[45] God is virtuous by nature, but human beings must *learn* virtue through suffering, struggle, and study (*Ep.* 95.36; 124.14).[46] God "governs all things" and protects them as the "Master Builder" (58.28). God is "our Father" (*parens noster*), who gives people those things that he intends for their good (110.10).[47] Seneca exhorts his readers that God sends hardship out of love, intending humanity's ultimate good (*Prov.* 2.6; 3.1-2; 4.7; *Ep.* 65.10).

The "friendship" and relational bond between a good person and God is foundational for Seneca's claim that suffering serves the divine purpose of testing,

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[41] For Seneca's graphic "display" of suffering, see ch. 1 §3.2.1. Cf. *Ep.* 14.4–5; 24.14; *Helv.* 2.2; Edwards, "Suffering," 258.

[42] Cf. ch. 1 §2.2.1. Here *mala fortuna* may be understood as a concession to popular usage, following A. A. Long, "The Stoic Concept of Evil," *Philosophical Quarterly* 18 (1968): 329–343, esp. 333.

[43] Sevenster, *Paul*, 149. Cf. *Prov*. 4.6; *Ep*. 67.4, 6.

[44] Motto, *Sourcebook*, 45. Cf. *Ep.* 65.10; 95.49–50. Seneca uses *deus* and *providentia* interchangeably; cf. *Ep.* 16.5–6; *Prov.* 1.1; 6.1.

[45] Dionigi, "La patientia," 426.

[46] See §3.2; Cf. Harry M. Hine, "Seneca, Stoicism, and the Problem of Moral Evil " in *Ethics and Rhetoric: FS D. Russell* (ed. Harry M. Hine, et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 93–106, esp. 106.

[47] The Stoic Balbus claims that Jupiter's name means "the helping father" (*iuvans pater*), the basis for the name *Iovem,* who is called "father of gods and humans" (*pater divomque hominumque*; Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.64). Cf. Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.3.1.

hardening, and preparation for divine service (*Prov*. 1.5–6).[48] Delarue explains, "[T]here is no way whatsoever, in the Stoic outlook, that God (Who is good) could be capable of doing injury to a good man. This, then, is to be the main premise in Seneca's proof that God controls the universe, yet does not cause or allow any evil or actual injury to befall the good man."[49] God intends his children's greatest good, not their greatest pleasure and comfort. Therefore he "wishes them to become supremely good and virtuous," which is only achieved through struggle and endurance of suffering (2.7).[50]

3. How Does Suffering Relate to our Nature, Task, and Purpose in the World?

In Seneca's worldview, the human soul or mind (*animus*) originates from God and is endowed with reason, a divine trait, though the *animus* is chained in this life to the frail, uncooperative body (*Ep.* 41.1–9). Humanity should live according to Nature and learn virtue amidst various sufferings, with the goal of becoming wise and thereby join the company of the gods (*Ben.* 4.25.1). By enduring hardship and learning and exhibiting virtue, one may even surpass the gods, who together with humans are subject to Fate, yet are exempt from enduring the suffering humanity must face (*Prov.* 6.6).

3.1. Humanity's Nature

According to Seneca, all people "if traced back to their original source, spring from the gods" (*a dis sunt*, *Ep.* 44.1).[51] Specifically, "every soul is of divine origin a part of and emanation from God. Man possesses a rational nature common in origin with the reason that creates and rules the cosmos."[52] He embraces what Motto terms "a pantheism of the internal spirit," which is clearly observed in *Epistle* 41.[53] The philosopher stresses that prayer for sound understanding is unnecessary, since "a holy spirit indwells within us" (*sacer intra nos spiritus sedet*), providing counsel and assistance to rise above Fortune (41.2). A great person's *animus* is "stirred by a force from heaven" and "propped up by the divine," providing those around with "a nearer

[48] See ch. 1 §2.3.1.
[49] Delarue, "Commentary," lv. Cf. *Ep.* 65.10.
[50] On adversity as seemingly paradoxical, see Motto and Clark, "Paradox," 65–86.
[51] Here Seneca and Luke appear to be in general agreement; cf. Acts 17:26–29.
[52] Motto, "Theology," 181. Cf. Daniel C. Russell, "Virtue as 'Likeness to God' in Plato and Seneca," *JHPh* 42 (2004): 241-60, esp. 252.
[53] Motto, "Theology," 181. Cf. *Ep.* 44.1; 66.12; 73.16; 92.29–30; Fischer, *Seneca*, 15.

knowledge of divinity" (41.5). Elsewhere, he calls such a soul "a god dwelling as a guest in a human body" (*deum in corpore humano hospitantem*; 31.11), and notes that Nature "has planted the seeds of virtue in us all" (*Ep.* 108.8; cf. 120.4). However, while God "is nothing but reason," only the *animus*—"the superior part of us"—is rational (*Nat.* 1, Pref. 14).[54]

The fundamental tension of Seneca's anthropology is captured in *Ep.* 41.8–9. A human person is "a reasoning animal" whose highest good consists in living "in accordance with his own nature" (*secundum naturam suam vivere*).[55] Though living in this way is "the easiest thing in the world," Seneca observes that it "is turned into a hard task by the general madness of mankind." Elsewhere, he explains that a person's holy, eternal *animus* is imprisoned in and bound to the body (*Helv.* 11.7; *Ep.* 65.17–18),[56] which is weak, tempted by vice, and suffers by want, sickness, and violence (14.3–4; 24.17).

As noted in §2.1, Seneca's distinction between divine cause and matter (*causam et materiam*, 65.2) offers an anthropological analogy for the divine *animus* (mind or soul) and the mortal body, which should serve the *animus* (65.24).[57] God and the *animus* are intrinsically *good*, and the material world and the human body are by nature *imperfect* and susceptible to evil. Seneca appeals to this dualism of God and imperfect matter when responding to Lucilius' theodicy question: "'Why … was God so unjust in his allotment of destiny as to assign to good men poverty, wounds, and painful death?' It is impossible for the moulder to alter matter; to this law it has been submitted" (*Non potest artifex mutare materiam; hoc passa est*, *Prov.* 5.9).[58] The imperfect body should be considered necessary, but not important (*Ep.* 23.6). The eternal *animus* for Seneca is the true person, while the temporal and frail body is merely one's "image" (*imago*), which temporarily constrains the *animus* (*Marc.* 24.5–25.1). The prudent person learns to separate soul from body (*animum diducit a corpore*) and live increasingly with "the better or divine part" (*meliore ac divina*

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[54] Translation Hine, *Natural Questions*, 139.
[55] "Living according to Nature" in broader Stoic thought refers first to human nature, but also acknowledges the natural course of events. According to Diogenes Laertius, Zeno taught that virtue was "the goal towards which nature guides us," and Crysippus said, "[O]ur individual natures are parts of the nature of the whole universe" (*Lives* 7.87 LCL). Cf. Schofield, "Ethics," 239–46.
[56] On Seneca's allusion to Plato, *Phaedo* 62b, see Inwood, *Letters*, 151. On Plato's view that the body is the prison-house for the immortal soul, see *Phaedo* 80–85; *Phaedrus* 250c; *Cratylus* 400c; *Gorgias* 493a. Cf. N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 48 with n. 89.
[57] Cf. Inwood, *Letters*, 154.
[58] Cf. Evelyn Spring, "The Problem of Evil in Seneca," *Classical Weekly* 16 (1922): 51–53, esp. 52.

parte, *Ep.* 78.10), overcoming the body's defects by reason (*ratione vitium corporis vincat*, 58.27).[59] Seneca strives to exemplify this as he reassures his grieving mother that, though in exile, he is "as happy and cheerful as when circumstances were best," and his "change of place" has afforded him leisure to contemplate the nature of the universe and his own *animus* (*Helv.* 20.1–2; cf. 6.1).

3.2. Humanity's Task and Purpose

Seneca explains, "Our aim is to live according to nature and to follow the example of the gods" (*Ben.* 4.25.1).[60] He agrees with the Stoic school that following and conforming to Nature constitutes true wisdom (*Vit. beat.* 3.3).[61] No special revelation is needed to understand humanity's vocation. Rather, Seneca appeals to the authority of human reason, which is capable of discerning Nature's design.[62] The human *animus,* the divine presence within, serves as a guardian and witness to the truth (cf. *Ep.* 41.2; 43.4; 73.16; 97.12) and enables each person to serve as his own accuser, judge, and intercessor (28.10). As Sevenster writes, "For Seneca the last judgment is when man communes with the voice within him, which, because part of man is of divine origin, is the voice of God, but *in* man himself, because God has entered into man."[63]

Seneca claims that the *sapiens,* whose soul is perfected through Reason and obedience to Nature, is equal to the gods and called their associate. He writes,

> [T]his leisure of the philosopher … is spent among the gods, and makes us gods.… In what respect is Jupiter superior to our good man? His goodness lasts longer … The gods are not disdainful or envious; they open the door to you; they lend a hand as you climb. Do you marvel that a man goes to the gods? (73.12–16)[64]

The gods possess virtue, happiness, and perfect reason. Humanity has been given a capacity for these things, but is hampered by weakness and a proclivity to vice (92.27–28). However, Seneca suggests that the good person may surpass God (*deum antecedatis*) by enduring and overcoming evil, since deity is by nature *extra patientiam malorum* (*Prov.* 6.6; cf. *Ep.* 95.49).[65] Setaioli writes,

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[59] On Seneca's dualism of body and mind/soul, see Sevenster, *Paul*, 68–75.
[60] Translation Griffin and Inwood, *Benefits*, 101.
[61] Cf. *Ep.* 66.39, "Reason … is copying nature" (*Naturae imitatio*); Sevenster, *Paul*, 135–36.
[62] In contrast, Luke and Auctor appeal to Scripture as the fundamental authority in their worldviews. See ch. 7 §3.1.
[63] Sevenster, *Paul*, 92
[64] Cf. 31.8, 11; 59.14; 87.19; 92.27.
[65] See ch. 1 §2.3.4.

> True, it is god who has equipped his soul and his reason with the capability to overcome these seeming evils, but his brave fight to complete the perfection of the world created by god goes to his credit. From this point of view he is actually superior to god, because he is an ethical being, whereas god is not.[66]

Seneca concedes that the gods are good for longer than human beings (*Ep.* 73.13; cf. *Prov.* 1.5). However, while "a god does not fear by benefit of nature (*naturae beneficio*), the sage does not fear by benefit of himself" (*suo*, *Ep.* 53.11, own translation).[67] Even if Seneca's claims concerning the wise person's superiority to God may be rhetorical embellishment, his essential point is that human beings—unlike the gods—are not inherently virtuous but must *learn* virtue by enduring adversity and overcoming vice.[68]

In *Epistle* 95, Seneca addresses proper worship of the gods. He claims religious practices such as lighting lamps, offering sacrifices, or visiting temples, do not constitute true worship (95.47).[69] Rather, worship consists in right knowledge of God. Seneca explains, "The first way to worship (*cultus*) the gods is to believe (*credere*) in the gods; the next to acknowledge their majesty … [and] goodness" (*reddere illis maiestatem suam ... bonitatem*, 95.50). Further, the worshipper should know that the gods command the universe by their power and serve as guardians of humanity. Ultimately, such knowledge of god entails imitation: "Would you win over the gods (*Vis deos propitiare*)? Then be a good man. Whoever imitates them, is worshipping them sufficiently" (*Satis illos coluit, quisquis imitatus est*, 95.50). Thus, "Seneca advocates no other form of worship than the study of philosophy which makes for virtue."[70]

3.3. Humanity's Education through Suffering

Seneca consistently teaches that virtue is learned and proven through adversity.[71] He writes, "No man is good by chance. Virtue is something which must be learned" (*Discenda virtus* est, 123.16; cf. 76.6; 90.46), and this happens through *cura*, "effort" (124.14).[72] No one prefers or seeks out suffering (67.3–4).[73] However, when adversity comes, the wise person recognizes it as a providential occasion for education and

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[66] Setaioli, "Divine," 366.
[67] Cf. *Ep.* 124.14; ibid., 365–66.
[68] Cf. Hine, "Seneca," 105–6.
[69] See §1.1.
[70] Motto, "Theology," 182.
[71] Cf. Epictetus, "It is difficulties that show what people are" (*Discourses* 1.24.1 LCL); Ovid, "virtue … comes to the fore and asserts itself in adversity" (*Tristia* 4.3.80 LCL).
[72] For this rendering, see Inwood, *Letters*, 101.
[73] See ch. 1 §3.3.1.

endurance. Seneca observes in 110.3 that supposed calamity has often been the cause and beginning of happiness (*Quotiens enim felicitatis et causa et initium fuit quod calamitas vocabatur*). The goal is *virtue*, the Supreme Good, not suffering, an indifferent thing, and virtue "enables us patiently to endure hardships" (67.4). Yet the things commonly called hardships or adversities may benefit individual sufferers, since such troubles function like a surgeon's scalpel, inflicting necessary and temporary pain to bring healing to those infected by love of pleasure (cf. *Prov.* 3.1–2).[74] Thus, Seneca stresses that sufferings serve God's design in *hardening* those afflicted against the empty pleasures of vice, *examining* their character, and *preparing* them for lives of true virtue (cf. *Prov.* 1.6; 4.7–8).[75]

4. How Does Suffering Clarify the World's Basic Problem?

Hardships themselves are not evil (*mala*) but "indifferent" (*indifferentia*), but one's *response* to such indifferent things may be good or evil (*Ep.* 82.12). The world's great problem is not suffering but moral evil, which affects all people (*Ira* 3.26.4). Seneca conceives of sin as giving oneself over to wrong thinking, which prompts enslavement to vice rather than the true freedom offered by virtue (*Ep.* 31.6; 85.28).

4.1. Suffering as Indifferent

Following traditional Stoic teaching, Seneca classifies all things as either bad, good, or indifferent.[76] Virtue—"a true and never-swerving judgment" (71.32)—alone is "good" and necessary for one's happiness (cf. 74.16–17). Suffering and adverse circumstances are not *mala*, as commonly thought, since "evil" for Stoics is restricted to moral evil, such as sin, crime, and vice (*Prov.* 6.1).[77]

Circumstances matter little, since people are capable of making their own happiness (*Helv.* 5.1). For all *indifferentia*, "the decisive question is only whether wickedness or virtue has laid hold upon them" (*Ep.* 82.12). Seneca adheres to the common Stoic distinction between *valuable* or *preferred* things and *good* things, with something's value determined by its conformity to nature. Some things such as health, fame, wealth, and freedom from pain are commonly preferred, since they are *secundum naturam* (66.36–37; cf. 92.11; Cicero, *Fin.* 3.53). Conversely, one instinctively avoids unfavorable circumstances (*incommoda*), such as sickness, pain,

[74] See ch. 1 §2.2.1.
[75] See ch. 1 §2.3.
[76] See ch. 1 §2.2; 3.3. Cf. *Ep.* 117.9.
[77] Long and Sedley, *Philosophers*, 1:374.

ignominy, and poverty, which are *contra naturam* (*Ep.* 66.14, 36–37). But whether one reclines at a banquet or endures painful torture, "the virtue in each case is the same, whether it comes through joy or through sorrow" (66.19; cf. 71.21; 82.11–12). However, Seneca reasons that virtue shown through torture or sorrow is greater and more desirable, since "it is more of an accomplishment to break one's way through difficulties than to keep joy within bounds" (66.49). Seneca offers greater praise for Mucius' burned and shriveled hand than for the bravest man's uninjured hand (66.51).[78]

Seneca and the Stoics do not deny suffering's pain or unpleasantness, unlike the Cynics: "our ideal wise man feels his troubles, but overcomes them; their wise man does not even feel them" (9.3).[79] Seneca reasons, "That which is evil does harm; that which does harm makes a man worse. But pain and poverty (*dolor et paupertas*) do not make one worse; therefore they are not evils" (*mala*, 85.30; cf. Cicero, *Fin*. 3.39). Calamity cannot harm the Stoic sage, whose virtue and happiness cannot be taken away (cf. *Con*. 2.3; 3.5; 5.4; *Prov*. 6.1). While no one desires or seeks out suffering, the desire for virtue enables endurance of even the most unsavory trials (*Ep.* 67.4).[80]

4.2. Humanity's Basic Problem: Vice and Lack of Knowledge

Earlier we observed that Seneca challenges the common assumption that "many evils befall good men" (*Prov.* 1.1; cf. *Ep.* 74.10).[81] Seneca reclassifies adversities (*adversa*), which Lucilius regards as *mala* (*Prov.* 1.1; 2.1), as "externals" (*externa*), which are to be scorned by good people (6.1).[82] Evil (*malum*) is defined as ignorance (*imperitia*, *Ep.* 31.6), "an internal mental failing,"[83] which leads people to yield (*cedere*) to those things commonly called evils (*mala vocantur*), thereby forfeiting their freedom (*libertatem*; 85.28).[84] Conversely, the cardinal virtue bravery (*fortitudo*) is "the knowledge which enables us to distinguish between that which is evil and that which is not" (85.28).

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[78] Hine, "Seneca," 97. See §5.3.
[79] Cf. Long, "Evil," 329.
[80] See ch. 1 §3.3.2.
[81] See ch. 1 §2.2.
[82] On Seneca's similarity to Socrates at this point, see Sørensen, *Seneca*, 199–200.
[83] Translation Inwood, *Letters*, 233. Cf. Motto and Clark, "Paradox," 85 n. 34.
[84] For the Stoics "it is by assenting to false propositions that bad dispositions are formed," according to Long, "Evil," 337.

Seneca conceives of sin as fundamentally *noetic* and *anthropocentric.* He explains, "These are the terms and stipulations of our birth: we are creatures subject to no fewer diseases of mind than of body (*animi quam corporis morbis*), neither dull nor slow, to be sure, but misusing our acuity, all of us offering each other examples of vice" (*vitiorum exempla*, *Ira* 2.10.3).[85] He speaks of "diseases of the mind" (*morbi animi*), defined as hardened, chronic vices, persistent perversions of judgment (*Ep.* 75.11), and observes, "the worse one is, the less one perceives it" (53.7).

Because all are subject to these mental failings, "we will always be obligated to make the same declaration about ourselves: that we are bad now, have been bad in the past, and … will be bad in the future (*malos esse nos, malos fuisse … et futuros esse*). There will always be killers, tyrants, thieves, adulterers, rapists, violators of religion, and traitors" (*Ben.* 1.10.3–4).[86] Human beings have in their souls "an idea of good conduct present subconsciously" (*Ep.* 97.12). "We have all done wrong (*peccavimus omnes*), some in more serious ways, others more trivially … not only have we fallen short, but we will continue to fall short to the end of our days" (*Clem.* 1.6.3).[87] In particular, Seneca observes humanity's ingratitude (*ingratus*, *Ben.* 5.17.3; *Ep.* 81.22–23) and unchastity (*impudicitia*, *Helv.* 16.3), and his critique is most explicit in *Ira* 3.26.4: "We are all inconsiderate and unthinking, we are all untrustworthy, discontented, ambitious … we are all wicked" (*Omnes inconsulti et improvidi sumus, omnes incerti, queruli, ambitiosi … omnes mali sumus*; LCL).[88] Seneca summarizes Menander's lament "everybody lives wickedly … now crime is intertwined <with crime>" (*Nat.* 4A Pref. 19),[89] though Seneca claims that his quarrel is particularly with his own vices and failings (*Vit. beat.* 18.1; *Ep.* 6.1).

Seneca presents torture, persecution, and injustice as moral indifferents from the *sufferer's* perspective, who may learn and demonstrate virtues such as bravery and fortitude in such adverse circumstances. At the same time, Hine observes, "to inflict such things on someone else is prima facie a moral evil."[90] Seneca reasons that "contrivers of the most monstrous crimes" (*maximorumque molitores scelerum*), were

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[85] Translation Robert A. Kaster, ed., trans., *Seneca, Anger, Mercy, Revenge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 40–41.
[86] Translation Griffin and Inwood, *Benefits*, 27. Cf. *Ira* 2.9.1–2
[87] Translation Kaster, *Seneca*, 152. Braund's rendering, "We have all made mistakes," minimizes the force of *peccavimus omnes*, *Clementia*, 105. Cf. *Ira* 2.28.1.
[88] For other references and discussion, see Richard Tarrant, "Seeing Seneca Whole?," in *Seeing Seneca Whole* (ed. Katharina Volk and Gareth D. Williams; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1–18, esp. 5–11.
[89] Translation Hine, *Natural Questions*, 56.
[90] Hine, "Seneca," 99.

necessary for Cato to test his strength (*vim suam experiretur*, *Tranq.* 7.5). Thus "human virtue … must be acquired after moral struggle in a climate where vice exists."[91]

Seneca teaches that people are innocent at birth, given health and freedom by Nature, though each person corrupts himself and others, resulting in "a vast mass of wickedness" (*Ep.* 94.54–56).[92] Seneca envisions a similar pattern of innocence then corruption following the future world conflagration,

> Every kind of animal will be created again, and earth will acquire human beings who are unacquainted with wickedness (*inscius scelerum*) and born under better auspices. But even their innocence (*innocentia*) will not last except while they are newly formed. Wickedness soon creeps in. Virtue is difficult to discover; it needs a guide and leader; vice is learned even without a teacher. (*Nat.* 3.30.8)[93]

Humanity enjoys a short period of "innocence" of evil, but they have a natural propensity toward vice and will quickly learn to do evil all over again. Seneca insists that humanity, not God, is to blame: "we cannot complain against god our maker, if we have corrupted his good gifts and made them the opposite" (*Nat.* 5.18.13).[94]

In Seneca's worldview, such innocence or ignorance of sin is inferior to learned virtue, demonstrated in adversity.[95] He writes, "[I]t makes a great deal of difference whether one wills not to sin or has not the knowledge to sin…. Virtue is not vouchsafed to a soul unless that soul has been trained and taught, and by unremitting practice brought to perfection" (*Ep.* 90.46). Russell explains, "Philosophy alone gives happiness; it does more than reproduce the bliss of the Golden Age, because it offers not innocent ignorance but virtue born of struggle."[96]

5. How Does Suffering Relate to the Solution for the World's Problem?

The solution to humanity's moral and intellectual plight in this world is to embrace true philosophy, which entails a transformation of mind and actions (*Ep.* 78.3). Philosophy helps people face their fears and prepare for, endure, and master sufferings (14.3–6, 11). Seneca regularly calls readers to learn from and imitate great

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[91] Ibid., 106. Cf. *Con.* 9.3; Fischer, *Seneca*, 35.
[92] Fischer notes that Seneca here followers Chrysippus, against Posidonius, in teaching humanity's natural goodness and disposition to virtue. *Seneca*, 29. Cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 7.89.
[93] Translation Hine, *Natural Questions*, 52. On the future world conflagration see §6.2.
[94] Translation ibid., 85. Cf. Cicero, *Nat. d.* 3.76.
[95] Cf. Sørensen, *Seneca*, 224–25.
[96] D. A. Russell, "Letters to Lucilius," in *Seneca* (ed. Charles D. N. Costa; London: Routledge, 1974), 70–95, citing 93. Cf. Hine, "Seneca," esp. 94–96.

exempla such as Cato who have demonstrated virtue by enduring awful sufferings (67.12–13).

5.1. Humanity's Salvation through Progressive Knowledge

Seneca writes, "The knowledge of sin is the beginning of salvation (*initium est salutis notitia peccati*)…. For he who does not know that he has sinned (*peccare*) does not desire correction; you must discover yourself in the wrong before you can reform yourself (*emendes*)" (*Ep.* 28.9–10).[97] He later explains, "It is the evil mind (*mens ... mala*) that gets first hold on all of us. Learning virtue means unlearning vice" (*virtutes discere vitia dediscere est*, 50.7).[98] As observed in §4.2, human beings have a proclivity to sin, that is, to believe and follow after falsehood. Yet they also have God's help, as the divine presence resides in the human *animus* (cf. 41.2). So Seneca explains that the answer to humanity's problems lies not without but within: "We mortals have been endowed with sufficient strength by nature, if only we use this strength" (116.8). He acknowledges that, during an earlier bout with severe sickness, "My studies were my salvation … I owe my life to philosophy" (78.3).

Seneca has a progressive, not static, view of virtue.[99] That is, he conceives of the struggle against vice and progress toward virtue *as* virtuous (89.8).[100] He writes, "[L]et us press on and persevere (*instemus ... et perseveremus*). There remains much more of the road than we have put behind us; but the greater part of progress is the desire to progress" (*profectus velle proficere*, 71.35–36).[101] The sage has made substantial advance yet has not totally eradicated vice and achieved perfect virtue. Seneca clarifies, "Do you know what kind of man I now mean when I speak of 'a good man'? I mean one of the second grade" (42.1).[102]

5.2. Mastery of Fear through Philosophy and Preparation.

Humanity is gripped by the fear of suffering and death. Such fear compounds and hastens mental suffering and paralyzes people from truly living. There are three main classes of fear: fear of want (i.e. poverty), of sickness, and of persecution, with fear of

[97] The initial saying comes from Epicurus, *Frag*. 522. Cf. Lightfoot, "Seneca," 281.
[98] Cf. Hine, "Seneca," 97.
[99] On Lucilius' purported progress in the *Epistles*, see ch. 1 §3.1.
[100] "Seneca thus substitutes a process of becoming virtuous for the static virtue of the older Stoics," according to Spring, "Problem," 52.
[101] Seneca outlines three classes of those making progress in 75.8–14.
[102] For Seneca's self-assessment, see *Vit. Beat.* 17.3–4.

violent suffering by persecution taking pride of place (*Ep.* 14.3-6).[103] Humanity suffers from the false belief of fear, so Seneca counsels readers to overcome fear by appropriating a proper philosophical perspective.

He reasons, "He who fears death will never do anything worthy of a man who is alive" (*Tranq.* 11.6). Troubles are ordained to be, but it does no good to hasten them through fear (*Ep.* 13.10). One need not dwell on past suffering and be unhappy presently because of previous unhappiness (78.14), though Seneca does occasionally recommend that the bereaved take solace in contemplating past happiness (*Ep.* 99.4; *Polyb.* 10.1–6).[104] He stresses that people must *examine* their fears rather than retreating or succumbing to them, since "we suffer more often in imagination than in reality" (*Ep.* 13.4; cf. 24.2). At the same time, he employs the Stoic strategy of *praemeditatio futurorum malum*, imagining and preparing for future troubles beforehand (107.4; *Marc.* 9.1–5; cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.29). Armisen-Marchetti clarifies, "In *praemeditatio*, imagination places itself in the service of reason; in anxiety, it is exactly the other way round: imagination overwhelms and sweeps away reason."[105]

According to Seneca, it is necessary to prepare for future trials in three ways. First, "Devote yourself wholly to philosophy" (*Ep*. 53.8; cf. 14.11; 78.3; 98.17), for "she alone can rescue … from the power of Fortune" (*Helv.* 17.5). Philosophy "moulds and constructs the soul; it orders our life, guides our conduct," encouraging her students "to follow God and endure Chance" (*Ep.* 16.3, 5; cf. 53.12). Seneca counsels his grieving mother that studies "will heal your wound" and "uproot all your sadness" (*Helv.* 17.3). Second, one should prepare for future hardship by periods of fasting from life's comforts to avoid attachment and escape excess (*Ep.* 18.5-11).[106] Third, one should take heed when unexpected tragedies befall others, such as in the burning of Lyons, so that one is unsurprised by Fortune's trials (*Ep.* 91.1-5; *Tranq.* 11.6-12). The wise person *conquers* (*vinco*) Fortune by virtue (*Ep.* 71.30), for Fortune sends calamity but cannot hold sway over one's mental attitude.[107]

According to Seneca, the mind must endure and conquer bodily pains through reason (78.18–19). This triumph occurs when a person despises death, roots out fear

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[103] Persecution is of considerable importance in 4 Maccabees and Acts, as discussed in subsequent chapters.
[104] Cf. Mireille Armisen-Marchetti, "Imagination and Meditation in Seneca: The Example of *Praemeditatio*," in *Seneca* (ed. John G. Fitch; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 102–113, esp. 110–11.
[105] Ibid., 112.
[106] Seneca quips that "even Epicurus, the teacher of pleasure" used to fast periodically (18.9).
[107] Asmis, "Fortune," 117.

of future suffering and recollection of past suffering, and looks to philosophy for salvation or safety (*salus*, 78.3; cf. 78.14–15). Philosophy—the love of wisdom—brings true freedom, because it concerns "the perfect good of the human mind" (89.4). Thus, "this leisure of the philosopher … is spent among the gods, and makes us gods" (73.11-12). The wise are equal to the gods, called their associates, as their souls are perfected through reason and obedience to Nature.[108]

5.3. The Instruction, Encouragement, and Modeling of Exemplars

Seneca frequently summons his readers to follow *exemplars*, whose familiar tales of unsavory suffering and profound commitment to virtue are recounted in vivid detail. He insists to Serenus that the Stoic *sapiens* is not a fictional construct but may be shown "in the flesh," albeit rarely (*Con.* 7.1). According to Ker, Seneca's inventive development of the *exempla* "serves to habituate the *reader* to every possible spectacle of adversity, and of endurance … each successive trial is simply another version of *corporeal* suffering, each equally irrelevant to the *animus* of the good man."[109] These exemplary figures benefit humanity in three primary ways: instruction, encouragement, and modeling.[110]

First, the *sapiens* serves as humanity's *instructor*, bringing truth to light and teaching others how to know and follow the gods (*Ep.* 90.34). In Seneca's understanding, the best ideas are "common property" (8.9), and the wise person is able to "impart what he has discovered" (109.3). The ancients have found the "cures for the spirit" (*animi remedia*), but their successors must build upon and apply this knowledge (64.8-9).[111]

Second, the wise person who has successfully endured hardship offers necessary *encouragement* to others in their struggle. Seneca appeals to *exemplars* that endured and overcome great suffering, to embolden readers to face and conquer their own fears (24.9). Seneca marvels at the sheer bravery of Mucius, "a man of no learning, not primed to face death and pain by any words of wisdom," who held his own hand in the fire and ultimately defeated two kings (24.5; 66.53). However, he reserves highest praise for the Stoic Cato, whose philosophical study ultimately leads

[108] Cf. 31.8, 11; 59.14; 73.11-12; 87.19; 92.27.
[109] Ker, *Deaths*, 81, emphasis original.
[110] On *exempla*, see ch. 1 §3.2.3.
[111] On the morally improving effect ("die sittlich bessernde Wirkung") of Seneca's appeals to exemplars, see Trillitzsch, *Beweisführung*, 35.

him to despise Fortune and death (*Ep.* 24.6–8; *Tranq.* 16.1).[112] The wise person's life and teaching offer crucial perspective for the sufferer and show the priority of virtue over the pursuit of comfort and pleasure. The *sapiens* admonishes others to trust firmly in the truth, which inspires the soul and provides confidence to endure hardship virtuously (*Ep.* 94.46).

Third, the wise person provides a *model* for others to imitate.[113] Seneca exhorts Lucilius, "Prove your words by your deeds," for "philosophy teaches us to act, not to speak," teaching each person that "his life should not be out of harmony with his words" (20.1–2; cf. 90.1). Humanity learns to live well by following after the teaching and conduct of the great philosophers who have gone before, who demonstrated virtue amidst trials and have shown others the way. According to Seneca, the wise suffer hardship because "they were born to be a pattern" (*exemplar*; *Prov*. 6.3; cf. *Ep.* 66.3). Indeed, they are worthy of emulation, honor, and even *worship* (*veneror*, *Ep.* 59.7; 64.10), as they share the perfected reason, virtue, and happiness of the gods (41.4; 73.11-13; 92.27, 30).

According to Seneca, humanity needs assistance to achieve salvation from vice and fear of death. This aid is readily available from great exemplars of earlier times, which "were unconquered by struggles, were despisers of pleasure, and victors over all terrors" (*Con.* 2.1). In his *Epistles* and *Essays*, Seneca frequently highlights the lives of these great teachers, such as Marcus Cato (the Elder and the Younger), Laelius, Socrates, Plato, Zeno, Cleanthes, Mucius, Fabricius, Rutilius, Regulus, Tubero, Chrysippus, and Posidonius (cf. *Ep.* 64.10; 98.12, 14; 104.22; *Prov.* 3.4; *Con.* 2.1).[114] He finds it instructive to consider the sober truism that "the best men suffer the worst fate" (*Tranq.* 16.1).

In particular, Seneca commends Socrates and Cato as worthy models for emulation. Of the former he writes,

> If … you desire a pattern (*exemplum*), take Socrates, a long-suffering old man, who was sea-tossed amid every hardship and yet was unconquered both by poverty (which his troubles at home made more burdensome) and by toil, including the drudgery of military service. (*Ep.* 104.27)

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[112] Here's Seneca's argument concerning value of philosophical training is comparable to *Tusc.* 2.17.41, as observed by Catharine Edwards (personal correspondence). Cf. *Ep.* 90.44–46.
[113] Cf. Mayer, "Exempla," 312.
[114] Busch observes that Seneca's tragedies present characters such as Astyanax (*Tro.* 1088–1104) and Polyxena (*Tro.* 1137–64) "as Stoic *exempla* of how to die well." "Dissolution," 278.

Socrates was unshaken by trials and demonstrated great wisdom precisely in adversity. Seneca notes that Socrates chose not to escape from prison when afforded the opportunity, but "he remained in order to remove the fear of the two greatest burdens to humanity, death and imprisonment" (24.4).[115] His teaching and life example offer what amounts to salvation from fear, by encouraging those after him to face terrible trials and overcome them (cf. 24.9).[116]

For Seneca, Marcus Cato is the *virtutium viva imago* (*Tranq.* 16.1; cf. *Ep.* 67.12–13),[117] indeed "a truer exemplar of the wise man than earlier ages had in Ulysses and Hercules" (*Con.* 2.1; cf. 7.1). Cato epitomized bravery and virtue by enduring toil, showing contempt for exile, and above all by scorning death, choosing to take his own life in an honorable fashion (cf. *Prov.* 2.9–12; *Ep.* 24.6–8; 71.8–16; 104.29-33).[118] Seneca stresses that Cato was not at the whims of Fortune but was constant in favorable and unfavorable circumstances (24.7).[119]

Ultimately, Seneca's appeals to such examples so that he and his readers would likewise become living illustrations of virtue to benefit others. He encourages Lucilius to choose for himself a spiritual director and pattern (11.10; cf. 6.5–6), and Seneca in his letters suggests awareness of his own exemplary status.[120] He writes, "I shall find favour among later generations; I can take with me names that will endure as long as mine" (21.5). In 98.13, Seneca appeals to his reader: "Let us be included among the ideal types of history" (*simus inter exempla*). Mayer explains, "Reviewing his career … Seneca saw that he had accomplished the goal which he had set Lucilius and himself, to enter the ranks of the exemplary."[121] According to Tacitus, Seneca left his friends his most noble and enduring possession, namely "the image of his life (*imaginem vitae suae*). If they bore it in mind, they would reap the reward of their loyal friendship in the credit accorded to virtuous accomplishments" (*Ann.* 15.62 LCL).[122]

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[115] Own translation, *remansitque, ut duarum rerum gravissimarum hominibus metum demeret, mortis et carceris*. Cf. Plato, Phaedo 64a.
[116] Cf. Döring, *Exemplum*, 18–27.
[117] See §1.1; ch. 1 §3.2.3.
[118] On the links between Socrates and Cato, see Edwards, "Modeling," 203-6.
[119] On Seneca's appeals to Cato, see Hutchinson, *Literature*, 273–79.
[120] Mayer, "Exempla," 314.
[121] Ibid., 315. Cancik writes, "…das Ziel eines Menschenlebens erreicht ist, wenn es exemplarisch geworden ist." *Untersuchungen*, 25.
[122] Cf. Ker, *Deaths*, 284–89; Miriam T. Griffin, "*Imago Vitae Suae*," in *Seneca* (ed. John G. Fitch; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 23–58, esp. 24.

6. How Does Present Suffering Relate to our Expectations for the Future?

In Seneca's worldview, all of life is characterized by suffering. Death, humanity's greatest fear, marks the terminus of suffering (*Ep.* 54.2–5). Seneca counsels his reader to maintain a proper perspective toward death. However, he acknowledges that there is some uncertainty regarding one's state after death, as death either marks the end of one's existence or, more likely, the process of change to a better state (65.24). Seneca rejects any notion of final judgment or post-mortem suffering (*Marc.* 19.4-5). Following Stoic teaching, he teaches that a future world conflagration will mark the end of the present cosmos and the beginning of a new one (*Ep.* 9.16). Seneca eschews both fear and hope and commends preparing for the future but living fully in the present (*Vit. beat.* 26.4).

6.1. Suffering Is Temporary

Disease is characterized by great physical pain (*magnos cruciatus*, *Ep.* 78.7; cf. 78.14; 98.16), but even the most severe pains (*maximi dolores*) are temporary (78.8; cf. 24.14; 94.7). He concurs with Epicurus,

> For no great pain (*dolorem … magnus*) lasts long. And at all events, a man will find relief at the very time when soul and body are being torn asunder, even though the process be accompanied by excruciating pain (*cruciate*), in the thought that after this pain is over he can feel no more pain (*post illum dolorem se dolere non posse*). (30.14, citing *Frag*. 503)

In *Epistle* 54, Seneca remarks that in his troubled breathing he is regularly practicing for death (*meditationem mortis*, 54.2). He explains death as non-existence (*Mors est non esse*), a return to one's condition before birth (54.4–5). One's mortal life is depicted as a lamp that is lit and soon extinguished, and this time is presented as the intervening period of suffering (*medio illo tempore aliquid patimur*) between the deep peace of non-existence before birth and in death (54.5). Later Seneca explains that it is necessary (*oportet*) to suffer pain, sickness, loss, and ultimately death (91.18; cf. 96.3; 101.15), since calamities are fixed by Fate and thus inevitable in this world (91.15; 107.9-10; cf. *Helv.* 6.8).

6.2. Death, the End of Suffering

Sevenster concedes, "[I]t is not so easy to ascertain what Seneca thinks of the life after death."[123] Seneca observes that two faulty perspectives on death are common,

[123] Sevenster, *Paul*, 224.

either running from or running toward it (*Ep.* 24.22),[124] but he counsels that young and old alike should look death in the face with proper perspective (12.6). Death is "fixed by law for us all to suffer" (94.7; cf. 24.14). Yet what actually becomes of a person at death is not wholly clear in Seneca's writings. In 65.24 we read,

> And what is death? It is either the end, or a process of change (*aut finis aut transitus*). I have no fear of ceasing to exist; it is the same as not having begun. Nor do I shrink from changing into another state, because I shall, under no conditions, be as cramped as I am now.

A similar ambivalence is observed in 24.18, "Death either annihilates us or strips us bare" (*Mors nos aut consumit aut exuit*, cf. 36.10-11). Thus, Seneca conceives of two possibilities for what happens at death: either one will encounter change and pass into a better life among the gods, or one ceases to exist, suffering is ended, and the soul is returned to the universe (71.16).[125] Seneca more frequently emphasizes the former possibility of a beatific afterlife.[126] Regardless, Seneca's basic philosophical conviction is that "death frees the self from life's tortures."[127] At the same time, Seneca's tragedies contextualize his philosophical writings "within a dialogue that is radically unresolved."[128] Sometimes death is presented as bringing freedom (*Tro.* 146, 791) or the end of punishment (*Thy*. 246–48), though elsewhere Seneca's characters contemplate the continuation and intensification of life's oppressive horrors post-mortem (*Herc. fur.* 747–59*; Thy.* 13–18, 87–100).

The wise person does not fear death but resolves to "suffer unhesitatingly whatever fate the law of the universe ordains" (71.16). The immortal soul's release from the body's burden and bondage is what makes death advantageous (cf. 24.17–18; 65.16, 21).[129] Thus, for Seneca "it would have been unthinkable that anyone could after death, which liberates the soul from the body, wish to be covered again by a body."[130] Death is the end of suffering, and one should not fear death but take control and "see to it that the closing period is well turned" (77.20), which means dying

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[124] Citing Epicurus, *Frag.* 496–98; Brad Inwood and Lloyd P. Gerson, ed., trans., *The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia* (Cambridge: Hackett, 1994), 103.
[125] Tertullian summarizes Seneca's view: "After death all comes to an end, even (death) itself" (*An.* ch. 42 [*ANF* 3:464]; cf. *Res.* ch. 1 [*ANF* 3:1216]).
[126] Busch, "Dissolution," 264–65. For references, see Motto, *Sourcebook*, 59–62.
[127] Busch, "Dissolution," 257.
[128] Ibid., 266.
[129] Cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 67d.
[130] Sevenster, *Paul*, 239. Similarly Wright, *Resurrection*, 54–55. For comparison and contrast with Auctor and Luke, see ch. 7 §2.5; 3.6.

"honourably, sensibly, bravely" (77.6), and often for Stoics, by suicide (77.15; *Prov.* 2.10; 6.9).[131]

Seneca understands death as a release from suffering into a peaceful state. He writes to Marcia,

> Reflect that there are no ills to be suffered after death (*Cogita nullis defunctum malis adfici*), that the reports that make the Lower World terrible to us are mere tales, that no darkness is in store for the dead, no prison, no blazing streams of fire, no river of Lethe, that no judgement-seats are there, nor culprits, nor in that freedom so unfettered are there a second time any tyrants. All these things are the fancies of the poets, who have harrowed us with groundless terrors. Death is a release from all suffering (*Mors dolorum omnium exsolutio est et finis*), a boundary beyond which our ills cannot pass—it restores us to that peaceful state in which we lay before we were born. (*Marc.* 19.4-5)

Fitch notes, "By Plato's time the idea that transgressors in general would receive *post mortem* judgment and punishment was widespread, and Plato's myths of the afterlife … further strengthened it."[132] However, like Cicero,[133] Seneca strongly dismisses all notions of a final judgment or experiences of suffering during the afterlife.[134] Nevertheless, in his tragedies, Seneca dabbles in such "poetic fancies." For example, Theseus states that, in the afterlife, "What each man did, he suffers (*patitur*): the crime recoils on its perpetrator, and the criminal is plagued by the precedent he set" (*Herc. fur.* 735–36). Seneca's clearest statement concerning punishment for wrongdoing comes in *Ira* 3.26.2: "the greatest punishment of doing wrong is having done it, and no man suffers more grievously than the person sentenced to regret."[135]

Seneca explains to Polybius that his dead brother's soul has been released from incarceration and is now "finally his own lawyer and judge" (*Polyb.* 9.3).[136] To Marcia, Seneca writes of a brief period postmortem when the deceased are purified (*expurgo*, *Marc.* 25.1) and their defilement and stain is washed away (*eluo*, 23.1). He

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[131] "The rationality of suicide 'at the right time' was a notorious Stoic doctrine," according to Long and Sedley, *Philosophers*, 1:428.
[132] John G. Fitch, *Seneca's Hercules Furens: A Critical Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 311. Cf. Plato, *Rep.* 614–16; *Phaed.* 113–14.
[133] "It is ignorance of this that has invented the world below and the terrors which not without reason you appeared to despise" (*Tusc.* 1.16.36 LCL). Cf. *Tusc.* 1.6.11; *Nat. d.* 2.2.5.
[134] In contrast, both Luke and Auctor affirm a final judgment and eternal punishment of the wicked. See ch. 7 §3.6. Recently, Brookins has argued that Luke 16:18–31 evokes and subverts Stoic notions of "good" and "evil," reorienting readers with a new perspective contra Stoicism and the world's wisdom. "Dispute," 34–50.
[135] Cf. *Ira* 2.30.2: "he's already punished himself by being a wrongdoer." Translations from Kaster, *Seneca*, 56, 84. See Fischer, *Seneca*, 24–26.
[136] Own translation, *tandem sui iuris et arbitrii*. Cf. Busch, "Dissolution," 264.

thus "bids his friends look forward to the period of purgation, the life of pure souls in the regions of the aether, and the final union with the divine being."[137]

Following traditional Stoic teaching, Seneca teaches that a future world conflagration (*conflagratio futura*) "will occur when god has decided to inaugurate a better world and to end the old" (*Nat.* 3.28.7).[138] He anticipates that the world's future destruction will come about through water and fire.[139] According to orthodox Stoicism, the present cosmos "will totally burn up, but the substance left by this mighty conflagration will give rise to a new cosmogony," with the new cosmos being "indiscernible from the present one."[140] The cycle will start again with eternal Reason, which previously created and inhabited the universe (*Ep.* 90.29). According to Seneca, the wise person's life "will be like that of Jupiter, who, amid the dissolution of the world, when the gods are confounded together and Nature rests for a space from her work, can retire into himself and give himself over to his own thoughts" (9.16). At the conflagration "the souls of the blest, who have partaken of immortality," will be destroyed along with the universe and changed again into their former elements (*Marc*. 26.7).

6.3. Neither Fear nor Hope

Seneca counsels preparation for future suffering, come what may, but one should neither *fear* future trouble nor *hope* for improved circumstances. In *Ep.* 22.14, Seneca observes, "[A]ll are equally afraid of death (*timidum mortis*), and equally ignorant of life," and he then develops this point in subsequent letters in Book 3.[141] *Epistle* 23 advises against hoping for what may not come and emphasizes pursuing joy and happiness by living fully in the present. *Epistle* 24 then focuses on confronting and overcoming the fear of death. Seneca graphically portrays various examples of death to encourage Lucilius to "face that which is thought to be most terrible" (24.9).[142] In 24.21 he explains, "[T]his death, of which we are afraid, is the last but not the only

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[137] Arnold, *Stoicism*, 268.
[138] Translation Hine, *Natural Questions*, 49. Cf. Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.118; *SVF* 2.596–632. For discussion, see A. A. Long, "The Stoics on World-Conflagration and Everlasting Recurrence," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23 (1985): 13-37; Long and Sedley, *Philosophers*, 1:274–79; Edward Adams, *The Stars Will Fall From Heaven: Cosmic Catastrophe in the New Testament and its World* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 114–24; Setaioli, "Divine," 341; Ricardo Salles, "Chrysippus on Conflagration and the Indestructibility of the Cosmos," in *God and Cosmos in Stoicism* (ed. Ricardo Salles; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 118–34.
[139] *Nat.* 3.27.1–15; 3.28.7; 3.30.6; *Marc*. 26.6; *Ben.* 6.22.
[140] Salles, "Introduction," 2.
[141] As observed by Catharine Edwards, personal correspondence.
[142] On Seneca's portrayal of suffering as a spectacle, see Edwards, "Suffering," 258–59.

death." One should avoid the extremes of desiring or dreading death (24.22–25). Instead, one should examine his fears (24.2) and despise death like the great exemplars (24.11).

Seneca calls hope "merely the title of an uncertain blessing" (*Ep.* 10.3; cf. *Brev.* 10.2) and concurs with the words of Hecato, "Cease to hope…and you will cease to fear" (*Ep.* 5.7). The problem with both fear and hope, for Seneca, "is that we do not adapt ourselves to the present, but send our thoughts a long way ahead" (5.8). Rather, the wise person "ever lives happy in the present and unconcerned about the future" (*Vit. beat.* 26.4).

7. Conclusion

In light of the analysis of Chapters 1–2, we may now summarize Seneca's understanding of suffering and its function in his worldview. As discussed in ch. 1 (§1.2), the following definition of suffering is consistent with Seneca's treatment: *the individual or group experience of bearing physical, psychological, economic, and/or social pain, distress or loss.* Seneca does not mince words when acknowledging the painful reality of suffering in his own and others' experiences. Suffering may result from natural disaster, from illness and bodily decline, from war and political turmoil, or from violence and persecution (*Ep.* 14.3–6). Suffering is inevitable in this life and comes not randomly, but according to Fate's settled decrees (*Prov.* 5.7–9). Suffering is undesirable, but it is not inherently evil but "indifferent" with regard to one's true happiness (*Ep.* 82.10–11). In fact, Seneca conceives of suffering as valuable and even necessary for testing, refining, and instructing a person in the path of virtue (*Prov.* 1.6). Given this summary of Seneca's view of the *nature* of suffering, we now turn to consider suffering's function in his worldview. As in chapters 4, 6, and 7, this summary section is written in the first-person plural from the perspective of Seneca and his implied readership.[143]

First, *who is God and how is God involved in our suffering?* We Stoics may call Jupiter many names—Fate, Providence, Nature, Father, Fate—given his various activities and roles (cf. *Ben.* 4.8.3). We human beings, in pleasant and adverse circumstances, are guided by the fixed decrees of *fatum* (*Ep.* 96.1–2). Of course, it seems as though *fortuna* assaults us randomly and maliciously with painful and bitter adversities (85.26). Yet *providentia* foresees and intends such hardships, like a Father

[143] Cf. §1.

who disciplines and educates his children not for their comfort but their ultimate good (*Prov*. 1.5–6; 4.7).[144]

Second, *how does suffering relate to our nature, task, and purpose in the world?* Human beings are reasoning animals, with rational, divine souls encased in weak, vulnerable, uncooperative bodies (*Ep.* 41.8–9; cf. 24.17). We must follow the gods and live according to Nature, and God equips us for this task through our reason (*Ben.* 4.25.1). Virtue is not bestowed at birth but learned at the school of suffering. Once we have learned virtue, we may benefit others. Further, though suffering is unpleasant and undesirable, our essential advantage over the gods is this: while deity is *extra patientium malorum* and is virtuous by nature*,* the sage is virtuous by choice and is *supra patientiam*, enduring and overcome suffering with fortitude (*Prov.* 6.6).[145]

Third, *how does suffering clarify the basic problem in the world?* The great problem in our world is not suffering but *human beings*—especially our moral evil and mental failing (*Prov.* 6.1; *Ep.* 6.1; 31.6). False thinking and enslavement to vice hinder our freedom and are deleterious for society (85.28; *Ira* 2.10.3). We all are born innocent with a propensity to vice, and each person has succumbed to vice in some way (*Clem.* 1.6.3). Hardships themselves are not *mala* but *indifferentia*, but our *response* to these indifferent things may be good or evil (*Ep.* 67.3–4; 82.12).[146]

Fourth, *how does suffering relate to the solution for the world's problem?* As a youth, on the brink of despair, philosophical studies were my salvation (78.3). Yes, philosophy offers the solution to our world's endemic woes: wrong thinking and its fruit, vice and immorality. We must first identify our problem and then begin unlearning vice and learning virtue (50.7). Philosophy, the love of wisdom, helps us face our fears, endure and overcome sufferings, and pursue a virtuous life (14.3–6). Philosophy consists not merely in talk but in action (20.1–2). Therefore, we should choose a great teacher (for me, Cato), who has endured sufferings, demonstrated virtue, and set an example to follow (11.10; 24.3–9).[147]

Finally, *how does present suffering relate to our expectations for the future?* Suffering marks our lives from birth until death (54.5). Death is humanity's greatest fear, but we must recognize that death marks the end of suffering. It is essential to

[144] Cf. §2.
[145] Cf. §3.
[146] Cf. §4.
[147] Cf. §5.

maintain the right perspective on death, not clamoring for it or cowering in fear but courageously preparing to die well (24.21–25). What comes after death? Death may simply mark the end of our existence, but more likely at death our souls are liberated from these tiresome bodies, cleansed of defilement, and released to the immortal gods until the conflagration (*Marc.* 23.1–2; 26.7). Because the future is uncertain, we should not cherish fears or hopes but learn to live fully in the present (*Ep.* 5.7–9).[148]

[148] Cf. §6.

Chapter 3: Suffering in 4 Maccabees: Exegesis

1. Introduction to 4 Maccabees

Chapters 3–4 will analyze the function of suffering in the worldview presupposed and advocated by the author of 4 Maccabees (hereafter Auctor). Chapter 3 will lay the exegetical foundation for the synthesis of Auctor's thought in Chapter 4. This chapter will first offer a brief introduction to 4 Maccabees, addressing matters of authorship, date, and purpose, as well as a survey of suffering and persecution in 4 Maccabees (§1.1–4). Then we will provide detailed treatment of two key passages, the initial martyrdom of Eleazar in 6:1–30 (§2) and the peroration in 17:7–24 (§3).

1.1. Title and Author

Fourth Maccabees is attested in the important Septuagint codices Sinaiticus (א) and Alexandrinus (A) and is linked by its title to the other books of the Maccabees.[1] However, "4 Maccabees is in no sense a history of the exploits of the Maccabean leaders or of the course of the revolt."[2] Eusebius fittingly called the book "On the Supremacy of Reason" (Περὶ αὐτοκράτορος λογισμοῦ),[3] reflecting Auctor's stated subject "whether devout reason is sovereign over the passions" (1:1).

Anderson writes, "4 Maccabees provides us with a particularly fascinating insight into the thought world of a Hellenized Jew of the Diaspora in the first century of our era."[4] Auctor "distinguishes himself in Greek compositional skills and cultural fluency,"[5] and his opening reference to the four cardinal virtues taught by Plato and

[1] Unless otherwise noted, references to the Greek text of 4 Maccabees are to Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart, eds., *Septuaginta* (Revised ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006). The Göttingen Septuagint volume of 4 Maccabees has not yet been released at the time of writing, though many textual matters are discussed by Robert J. V. Hiebert, "In Search of the Old Greek Text of 4 Maccabees," in *Text-Critical and Hermeneutical Studies in the Septuagint* (ed. Johann Cook and Hermann-Josef Stipp; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 127–43. Cf. Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 678–80.

[2] Hugh Anderson, "4 Maccabees," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; vol. 2; Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), 531–564, citing 532.

[3] *Hist. Eccl*. 3.10.6 (*NPNF*^{2} 1:145). Eusebius was almost certainly mistaken, however, in identifying the author as Josephus. Cf. Moses Hadas, *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1953), 114–15.

[4] Anderson, "4 Maccabees," 2:537.

[5] deSilva, *Commentary*, xii. Cf. Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 665.

the Stoics (prudence, temperance, justice, and courage)[6] suggests Auctor is "quite conversant with the 'philosophical *koine*' of his time."[7] Nevertheless, Auctor insists that study and practice of Torah is the *sine qua non* of true philosophy and uniquely promotes "devout reason" which can master the passions (1:1–6, 17; 2:23; 7:7).

1.2. Date

Here we must justify the earlier designation of Auctor as a first-century author, a rough contemporary with Seneca and Luke. Most modern scholars agree that 4 Maccabees was composed in the approximate period 20–120 CE.[8] In his seminal essay, Bickerman dates 4 Maccabees between 18 and 53 CE.[9] First, he claims "that the Temple and its service are regarded as existent in the book."[10] Second, he asserts that the term θρησκεία ("religion"), used in 5:7 and 13, points to the time of Augustus onward.[11] Third, he claims that Auctor's reference to Apollonius as στρατηγός ("governor") of Syria, Phoenicia, and Cilicia in 4:2 updates his source, 2 Macc 3:5 ("Apollonius … was governor of Coele-syria and Phoenicia"), using "the official nomenclature of his own time."[12] In Bickerman's analysis, these three regions operated as one administrative Roman district approximately 20–54 CE.[13]

Each of Bickerman's arguments may be criticized. Auctor's reference to the Temple's *historical* existence during the Seleucid period implies nothing about its *contemporary* status at composition. The term θρησκεία is attested from the time of Herodotus.[14] Van Henten observes that Syria and Cilicia's union continued until approximately 72 CE, not 54,[15] which somewhat extends Bickerman's *terminus ad quem,* if 4:2 is considered a reliable guide to dating.[16]

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[6] These correspond to Stoicism's four *moral virtues* of Stoicism, distinct from the *intellectual virtues* of piety, godliness, holiness, and faith. Paul L. Redditt, "The Concept of Nomos in Fourth Maccabees," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 249–270, citing 260.
[7] deSilva, *Guides*, 13. Cf. Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 666.
[8] Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 668. Cf. deSilva, *Commentary*, xiv.
[9] E. J. Bickerman, "The Date of Fourth Maccabees," in *Studies in Jewish and Christian History, Vol. 1* (ed. Amram D. Tropper; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 266–71.
[10] Ibid., 268, appealing to 4:20 and (dubiously) 14:9.
[11] Ibid., 268; Hadas, *Maccabees*, 95.
[12] Bickerman, "Date," 269.
[13] Ibid., 269–71; cf. Hadas, *Maccabees*, 95–96. Cf. Gal 1:21; Acts 15:41;
[14] *Hist*. 2.18; 2.37; Cf. LSJ 806; Wis 14:18, 27; Philo, *Det.* 1:21; *Fug*. 1:41; *Spec*. 1:315; *Legat*. 1:232, 298.
[15] van Henten, *Martyrs*, 74; cf. idem, "Datierung," 140–43. Cf. Suetonius, *Vesp*. 8.4. This objection is anticipated by Bickerman, "Date," 270–71.
[16] Urs Breitenstein (who does not interact with Bickerman) concludes that 4:2 indicates a date *after* 57 CE. *Beobachtungen zu Sprache, Stil und Gedankengut des Vierten Makkabäerbuchs* (Basel: Schwabe, 1976), 174.

Van Henten claims that 4 Maccabees "abstracts and spiritualizes notions of the land of the Jews and of Jewish political institutions," such as the Temple, and thus suggests a date around 100 CE or shortly thereafter.[17] The references to Judea as "the fatherland" (πατρίς) in 4 Maccabees challenge the claim that the land is "spiritualized,"[18] since πατρίς appears throughout 2 Maccabees.[19] Auctor's infrequent Temple references[20] are perhaps the strongest argument for a post-70 composition, though this may indicate simply "the interests of Diaspora Jews, not the Temple's destruction."[21]

Alternatively, Campbell argues for a composition date "definitely after 135 CE, and possibly up to a century later."[22] He develops earlier proposals for an early second-century date on grounds of diction, style, rhetoric, and philosophy,[23] and he claims "striking points of contact" between 4 Maccabees and second-century accounts of martyrdom.[24] However, deSilva observes that Auctor's "philosophical eclecticism" is typical of first-century works and the vocabulary of 4 Maccabees, including neologisms and absolute *hapaxes*, is explicable as the work of an inventive author and does not necessitate second-century composition.[25] Klauck observes that the work's inclusion in the Septuagint and rapid Christian reception render such second-century proposals unlikely.[26] Further, deSilva has suggested links between 4 Maccabees and the NT,[27] and Williams has argued plausibly that Ignatius' usage (ca. 110) of the rare term ἀντίψυχον (Eph 21:1; Smyr 10:2; Poly 2:3; 6:1) suggests influence by 4

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[17] van Henten, *Martyrs*, 77; cf. idem, "Datierung," 144. Similarly, Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 669 (90–100 CE).
[18] deSilva, *Commentary*, xvi. Cf. 4 Macc 1:11; 4:1, 5, 20; 17:21; 18:4. πατρίς is rendered as "fatherland" to preserve the connection between the land and the "forefathers" (οἱ πατέρες, 3:20; 5:37; 13:17, 19; 18:23). The term denotes "a relatively large geographical area associated with one's familial connections and personal life," according to BDAG 788, §1, and is elsewhere rendered "native land" (NRSV) or "homeland" (NETS, ESV, deSilva).
[19] 2 Macc 4:1; 5:8–9, 15; 8:21, 33; 13:3, 10, 14; 14:18
[20] Six times in 4 Maccabees (3:20; 4:3, 8, 9, 11, 20), compared to thirty-three in 2 Maccabees.
[21] deSilva, *Commentary*, xv. Cf. John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (2nd ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 203.
[22] Douglas A. Campbell, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3.21–26* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 228. Campbell does not address critiques of this late dating from van Henten, "Datierung," 145; Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 668–69.
[23] Cf. Breitenstein, *Beobachtungen*, 173–75, 179; André Dupont-Sommer, *Le Quatrième livre des Machabées* (Paris: Champion, 1939), 75–85.
[24] Campbell, *Rhetoric*, 227.
[25] deSilva, *Commentary*, xvi.
[26] Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 669.
[27] deSilva, *Guides*, 143–49.

Maccabees (6:29; 17:21),[28] though Ignatius and Auctor employ ἀντίψυχον quite differently.[29] Thus, 4 Maccabees was probably written between 20 and 72 CE, most likely in the latter part of this range.[30]

1.3. Occasion, and Purpose

References to "this time" in 1:10 (κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν καιρόν) and 3:19 (ὁ καιρός) suggest that Auctor writes for a particular occasion. Scholars have offered various proposals, including a synagogue sermon, an address on the anniversary of the martyrdoms, or—most likely—Hanukkah.[31] Redditt rightly suggests that, while it is not possible to tie the book to a particular persecution against Jews, "the topic of martyrdom demonstrates that the author and his audience lived in a time of profound tension."[32]

It seems clear that 4 Maccabees addresses the "everyday situation" of Judaism in the Diaspora struggling with the problem of assimilation.[33] Barclay helpfully distinguishes between *assimilation* (social integration with one's neighbors which concerns social interaction and practices) and *acculturation* (the linguistic, educational and philosophical aspects of a given cultural environment).[34] Auctor's *acculturation* "does not lead to significant cultural convergence," and his work aims "to counter the temptations to assimilation among acculturated Jews."[35]

1.4. Suffering and Persecution in 4 Maccabees: An Initial Overview

Suffering, defined as *the individual or group experience of bearing physical, psychological, economic, and/or social pain, distress or loss*, features prominently in 4 Maccabees.[36] Auctor's discussion of suffering is more focused than Seneca's. Auctor does not directly address suffering caused by sickness or calamity, but focuses on the *persecution* inflicted by the tyrant Antiochus on the Jews because of their

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[28] Williams, *Death*, 236–39. Fourth Maccabees' influence on Ignatius cannot be proved, according to G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 79–81. Cf. Breitenstein, *Beobachtungen*, 28 n. 1, 177.
[29] Alexander N. Kirk, "Ignatius' Statements of Self-Sacrifice: Intimations of an Atoning Death or Expressions of Exemplary Suffering?," *JTS* 64 (2013): 66–88, esp. 79–81.
[30] Cf. deSilva, *Commentary*, xiv–xvii.
[31] See ibid., xxiii–xxv.
[32] Redditt, "Nomos," 264.
[33] Cf. deSilva, *Guides*, 25, 42–44; Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 664.
[34] John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 92–98. Barclay uses the term *accommodation* to refer to the use of acculturation, either toward integration or opposition of the majority culture.
[35] Ibid., 375, 378–79.
[36] See Introduction §3.1.2; cf. ch. 1 §1.2.

distinctive beliefs and practices.[37] As will be discussed below, Auctor portrays Israel's persecution as *retributive*, the divine response to her covenant violations, and *redemptive*, as the martyrs' vicarious righteous suffering reverses Israel's plight and restores divine favor.[38]

Fourth Maccabees uses the general term πάσχω four times to denote persecution resulting in death (4:25; 9:8; 10:10; 14:9). But Auctor frequently employs more specialized terminology such as βάσανος ("inquiry by torture"),[39] αἰκισμός ("torture suffered"),[40] ἀλγηδών ("acute pain"),[41] and στρέβλη ("instrument of torture").[42] Further, 4 Maccabees refers to an extensive list of torture devices (τὰ βασανιστήρια) unattested elsewhere in the Septuagint.[43] For example, 8:13 refers to *eleven* such devices (cf. 8:12): torture wheels, joint–dislocators, racks, bone crushers, catapults, cauldrons, frying–pans, thumbscrews, iron claws, wedges and coals of fire.[44] These instruments are designed to inflict gruesome pain and psychological trauma on victims and serve as vivid pictures of the steep cost of these martyrs' allegiance to Torah.[45] This persecution is presented as publicly humiliating (6:2), and supremely painful (6:24; 14:9–10).[46] Additionally, in narrating the torture and death of the seven brothers, Auctor highlights the deep relational pain and distress that the brothers and especially their mother experienced and overcame:

> Moreover, they even urged them on to face the abuse (αἰκισμόν), so that they not only disdained the acute pains (ἀλγηδόνων) but also overcame the passions of brotherly love. (14:1)
>
> Do not consider it remarkable if reason had full control of those men in these tortures, when even a woman's mind despised more manifold pains (πολυτροπωτέρων … ἀλγηδόνων). For the mother of the seven young men endured the tortures (στρέβλας) of each one of her children. (14:11–12)

[37] See Introduction §3.1.3.
[38] See §2.2, 5; 3.4; ch. 4 §4.3; 5.1.
[39] LSJ 309 §III; 41x in 4 Macc, first at 4:26.
[40] Muraoka 14; cf. 6:9; 7:4; 14:1; 15:19; cf. 2 Macc 8:17.
[41] Muraoka 24. Cf. 4 Macc 3:18; 6:7, 34, 35; 8:28; 9:28; 13:5; 14:1, 11; 16:17; van Henten, *Martyrs*, 125 n. 1.
[42] Muraoka 639; cf. 7:4, 14; 8:11, 24; 9:22; 14:12; 15:24, 25.
[43] Cf. 4 Macc 6:1; 8:1, 12, 19, 25.
[44] For discussion of these terms, see deSilva, *Commentary*, 162–64.
[45] See §2.5.
[46] See §2.3, 5.

> But pious reason, filling her bowels with manly courage amidst these sufferings, strengthened her to disregard the immediate claims of parental love. (15:23)[47]

Other Jewish writings of the Second Temple period also discuss suffering and persecution at length.[48] However, 4 Maccabees is the first Jewish text devoted chiefly to martyrdom,[49] though Auctor does not employ technical terms such as μάρτυς or μαρτύριον.[50] Van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie define a *martyr* as "a certain person who in an extreme hostile situation prefers a violent death to compliance with a demand of (the usually pagan) authorities."[51] "Martyr texts," including 2 Maccabees 6–7 and 4 Maccabees, typically show five common, sequential narrative elements:[52]

> (1) Pagan authorities make a law in a situation of oppression (2 Macc 6:1–5; 4 Macc 4:23–26).
>
> (2) The authorities' decree makes it impossible for Jews to maintain faithfulness to Torah (2 Macc 6:6–9, 18; 7:1–2; 4 Macc 5:1–3; 8:5–11).
>
> (3) The martyr chooses to die rather than compromise (2 Macc 6:19–20; 7:1–2; 7:30; 4 Macc 5:25–38; 6:16–23; 9:1).
>
> (4) The martyr is then examined by torture (2 Macc 6:21–28; 7:7–8; 4 Macc 6:1–23; 9:7, 11–20).
>
> (5) Finally, the martyr is executed, which is sometimes recorded in detail (2 Macc. 6:29–31; 7:39–40; 4 Macc. 6:24–30; 9:21–25).

Table 1: Martyr Narratives in 2 and 4 Maccabees

Martyr Narrative	*2 Maccabees*	*4 Maccabees*
Eleazar	6:18–31 (14 verses)	5:4–7:23 (93 verses)
Brothers	7:1–40 (40 verses)	8:1–14:10 (162 verses)
Mother	7:41 (1 verse)	14:11–17:6 (73 verses)

[47] See further deSilva, "Perfection," 251–68; cf. Hans-Josef Klauck, "Brotherly Love in Plutarch and in 4 Maccabees," in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: FS Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. David L. Balch, et. al.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 144–56.
[48] For example, Dan 7:19–25; 12:1; Wis 2:12–3:13; Jdt 8:18–23; 1QS 8:3–4; 1QpHab 8:1–9:1; *T. Mos.* 9:3; *2 Bar.* 78:5–6; Josephus, *J.W.* 5:439–442. Cf. Dumke, "Suffering."
[49] van Henten, *Martyrs*, 58.
[50] Though note διαμαρτυρία in 16:16. Compare *Mart. Pol.* 1:1.
[51] J. W. van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2002), 3.
[52] Summarizing van Henten, *Martyrs*, 8–14, with verse references added. Eight features of martyrdom are noted by Ulrich Kellermann, "Das Danielbuch und die Märtyrertheologie der Auferstehung," in *Die Entstehung der jüdischen Martyrologie* (ed. J. W. van Henten, et. al.; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 51–75, citing 54–55.

Scholars broadly agree that 2 Maccabees 3–7 serves as the primary source for 4 Maccabees 5–18.[53] Second Maccabees 6:18–7:41 recounts nine martyrdoms as illustrations of the Antiochus' extreme tortures of faithful Jews. Auctor *abridges* the events in 2 Maccabees 3:1–6:17 and dramatically *amplifies* the martyrdoms (see Table 1).[54] Auctor highlights their noble deaths to demonstrate his thesis that devout reason is master of the passions (1:7–9; cf. 6:31; 7:16; 13:1; 15:23; 16:1; 18:2).[55] They prove devout reason's superiority by their *endurance of pains* in torture, as well as their *resistance of pleasures* promised by the king (6:33–35; cf. 1:20).

2. Exegesis of 4 Maccabees 6:1–30

2.1. Introduction

While the suffering motif is prominent throughout the 4 Maccabees, 6:1–30 and 17:7–24 have been chosen for detailed exegesis because they offer particular insight into the nature and purpose of the martyrs' suffering. We begin with 6:1–30 for three reasons. First, 6:1–30 recounts the initial martyrdom under Antiochus. The sagacious priest Eleazar serves as an exemplar and inspiration for the seven brothers and their mother (cf. 9:6). Second, this text graphically depicts Eleazar's suffering, which includes being stripped (6:2), repeatedly beaten and kicked (6:3, 6, 8), and finally tortured and burned to death (6:24–26). Third, Eleazar's prayer in 6:27–29 offers particular insight into his death's significance and accomplishment.

Some interpreters treat 6:1–35 as a unit,[56] though the narrator's comments in 6:31–35 more closely align with 7:1–23, Auctor's praise of Eleazar and confirmation of his thesis. In fact, 7:16b is a near verbatim repetition of 6:31:

> Ὁμολογουμένως οὖν δεσπότης τῶν παθῶν ἐστιν ὁ εὐσεβὴς λογισμός. (6:31)
> ὁμολογουμένως ἡγεμών ἐστιν τῶν παθῶν ὁ εὐσεβὴς λογισμός. (7:16b)[57]

These verses reiterate Auctor's thesis that devout reason is master over the passions (cf. 1:1) and frame his encomiastic reflection on Eleazar's achievement.[58] Thus,

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[53] Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 654–57; van Henten, *Martyrs*, 70–73; deSilva, *Guides*, 28–29.
[54] Cf. van Henten, *Martyrs*, 72, 296.
[55] On the unique collocation ὁ εὐσεβὴς λογισμός, see deSilva, *Commentary*, 69–70.
[56] Anderson, "4 Maccabees," 551–52; David J. Elliott, "4 Maccabees," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (ed. John Barton and John Muddiman; Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 790–92, citing 790; Jeremy F. Hultin, "4 Maccabees," in *The New Interpreter's Bible One Volume Commentary* (ed. Beverly R. Gaventa and David L. Petersen; Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 622–27, citing 625.
[57] Cf. 13:1; 16:1.
[58] A similar reflection is made in 13:1– 5 following the death of the seventh brother, as noted by Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 649.

following deSilva and Klauck, 6:1–30 is a distinct unit focused on the narration of "Eleazar's contest" in his "death by torture" (Der Martertod).[59] Within 6:1–30, the following three subunits emerge, which will inform our analysis below: (1) Eleazar nobly endures torture (6:1–11); (2) Eleazar refuses to compromise Torah observance (6:12–23); (3) Eleazar's last words and death (6:24–30).[60] Our discussion will focus on the *reason* for Eleazar's suffering, Auctor's *presentation* of Eleazar's suffering, and the priest's *response*.

2.2. Narrative Context of Eleazar's Contest (3:19–5:38)

In 1:7, Auctor explains his literary aim: "to demonstrate that reason is complete master over the passions" (ἐπιδεῖξαι ὅτι αὐτοκράτωρ ἐστὶν τῶν παθῶν ὁ λογισμός). The martyrs who die "for virtue" supremely demonstrate his thesis (1:8–9).[61] Fourth Maccabees 1:12 serves as a succinct outline: Auctor first sets forth his thesis (ὑπόθεσις) concerning the reason's supremacy (1:13–3:18), then he offers proof (ἀπόδειξις) of this thesis with the martyrs' example beginning at 3:19.[62]

The historical and theological context for Antiochus' Jewish persecution is established in 3:20–4:26. First, Auctor recalls "a time when our ancestors were enjoying profound peace because of their Law observance (διὰ τὴν εὐνομίαν) and were doing well" (3:20a). Trouble comes when "certain persons attempted a revolution against the public harmony and experienced various calamities" (3:21). In 4:1–14, the threat against the Jews is averted by remarkable divine intervention in response to prayer (4:9–11).

However, Jason's appointment as high priest and leader (4:16–18) brings disastrous consequences for the Jews.[63] Jason completely disregards Torah in his reforms of the people's lifestyle and governance (4:19), which results (ὥστε) in erecting a gymnasium and ending Temple service (4:20). Auctor credits Jason with abolishing the Temple service in 4:20, which prompts "divine justice" to send a Seleucid king against Israel (4:21). According to 2 Maccabees 6:1–6, the Temple's defilement takes place during Menelaus' high priesthood (cf. 4:25–27). However, Jason's reforms move the priests to "despise the sanctuary and neglect the sacrifices"

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[59] deSilva, *Commentary*, xxviii; Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 714.
[60] For a similar outline, see Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 652.
[61] 1:1-12 follows with the classical rules of rhetoric as a speech's exordium, as demonstrated by Hans-Josef Klauck, "Hellenistische Rhetorik im Diasporajudentum: das Exordium des vierten Makkabäerbuchs (4 Makk 1:1-12)," *NTS* 35 (1989): 451–465.
[62] Cf. ἀποδείκνυμι in 1:8; 16:2. For this rhetorical pattern, see Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.13.1.
[63] See ch. 4 §4.1–3.

(2 Macc 4:14), and thus anticipate the later Temple desecration. By situating the cessation of Temple service under *Jason's* high priesthood, Auctor sets the stage for the martyrs' deaths, which are presented as effective sacrifices benefiting Israel.[64]

Fourth Maccabees 5:1–4 provides the setting for the verbal sparring match (das Rededuell) in verses 5–38 between Antiochus and Eleazar.[65] Auctor presents Antiochus as the typical tyrant,[66] who decrees that all must eat defiled food or else face torture and death (5:3). Eleazar is introduced positively as "one leading person from the herd (εἷς πρῶτος ἐκ τῆς ἀγέλης) … with regard to ancestry, a priest (τὸ γένος ἱερεύς); with regard to experience, a lawyer (τὴν ἐπιστήμην νομικός); and with regard to age, advanced (καὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν προήκων)" (5:4).[67]

Antiochus then seeks to persuade Eleazar to save himself and eat pig's meat (5:5–13). Antiochus' speech draws upon standard rhetorical categories of persuasion, highlighting motives of choice (the noble, expedient, and pleasant) and motives of avoidance (the base, harmful, and painful).[68] Antiochus claims pork is "the most excellent thing" (καλλίστην) among Nature's pleasures, and he warns that failure to eat amounts to injustice and ingratitude for Nature's gifts and will result in punishment (5:8–10).[69]

Eleazar offers a pointed riposte in 5:14–38. He is uncompromising in his faithfulness to the Law (5:16), even in "minor" matters such as the prohibition of unclean food (5:19–21). His is not "silly philosophy" (5:11; cf. 5:22), since the Torah accords with nature (κατὰ φύσιν), and teaches true virtue, specifically self-control (σωφροσύνη), courage (ἀνδρεία), justice (δικαιοσύνη), and piety (εὐσέβεια, 5:23–25).[70]

2.3. Eleazar Nobly Endures Torture (6:1–11)

In 6:1–11, Eleazar's severe suffering is juxtaposed with his unswerving piety and courage. Eleazar challenges Antiochus to "prepare the wheels and fan the fire more

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[64] deSilva, *Commentary*, 122.
[65] Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 652.
[66] Bernhard Heininger, "Der böse Antiochus: eine Studie zur Erzähltechnik des 4 Makkabäerbuchs," *BZ* 33 (1989): 43–59, esp. 50–53. Cf. deSilva, *Commentary*, 125–27.
[67] πρῶτος here indicates first of rank or dignity (LSJ 1535 §4), not the first in order as in OTP, "the first of the herd to be brought." NETS adds "a Hebrew" to this description, following Alexandrinus.
[68] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 2.3.7.
[69] "Ingratitude toward a patron … is a basic form of injustice," according to deSilva, *Commentary*, 130. As Seneca writes, "To praise the deserving is justice" (*Ep. Mor*. 102.19).
[70] Cf. Redditt, "Nomos," 256. On εὐσέβεια, see Mary Rose D'Angelo, "εὐσέβεια: Roman Imperial Family Values and the Sexual Politics of 4 Maccabees and the Pastorals," *BibInt* 11 (2003): 139–165, esp. 141.

vigorously" (5:32), and so the guards drag him violently to the torture instruments (τὰ βασανιστήρια; 6:1). DeSilva remarks, "Crassly, he must put his body where his mouth is."[71]

Table 2: Rare Terms for Suffering and Torture

Verse	*Term*	*Definition*
6:1	τὰ βασανιστήρια	"instruments of torture"[72]
6:2	περιδύω	"to strip clothes off"[73]
6:3	περιαγκωνίζω	"to tie the hands behind the back"[74]
6:3	καταικίζω	"to torture hard"[75]
6:6	ἀποξαίνω	"to tear, to strip off";[76]
6:6	κατατιτρώσκω	"to wound"[77]
6:11	ἐπασθμαίνω	"to breathe hard"[78]
6:25	ὑπορρίπτω	"to hurl downwards"[79]
6:25	δυσώδεις χυλούς	"stinking liquids"[80]
6:26	λιποθυμέω	to "fall into a swoon, faint."[81]

In 2 Maccabees, Eleazar refuses to eat the swine's flesh (6:18–20), is counseled privately to save himself through deception (6:21–22), but defiantly rejects this course (6:23–28a) and then is beaten to death on the "torture rack" (τύμπανον).[82] Fourth Maccabees significantly expands and recasts this narrative, as Eleazar is

[71] deSilva, *Commentary*, 141. Cf. 7:9b.
[72] LSJ 308; LEH 104; NETS; ESV; cf. Muraoka 114; 8:1, 12, 19, 25; Plutarch, *Mor.* 315D.
[73] Muraoka 548; cf. NRSV, NETS; OTP.
[74] LSJ 1367; LEH 481 (neologism); cf. NETS.
[75] Muraoka 371; cf. 6:3; 7:2; 9:15; 11:1; 12:13; 13:27; Josephus, *J.W.* 2:652; Philo, *Ios.* 1:22; *Flacc.* 1:85; Plutarch, *Mor.* 1141D.
[76] LEH 72 (neologism); cf. LSJ 211; Muraoka 80, "*to cut off* pieces of [somebody's] skin."
[77] Muraoka 385; LSJ 917; cf. NETS, OTP: "lacerated."
[78] Muraoka 260; LEH 222 (neologism); NRSV, NETS, ESV: "gasping heavily for breath." Homer uses the cognate ἀσθμαίνω for Mydon's dying gasps (*Il.* 5.585; cf. LSJ 256).
[79] Muraoka 705; NRSV, NETS: "threw him down."
[80] NRSV, NETS, ESV; cf. OTP: "an evil-smelling concoction."
[81] LSJ 1053; LEH 374; cf. NETS, "lose consciousness."
[82] Cf. E. Owen, "αποτυμπανιζω, αποτυμπανισμος (τυμπανισμος), τυμπανιζω, τυμπανον (τυπανον)," *JTS* 30 (1929): 259–266, esp. 260.

savagely tortured before and after the private counsel to feign obedience (6:12–15). DeSilva suggests that Auctor's "vivid description" (ἔκφρασις) of the torture is due "to his desire to make the audience squirm as they imagine these scenes (see 14:9) so that they can also appreciate to a greater extent the violence of the pains that pious reason can master for the sake of God and God's benefits."[83]

Auctor graphically describes Eleazar's physical torture, going beyond not only 2 Maccabees but also all other descriptions of persecution in the LXX, Apocrypha, and OT Pseudepigrapha. Chapter 6 uses several neologisms and a number of terms elsewhere unattested in Hellenistic Jewish literature to capture the extreme brutality of Eleazar's suffering under Antiochus (see Table 2).

The torture commences in 6:2 when the guards "stripped the old man" (περιέδυσαν τὸν γεραιόν). The adjective γεραιός carries a "notion of dignity,"[84] yet the guards do not respect Eleazar's "age and gray hairs" (5:7) but publicly humiliate him. DeSilva remarks, "Stripping Eleazar of his clothing, the outer trappings that display his status but also hide the shame of his nakedness, is part of the status-degradation ritual inflicted upon him."[85] Next, they bind the naked priest's arms around him and "repeatedly torture him with whips" (μάστιξιν κατῆκιζον, 6:3),[86] the same punishment later inflicted upon the eldest brother (9:12). The adverb ἑκατέρωθεν may indicate either that Eleazar is *bound* on each side (modifying περιαγκωνίσαντες; cf. NRSV, NETS) or that he is *tortured* on each side (modifying κατῆκιζον).[87] In 9:11, ἑκατέρωθεν indicates *binding* on both sides. However, such usage would be redundant in 6:3 since the participle περιαγκωνίσαντες already implies that both hands are bound. Further, 6:6 refers to his sides receiving mortal wounds (τὰ πλευρὰ κατετιτρώσκετο). Thus, Auctor portrays Eleazar's repeated torture with whips from two sides. While being tortured,[88] Eleazar is summoned to obey the king's decrees (6:4).

In 6:5, Auctor pauses his narration of the priest's torture to extol him as a "high-minded and noble man." His actions truly accord with his name Eleazar (ὡς ἀληθῶς Ελεαζαρος), which means "God's help,"[89] as he experiences "God helping

[83] deSilva, *Commentary*, 141.
[84] LSJ 345; cf. Homer, *Il.* 1:35 (of Chryses); *Il.* 10:164 (of Odysseus); Margherita di Mattia, "Old Age," *New Pauly* 10:83–85.
[85] deSilva, *Commentary*, 142.
[86] The imperfect κατῆκιζον is translated as iterative.
[87] deSilva, *Commentary*, 143.
[88] Note the present genitive absolute κήρυκος ἐπιβοῶντος.
[89] Cf. HALOT 59.

him to bear the torments."[90] He is unmoved, "as though being tortured in a dream" (ὥσπερ ἐν ὀνείρῳ βασανιζόμενος).[91] DeSilva suggests that an experience of ecstasy allows Eleazar to focus heavenward amidst severe distress.[92] However, Auctor primarily stresses reason's primacy over the passions, both pleasure or pain (6:35).

The description of Eleazar's suffering resumes in 6:6 in more gruesome detail. Again he is called "the old man" (ὁ γέρων), which recalls Eleazar's earlier self-description (5:31) and again highlights the incongruity of this shameful treatment of a respected elder. As Eleazar gazes heavenward, the whips tear apart his flesh (ἀπεξαίνετο ταῖς μάστιξιν τὰς σάρκας). His body streams forth blood (κατερρεῖτο τῷ αἵματι),[93] and he suffers mortal wounds on his sides (τὰ πλευρὰ κατετιτρώσκετο). Auctor adds that Eleazar's "face was sweating and he was gasping heavily for breath" (6:11). When he falls to the ground physically unable to bear the pains, he is assaulted and repeatedly kicked[94] in the sides (λάξ … εἰς τοὺς κενεῶνας ἐναλλόμενος ἔτυπτεν) by one of the cruel (πικρός) guards (6:7). This appalling scene makes Eleazar's resolute endurance in 6:9–10 all the more remarkable: "But he continued to endure (ὑπέμενε) the pains and despise (περιεφρόνει) the punishment and outlast (διεκαρτέρει) the tortures. Like a noble athlete, the old man, while being beaten, was conquering (ἐνίκα) his torturers."[95]

2.4. Eleazar Refuses to Compromise Law Observance (6:12–23)

The king's attendants intervene, moved by pity (ἐλεῶντες) for Eleazar's old age, sympathy (ἐν συμπαθείᾳ) because of his companionship, and amazement (ἐν θαυμασμῷ) at his courage (6:12–13).[96] In 6:12–15, they appeal to the priest, "save yourself by pretending to taste pork" (ὑποκρινόμενος[97] τῶν ὑείων ἀπογεύεσθαι σώθητι, 6:15). This advice directly recalls the tyrant's advice in 5:6. Both the tyrant and his entourage chide Eleazar for his "unreasonable" position (5:11; 6:14), urging

[90] deSilva, *Commentary*, 143.
[91] A parallel to Philo's description of Anaxagoras and Zeno (*Prob.* 106) is suggested by Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 714.
[92] deSilva, *Commentary*, 143.
[93] On blood in 6:6, see Shmuel Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 55–56.
[94] ἔτυπτεν is rendered as an iterative imperfect.
[95] The imperfect tense-forms in verses 9–10 (obscured in NETS, NRSV, OTP) highlight the unfolding process of Eleazar's endurance. Cf. ESV.
[96] In 2 Maccabees 6:21, they intervene because of their long acquaintance with Eleazar. Cf. Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 715.
[97] ὑποκρινόμενος is interpreted as an adverbial participle of means.

him to avoid further pain (5:6; 6:14).[98] But even after undergoing brutal torture, Eleazar rejects this second attempt at persuasion in 6:16–23 more vigorously than the first (5:16–38).

The precise nature of the proposed ruse in 6:15 is ambiguous: "We will set before you the boiled food (τῶν ἡψημένων βρωμάτων παραθήσομεν), but as for you, save yourself by pretending to taste swine flesh." The deception is clearer in 2 Maccabees 6:21b: "They privately exhorted him to bring meat—lawful for him to use—prepared by him, and to pretend (ὑποκριθῆναι) that he was eating the flesh of the sacrificial meal commanded by the king." Some interpreters suggest that the boiled food was in fact ritually clean meat made to appear like pork.[99] βρῶμα is a general term without inherent positive or negative value, though 1:34 refers to παντοίων βρωμάτων forbidden by the Law. Further, in 6:15 the articles on τῶν βρωμάτων and τῶν ὑείων may function anaphorically, recalling the king's initial order to eat κρεῶν ὑείων καὶ εἰδωλοθύτων (5:2).[100] Thus the ruse most likely involved Eleazar pretending to eat actual pork, not eating clean meat dressed like pork.[101]

Eleazar emphatically rejects cowardice and conniving. Verse 16 highlights the intensity of Eleazar's response, as he cries out "as though tormented more bitterly (πικρότερον) by this counsel." The comparative πικρότερον signals that the proposed ruse is a crueler form of torture than that administered by the "cruel" (πικρῶν) guards (6:8). The priest does not appeal to the king's men. Rather, using the "honorific designation" Ἀβραὰμ παῖδες (6:17, 22)[102] and seven first person plural verbs,[103] Eleazar identifies with his audience and encourages them to follow his example.[104]

First, the priest eschews cowardice. In 6:17 the neologism μαλακοψυχέω, "be cowardly" or "act cowardly,"[105] is based on the adjective μαλακός ("soft"), which

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[98] The original text of Sinaiticus omits the initial pronoun τί in 6:14, turning the attendants' *question* ("why are you irrationally destroying yourself?" NETS) into an *indictment* ("you are irrationally destroying yourself!"). See deSilva, "Sinaiticus," esp. 56.
[99] Anderson, "4 Maccabees," 2:551 (note c). This interpretation is "zu subtil," according to Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 715.
[100] The anaphoric article may recall an earlier synonym according to Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 219.
[101] Rightly deSilva, *Commentary*, 144.
[102] Seim, "Abraham," 30.
[103] φρονήσαιμεν (6:17); μεταβαλοίμεθα (6:18); γενοίμεθα, γενώμεθα (6:19); ἐπιβιώσομεν (6:20), καταφρονηθῶμεν, προασπίσαιμεν (6:21).
[104] Cf. deSilva, "Contest," 42.
[105] Muraoka 440.

commonly designated those who were not considered "true men."[106] Eleazar explains in 6:20–21 that forsaking Torah's true course would shameful (αἰσχρός) and result in being ridiculed for "cowardice" (δειλία) and despised for "unmanliness" (ἄνανδρος).

Second, Eleazar stridently rejects the attendants' conniving plan (6:15). Participation in such a ruse would be to "act out an unsuitable part" (ἀπρεπὲς … δρᾶμα ὑποκρίνασθαι, 6:17).[107] Eleazar's fellow Israelites must reject this deceptive course because (γάρ) it would be irrational to change their course after keeping the Law faithfully unto old age (6:18).

Third, Eleazar cautions that eating defiled foods in such circumstances would set a deleterious example for Jewish youth. He says, "we might become ourselves a model (τύπος) of ungodliness for the young, that we may set a pattern (παράδειγμα) of eating defiled food" (6:19). He then boldly calls for his audience to "die nobly for your true religion" (εὐγενῶς ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐσεβείας τελευτᾶτε, 6:22) and then exemplifies such a "noble death" himself (εὐγενῶς … ἐναπέθανεν, 6:30).[108] In 9:6, the seven "young men" commend the example of Eleazar, "our aged instructor," who overcame the tyrant's coercive tortures.

2.5. Eleazar's Last Words and Death (6:24–30)

In response to Eleazar's defiant challenge, the tyrant's guards resume their malicious tortures (6:23–24). First, they lead him to the fire (6:24), which recalls Eleazar's provocation, "Fan the fire more vehemently" (5:32). In the parallel text in 2 Maccabees 6:28–30, Eleazar goes to the torture rack and is beaten to death. But in 4 Maccabees, fire features prominently in the torture of Eleazar and the brothers after him. Auctor reflects later on the brothers' deaths:

> Now when hearing about these young men's affliction (θλῖψιν), we shudder. However, they not only saw and not only heard the imminent word of threat, they also while suffering continued to persevere—and this in agonies by fire (ταῖς διὰ πυρὸς ὀδύναις)! What could be more painful than these? For the fire's sharp and intense power quickly destroyed the bodies. (14:9–10)

Thus, fire is portrayed as the most painful form of death, which serves "to further heighten the audience's appreciation of the martyrs' self-mastery in the face of such

[106] Stephen D. Moore and Janice C. Anderson, "Taking It Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees," *JBL* 117 (1998): 249–273, citing 263. Cf. deSilva, *Commentary*, 145.
[107] Klauck observes the semantic shift in Auctor's usage of ὑποκρίνομαι from Hellenistic play-acting imagery (6:17), to the Jewish-Christian technical usage for acting hypocritically (6:15). "Rhetorik," 465 n. 1.
[108] Cf. 2 Macc 6:31.

agonies."[109] As Auctor comments in 7:12, "Eleazar did not alter his reason, though being consumed by the fire." Later, he recalls how the seven brothers encouraged one another to "imitate the three young men in Assyria who despised the same civic rights accorded us—in a furnace!" (13:9 NETS; cf. 16:21).

The guards then "take up new strategies for inflicting suffering"[110] in 6:25: "Then burning him with maliciously contrived instruments, they were throwing him down and were pouring stinking liquids into his nostrils." Auctor again employs imperfect verbs to narrate Eleazar's torture,[111] which increases the scene's vividness by providing an internal perspective on these events as they unfold.[112] The "maliciously contrived instruments" (κακοτέχνων ὀργάνων) may be equivalent to τὰ βασανιστήρια introduced in 6:1.[113] The summary description τὰ βασανιστήρια draws attention to these instruments' purpose to inflict torture, while the phrase κακοτέχνων ὀργάνων in 6:25 highlights their evil origin.[114]

Auctor apparently coins the phrase "stinking liquids" (δυσώδεις χυλούς) to denote the detestable concoction poured into Eleazar's nostrils (6:25). Herodotus depicts the Egyptian kikki plant as "ill-smelling" (δυσώδης, *Hist.* 2.94), and Josephus references "the poison of snakes and juices (χυλούς) of other reptiles" concocted to poison the king (*J.W.* 1:601, own translation). Whether the "stinking liquids" derive from plants, reptiles, or another source, the intention to harm and torture is clear. Perhaps this form of torture was particularly devised to spite Eleazar. Since he steadfastly refused to taste the "excellent meat," one of "nature's good gifts" (5:6–9), they decide to force an unnatural, repulsive brew through his nostrils.

Auctor dramatically introduces Eleazar's last words: "And having been burned to the bones already and about to faint, he lifted up his eyes to God and spoke" (6:26). After being "thrown down" (ὑπερρίπτοσαν) by his torturers (6:25), Eleazar raises his gaze toward God (ἀνέτεινε τὰ ὄμματα πρὸς τὸν θεόν),[115] who will soon vindicate him for his dogged faithfulness to Torah (7:9).

Eleazar's prayer in 6:27–30 offers clear insight into the purpose of his suffering in light of God's plan (cf. 1:11; 17:21). He envisions his death as vicariously

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[109] deSilva, *Commentary*, 216.
[110] Ibid., 146.
[111] ἀνῆγον (6:24); ὑπερρίπτοσαν, κατέχεον (6:25).
[112] Cf. Constantine R. Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 43–45, 62.
[113] Cf. 8:12–13, discussed in §1.4.
[114] Cf. Prov 6:14, 18; 12:20 LXX; Philo *Sacr.* 32.
[115] "Die typische Haltung des Märtyrers," Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 714. Cf. Acts 7:55.

benefiting the nation in four ways: (1) restoring divine mercy toward Israel; (2) satisfying divine punishment; (3) effecting purification; and (4) offering a "life in exchange for theirs."

First, Eleazar prays for God to have mercy on Israel (ἵλεως γενοῦ τῷ ἔθνει σου, 6:28), a request echoed by the seventh brother at his death (12:17). The same phrase, ἵλεως γενοῦ, occurs in Exodus 32:12, Deuteronomy 21:8, and Amos 7:2 in contexts of threatened judgment against sinful Israel.[116] In Exodus 32:12 LXX, Moses appeals for mercy following the revelation that Israel has acted lawlessly (ἀνομέω) by worshipping the golden calf (32:7–8). In Deuteronomy 21:8, the request for atonement[117] is coupled with a heifer's vicarious death (v. 6), though Exodus 32:12 and Amos 7:2 do not appeal to a substitute sacrifice.[118]

Second, Eleazar goes further and bases his appeal for divine mercy on his *own* vicarious death. The causal participle ἀρκεσθείς in 4 Maccabees 6:28b grounds Eleazer's request, "Become merciful to your nation, being satisfied with our punishment on their behalf" (ἀρκεσθεὶς τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν δίκῃ).[119] Elsewhere in 4 Maccabees, δίκη is associated with divine judgment (cf. 4:21; 9:9, 32; 11:3; 12:12; 18:22). In 6:28, δίκη is modified by τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ("our," referring to the martyrs) and ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ("on their behalf," referring to Israel), which suggests that the martyrs experience divine judgment vicariously in Israel's stead.[120] Sam Williams claims, "[T]he *idea* behind the ἀρκεσθείς phrase at IV Mac. 6:28 can be most adequately understood by assuming influence from the Greek world."[121] While ἀρκέω is used at times for a person's death sufficing for his deeds,[122] it is not as Williams suggests a technical term in the Greek world for placating a temperamental deity.[123] Rather, ἀρκεσθείς must be interpreted contextually in light of Eleazar's request that God act propitiously toward Israel because of the martyrs' vicarious punishment.[124]

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[116] Similar expressions occur in Num 14:19; 1 Kgs 8:30, 34, 36, 39, 50; 2 Chr 6:21, 25, 27, 39; 7:14; 2 Macc 2:7, 22; 10:26.
[117] In Deut 21:8 LXX, the expressions ἵλεως γενοῦ and ἐξιλασθήσεται both translate the Hebrew root כפר. Cf. Williams, *Traditions*, 45.
[118] Thus van Henten's claim that ἵλεως γενέσθαι in the LXX refers to "an appeal to God to be merciful through an act of appeasement" is rather imprecise. *Martyrs*, 144.
[119] NRSV, OTP, NETS, and ESV all obscure this connection.
[120] A. O'Hagan, "The Martyr in the Fourth Book of Maccabees," *SBFLA* 24 (1974): 94–120, citing 117; Williams, *Traditions*, 45–46.
[121] Williams, *Death*, 184, emphasis original.
[122] Cf. Sophocles, *Ant*. 547. For further references to ἀρκέω, see LSJ 242; van Henten, *Martyrs*, 151 n. 105.
[123] Williams, *Death*, 194. Tellingly, none of his proposed parallels in Euripides include the term ἀρκέω.
[124] Cf. 17:21–22, discussed in §3.4; Williams, *Traditions*, 44.

Third, Eleazar offers his blood for the people's purification (καθάρσιον αὐτῶν ποίησον τὸ ἐμὸν αἷμα, 6:29). καθάρσιος is a cultic term referring primarily to "*cleansing* from guilt or defilement" or to a "purificatory offering."[125] In the OT, blood is commonly associated with ritual cleansing and atonement for sin.[126] In 6:29 Eleazar offers his blood for the *people's* cleansing, and Auctor elsewhere recounts the *fatherland's* purification (τὴν πατρίδα καθαρισθῆναι, 17:21; cf. 1:11).[127]

Fourth, Eleazar prays, "Take my life as a *life in exchange* for theirs" (ἀντίψυχον αὐτῶν, 6:29). Auctor employs ἀντίψυχον—rendered "ransom" (NRSV, OTP, BDAG), or better, "life-in-exchange" (NETS, ESV)[128]—to indicate the atoning nature of the martyrs' deaths (cf. 17:21).[129] It may be that ἀντίψυχον recalls the sacrificial exchange portrayed in Leviticus 17:11 LXX, "For the life of all flesh is its blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for your lives; for its blood will make atonement *in exchange for the life*" (ἀντὶ τῆς ψυχῆς; Heb. בְּנֶפֶשׁ).[130]

Auctor reverently reports Eleazar's death in 6:30, "And after saying these things, this holy man died nobly in his tortures, and he resisted until death's tortures through reason for the Law's sake" (τῷ λογισμῷ διὰ τὸν νόμον). Significantly, the final two phrases link Eleazar's noble death to Auctor's thesis concerning devout reason's mastery over the passions (6:31). First, τῷ λογισμῷ specifies the *means* by which Eleazar resisted (cf. 2:3, 17; 6:30; 7:14; 8:1; 13:3; 16:4). Second, διὰ τὸν νόμον highlights his *motivation* for endurance, reiterating Eleazar's own confession in 6:27 (ἀποθνήσκω διὰ τὸν νόμον).

2.6. Excursus: A Comparison of Eleazar and Socrates

Many interpreters have claimed that Auctor presents Eleazar as a "New Socrates."[131] Both Eleazar and Socrates are called γέρων ἀνήρ (4 Macc 7:16; Plato, *Crito* 53d).[132] They are tried and condemned on account of the unsuitability of their φιλοσοφία,

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[125] LSJ 851; cf. Muraoka 348, "capable of cleaning and purifying." This is the only occurrence of καθάρσιον in the LXX or OT Pseudepigrapha,
[126] Cf. Exod 30:10; Lev 8:15; 12:7; 14:14, 17, 25, 28; 16:19.
[127] See ch. 4 §5.1.
[128] Cf. deSilva, *Commentary*, 59.
[129] ἀντίψυχον is not found elsewhere in the LXX, Pseudepigrapha, Josephus, or Philo. Ignatius appears to be the first Christian to use the term (Ign. *Eph.* 21:1; Ign. *Smyrn.* 10:2; Ign. *Pol.* 2:3; 6:1), perhaps under the influence of 4 Maccabees. See §1.2; Williams, *Death*, 236–39.
[130] Cf. O'Hagan, "Martyr," 118.
[131] Marie-F. Baslez, "The Origin of the Martyrdom Images," in *The Books of the Maccabees: History, Theology, Ideology* (ed. Géza G. Xeravits and József Zsengellér; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 113–30, citing 119. Cf. van Henten, *Martyrs*, 272–78; Gregory E. Sterling, "*Mors Philosophi*: The Death of Jesus in Luke," *HTR* 94 (2001): 383–402, esp. 392–93.

particularly for theological reasons (4 Macc 5:7, 11, 22; Plato, *Apol.* 23d, 24b).[133] Both men are presented with opportunity to save themselves from death, but Socrates rejects his friends' plan to escape from prison (Plato, *Crit.* 45a–46a; Xenophon, *Apol.* 23), and Eleazar shuns the ruse proposed by the king's retinue (4 Macc 6:12–15). They do not cower but courageously embrace a noble death (4 Macc 6:17, 22, 30; *Phaed.* 58e; Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.8.2–3), a death that exemplifies virtue (4 Macc 9:6; *Phaed.* 68c–69c; 118a; Xenophon, *Apol.* 33–34; *Mem.* 4.8.11) and benefits others (4 Macc 6:28–29; Seneca, *Ep.* 24.4).

However, the differences between these two noble deaths are quite striking. Socrates "met with the easiest death" (Xenophon, *Apol.* 32) and thus cheerfully accepted the poison in the company of his friends. "Socrates avoided all of the indignity usually associated with death."[134] Yet Eleazar was brutally and shamefully tortured to death by the tyrant's henchmen. While Socrates drinks the hemlock calmly on his own terms (*Phaed*. 117b–c), Eleazar has stinking liquids poured into his nostrils (4 Macc 6:25). Eleazar endures because of his allegiance to Israel's Law and is repeatedly characterized by εὐσέβεια (4 Macc 5:18, 24, 31, 38; 6:2, 22; 7:1, 3–4, 16). In contrast, Socrates is charged with impiety (ἀσέβεια) and condemned for beliefs and practices, which allegedly conflicted with Athens' laws (Plato, *Apol.* 24b, 35d).[135]

2.7. Summary

We have shown that suffering is a prominent motif in 4 Maccabees 6:1–30, where Auctor recounts Eleazar's graphic torture and noble death. We conclude this section by summarizing the reason for Eleazar's suffering, Auctor's presentation of Eleazar's suffering, and Eleazar's response to suffering.

First, the reason for Eleazar's suffering may be understood from several perspectives. Most obviously, he is persecuted as a devout Jew who refuses to compromise his loyalty to the divine Law (6:4–5, 15–22). Additionally, Eleazar prays that God would be merciful to Israel and consider his suffering and death as an

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[132] Cf. 4 Macc 5:31; 6:2, 6, 10; 7:10, 13; 8:2, 5; 16:17; 17:9. In Socrates' defense he mentions that he is seventy years old (Plato, *Apol.* 17d; cf. *Crit.* 43b; Xenophon, *Apol.* 6).

[133] Socrates was charged with corrupting the youth and not believing in those gods recognized by the state (Plato, *Apol*. 24b–c; cf. Xenophon, *Apol.* 10; *Mem.* 1.1.1). Emily Wilson surmises that his radical theological beliefs were "most important for the prosecution." *The Death of Socrates* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 28.

[134] Ibid., 12.

[135] See ibid., 28–29. Cf. Debra Nails, "The Trial and Death of Socrates," in *A Companion to Socrates* (ed. Sara Ahbel-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekar; Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 5–20, esp. 5, 11.

ἀντίψυχον, satisfying divine justice and purifying the nation polluted by Jason's Hellenizing reforms (6:27–30; cf. 4:19–21).

Second, Auctor presents Eleazar's suffering in vivid detail to serve his rhetorical aims. He emphasizes Eleazar's public humiliation (6:2) and the cruelty of the guards' torture, which culminates in burning by fire, the most painful form of death (6:24–26; cf. 14:9–10). Subjected to such mistreatment and agony, Eleazar's uncompromising devotion to Torah is all the more compelling to the audience (6:16–23).

Finally, Eleazar responds to this heinous suffering by appealing to God for help and continuing to live by devout reason (6:5–6, 26–30). Auctor commends Eleazar's virtuous endurance of unparalleled pains and his unequivocal rejection of the tyrant's tainted pleasures as a prime example of his thesis that devout reason is sovereign over the passions (6:30–35; cf. 1:1; 7:16).

3. Exegesis of 4 Maccabees 17:7–24

3.1. Introduction

We will now consider the portrayal of suffering in 4 Maccabees 17:7–24. There is general agreement that 17:7–18:24 serve as the peroration of 4 Maccabees.[136] In 17:7–24 and 18:3–5, Auctor recapitulates the achievement of the martyrs. In 18:1–2, Auctor summons his audience to emulate the martyrs' piety.[137] In 18:6–19, Auctor highlights the mother's feminine virtue (18:7–9), as well as the scriptural foundation for the martyrs' righteous suffering (18:10–19). The book closes with a vivid summary of the martyrs' torture and their divine vindication (18:20–24).

Here we will examine the first part of the peroration, 17:7–24, for two reasons. First, this section is bookended by the references to Abraham's descendants in 17:6 and 18:1. This inclusio suggests that Eleazar, the mother, and her sons are extolled as ideal Abrahamites worthy of emulation (18:1–2).[138] Second, 17:7–24 highlights the broad significance of martyrs' suffering by employing literary devices such as "vivid

[136] deSilva, *Commentary*, 242–43; Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 750. According to Aristotle, a speech's peroration (ἐπίλογος) is intended "to dispose the hearer favorably towards oneself … to amplify and depreciate; to excite the emotions of the hearer; to recapitulate" (*Rhet.* 3.19.1 LCL).
[137] Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.19.3.
[138] Cf. Seim, "Abraham," 35–36. Cf. Robin D. Young, "The 'Woman with the Soul of Abraham': Traditions about the Mother of the Maccabean Martyrs," in *'Women Like This': New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. Amy-Jill Levine; Atlanta: Scholars, 1991), 67–82, esp. 79–80.

description" and the epitaph (17:7–10), through an extended athletic metaphor (17:11–16), and by summarizing their achievement on Israel's behalf (17:17–24).

The two passages chosen for focused exegesis in this chapter are thus quite complementary. While 6:1–30 recounts the grisly details of Eleazar's torture, 17:7–24 sets the martyrdoms in historical (17:9–10, 17–24) and cosmic perspective (17:11–16). The former text depicts Eleazar's unflinching resolve to die nobly for piety (6:22, 30), *in hope* that God may again show Israel mercy and that his death may achieve atonement and purification. The latter text reports that the martyrs' deaths achieved precisely this result in Israel (17:20–22).

The present analysis of 17:7–24 will proceed according to the following three-stage outline:[139]

(1) Thesis: The martyrs vindicate Israel by piously enduring torture (17:7–10)

(2) The divine contest of the martyrs (17:11–16)

(3) Reactions and results of the divine contest (17:17–24).

3.2. The Martyrs' Achievement (17:7–10)

17:1–6 recounts the mother's suicide (v. 1)[140] and praises her "nobility of faith" (vv. 2–6). Then in 17:7, Auctor invites his audience to imagine afresh the deaths of the mother and her sons: "If it were proper[141] for us to represent the history of your piety on something, would not onlookers be trembling, seeing the mother of seven sons endure various tortures unto death, on account of piety?" Verse 8 continues this thought, as ἐπί τινος ζωγραφῆσαι ("to represent *on something*") is specified: ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἐπιταφίου ἀναγράψαι ("to inscribe *on the epitaph itself*").[142] This ἐπιτάφιον, a memorial inscription on a tombstone, stele, or stone sealing the grave,[143] serves as a literary device to stir the audience's memory concerning the martyrs' remarkable achievement.[144] DeSilva writes, "The endurance of these nine for the sake of God should embolden the audience to continue their loyalty to their Jewish heritage and also shame those who think too high the more moderate costs they must bear."[145]

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[139] For a similar outline, see Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 653, 750–52.
[140] By presenting her death as a suicide, Auctor "enhances the audience's perception of her honor" and "completes her depiction as a noble, tragic heroine," according to deSilva, *Commentary*, 239.
[141] The second-class condition introduced Εἰ δὲ ἐξόν makes clear that Auctor presents an imaginative scenario purely for rhetorical purposes.
[142] The reading ἐπιταφίου (epitaph) is preferable to τάφου (grave), according to van Henten, "Epitaph," 48–49; Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 751.
[143] Cf. van Henten, *Martyrs*, 66; deSilva, *Commentary*, 243.
[144] Cf. Lysias, *Or.* 2.3.
[145] deSilva, *Commentary*, 243.

The words of this hypothetical epitaph (17:9–10) aptly summarize the "narrative demonstration" of the book's philosophical thesis (cf. 1:8; 3:19) and introduce the main subject of 17:11–24. Verse 9 introduces the unlikely heroes and the despicable tyrant, "Here an old priest and an old woman and seven boys have been buried on account of the violence of the tyrant who wanted to destroy the Hebrew way of life." Antiochus has disgracefully tyrannized Israel's "weaker elements,"[146] seeking to destroy the Hebrew way of life (τὴν Ἑβραίων πολιτείαν).[147]

However, these Jews are not ultimately *victims* but *victors*, "who vindicated the race, looking to God and enduring the tortures unto death" (17:10). The participles ἀφορῶντες and ὑπομείναντες indicate the *means* by which they vindicated the nation. First, εἰς θεὸν ἀφορῶντες stresses their pious, unwavering trust in God,[148] recalling Eleazar's conduct amidst torture (cf. 6:6, 26). Second, μέχρι θανάτου τὰς βασάνους ὑπομείναντες highlights their response to extreme suffering unto death. The nine martyrs' faithful endurance is a leitmotif of 4 Maccabees 5–18, and chapter 17 brings this theme to a fitting climax, as the phrase "enduring tortures unto death" (μέχρι θανάτου τὰς βασάνους ὑπομείναντες) in 17:10 creates an inclusio with 17:7 (ποικίλας βασάνους μέχρι θανάτου ὑπομείνασαν). "Various tortures" aptly sums up the earlier narrative accounts of the martyrs' gruesome deaths under Antiochus (17:7; cf. 9:6; 16:1; 17:10). As will be shown in the next section, the metaphor of the ἀγὼν θεῖος in 17:11–16 clarifies the nature and impact of the martyrs' endurance.

3.3. The Martyrs' Divine Contest (17:11–16)

Auctor expounds his thesis concerning the martyrs' achievement beginning at 17:11, "For (γάρ) that which has happened by them was truly a divine contest." γάρ (untranslated in NRSV, NETS, ESV, OTP) indicates that what follows explains or illustrates 17:9–10,[149] as does the author's use of verbal tense-forms. The aorist (ἐξεδίκησαν) summarizes the martyrs' accomplishment in 17:10. Then the imperfect tense-forms in 17:11–15 (ἦν, ἠθλοθέτει, προηγωνίζετο, ἐνήθλει, ἠγωνίζοντο, ἀντηγωνίζετο, ἐθεώρει, ἐνίκα) provide supplemental, background detail by presenting

[146] Ibid., 244.
[147] Cf. BDAG 845 §3; H. Strathmann, "πόλις κτλ," *TDNT* 6:516–535, esp. 525; van Henten, *Martyrs*, 197–99.
[148] Cf. Heb 12:2; BDAG 158 §1.
[149] Cf. BDAG 189–90 §2.

an internal perspective on the events.[150] Auctor then returns to the aorist in verse 16 to summarize the onlookers' response (ἐθαύμασαν, ἐξεπλάγησαν).

In 17:11–16, Auctor develops his most extended and climactic athletic metaphor.[151] Earlier Eleazar was described as "a noble athlete" (γενναῖος ἀθλητής, 6:10). Now he and the other martyrs are presented as "athletes of divine legislation" (τοὺς τῆς θείας νομοθεσίας ἀθλητάς) who participate in a "divine contest" (ἀγὼν θεῖος, 17:11).

Verse 12 clarifies why this conflict should be considered a ἀγὼν θεῖος: "For (γάρ) then virtue, testing through endurance, was offering a victory prize, [in her] immortality in eternal life."[152] Auctor presents virtue as umpire of the ἀγών, and Eleazar, the mother and her sons are the contestants with the tyrant in opposition and the world looking on (17:12–14). In this reimagined scene, the tyrant is no longer seated in the position of judgment, promising freedom and favor to those who embrace his way of life (cf. 5:1; 8:2, 5, 7–8). Rather, virtue adjudicates the divine contest, offering a far greater "victory prize" (τὸ νῖκος), "[in her] immortality in eternal life" (17:12). On one reading of the earlier narrative, Antiochus appears to conquer weak Jews by coercion and raw power. Yet in this "divine contest," the roles are reversed. The tyrannized Jews who fear God, not the tyrant who rules by fear, ironically sport the victor's crown (17:15; cf. 8:12).

According to 17:12, virtue awards the victory prize "by testing through endurance" (δι' ὑπομονῆς δοκιμάζουσα). The term ὑπομένω occurs fifteen times in 4 Maccabees, compared to only once in 2 Maccabees.[153] Auctor consistently uses ὑπομένω with the meaning "to maintain a belief or course of action in the face of opposition."[154] The martyrs endure "every pain" (πάντα πόνον; 5:23; 7:22; 16:19; cf. 6:9), "tortures" (βασάνους, 9:6; 16:1; 17:7, 10), "torture racks" (στρέβλας, 9:22), and "bodily sufferings" (ἀλγηδόνας, 16:17). Likewise, Auctor frequently highlights the

[150] On the narrative function of the imperfect tense-form, cf. Constantine R. Campbell, *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative: Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 91–96; Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 19.
[151] Klauck writes, "Die Verse 11–16 bilden den Höhepunkt der agonistischen Metaphorik, die sich durch die ganze Schrift hindurchzieht." *Makkabäerbuch*, 752. Cf. van Henten, *Martyrs*, 119 n. 152; V. C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 38–69.
[152] On the syntax and original text of 17:12, see deSilva, *Commentary*, 58, 245.
[153] 2 Macc 6:20; 4 Macc 5:23; 6:9; 7:22; 9:6, 22; 13:12; 15:31–16:1; 16:8, 17, 19, 21; 17:7, 10.
[154] BDAG 1039 §2; cf. LSJ 1889–90 §2–3. ὑπομένω is used without reference to torture in 15:31 and 16:8.

heroes' ὑπομονή, "the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty,"[155] as well as their καρτερία, "patient endurance, perseverance."[156] By enduring extreme pain and suffering out of supreme devotion to the Law, these martyr-athletes endurance achieved personal victory over their passions (7:22), paradoxically conquered the tyrant (1:11; 9:30), and vindicated their nation (17:10).

3.4. Reactions and Results of the Divine Contest (17:17–24)

In 17:7 and 17:16, Auctor poses a series of rhetorical questions: "[W]ould not those onlookers have shuddered (ἔφριττον)? … Who did not marvel (ἐθαύμασαν) at the athletes of the divine legislation? Who was not astounded (ἐξεπλάγησαν)?" These questions "contribute to heightening the audience's *pathos*" and encourage them to admire and emulate the martyrs.[157] These questions effectively *conclude* the divine contest (17:11–16) and *introduce* the reactions and results of this contest (17:17–24). The repetition of ἐθαύμασαν makes explicit the link between verses 16 and 17.

According to 17:17, even the tyrant and his council marveled at their endurance (ὑπομονήν). Indeed, 4 Maccabees repeatedly mentions the torturers' admiration of the martyrs' endurance and courage (1:11; 6:11; 9:26; 17:23–24; 18:3). This ably serves Auctor's rhetorical aim of motivating Diaspora Jews faced with the constant pressure of assimilation to maintain their practice of Torah.[158]

Auctor then focuses attention on the martyrs' vindication and the salvation they achieved in Israel (17:18–22). He focuses first on their personal vindication. In 9:8, the brothers declared to Antiochus, "We will be with God,"[159] and 17:18 signals the *present fulfillment* of these hopes: "they now stand before the divine throne and live throughout the blessed eternity." The martyrs in 4 Maccabees (as in 2 Maccabees) anticipate that they will be exalted while their persecutors will be judged. While 2 Maccabees stresses their *future* restoration at the resurrection (7:9, 10, 11, 14, 23), 4 Maccabees stresses the martyrs' *present* vindication as they overcome through devout reason.[160]

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[155] BDAG 1039 §1. Cf. 4 Macc 1:11; 7:9; 9:8, 30; 15:30; 17:4, 12, 17, 23.
[156] LSJ 880; cf. 4 Macc 6:13; 8:26; 11:12; 15:28, 30; 16:14.
[157] deSilva, *Commentary*, 246.
[158] Cf. §1.3; deSilva, *Guides*, 25, 42–44; Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 664.
[159] The expression ἐσόμεθα παρὰ θεῷ (9:8) is unique in the LXX and indicates the seven's distinguished privilege, according to Christian Grappe, "De l'intérêt de 4 Maccabées 17.18–22 (et 16.20–1) pour la christologie du NT," *NTS* 46 (2000): 342–357, citing 349–50.
[160] See ch. 4 §6.1.

In 17:19, Auctor supports this claim with a fitting quotation of Deuteronomy 33:3a LXX, "For Moses says, 'All the sanctified (οἱ ἡγιασμένοι) are under your hands.'" According to Deuteronomy 33:3–4 LXX, God "spared" his people,[161] recalling Israel's exodus deliverance from Egypt and consecration as Yahweh's holy people (cf. Exod 19:6; Lev 11:45; Deut 7:6), who received "a law, which Moses commanded us, an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob." This fits precisely the depiction of the Jewish heroes as "athletes of the divine legislation" (4 Macc 17:16), who die for their commitment to the Law (6:27, 30; 9:15). They are then "sanctified" at their death and "honored," when they are delivered from the tyrant's profanity and consecrated in God's presence (17:19–20).[162] Thus deSilva writes,

> 4 Maccabees effectively rescues the Deuteronomistic world view from being disconfirmed by the shameful death of the righteous. According to the promises of Deuteronomy 28–29, the righteous would have blessing and a long life, while the impious would be cut off and cursed. The martyrs, however, died early and disgracefully because they remained righteous. According to 4 Maccabees, the promises have not failed: the martyrs enjoy this "long life" and "length of days" (Deut 30:20; 4 Mac 18:19) beyond the reach of death, having received immortality from God.[163]

In 17:20, Auctor concludes (οὖν) that these heroes have been honored in both heavenly and earthly ways. The phrase οὐ μόνον ταύτῃ τῇ τιμῇ recalls their present honor of standing in God's presence (17:18). But they have also been honored in their earthly victory over the tyrant, expressed in three infinitival phrases in 17:20b–21. The syntax is difficult, though the dative article (τῷ) governs the infinitival phrases, which apparently indicate the further *means* by which the martyrs are honored.[164]

In 17:21–22, Auctor signals that Eleazar's dying prayer (6:27–29) has been answered.[165] The martyrs' vicarious deaths *have* atoned for Israel's sin and *have* purified the land. These heroes have been decisively vindicated, exchanging the shame of the tyrant's torture for the honor of God's presence. Additionally, this text clarifies the *political* and *covenantal* dimensions of the martyrs' achievement, as the tyrant is punished and the divine Providence saves Israel.[166]

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[161] Deut 33:3 MT begins "indeed he loves the peoples" (אף חבב עמים). See John W. Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995), 540.
[162] deSilva, *Commentary*, 248; cf. Grappe, "4 Maccabées 17.18–22," 349.
[163] deSilva, *Commentary*, 245.
[164] NRSV similarly translates "by the fact that … our enemies did not rule over our nation," while NETS treats the infinitives as epexegetical ("in that").
[165] Parallels between 6:28–29 and 17:20–22 are summarized by O'Hagan, "Martyr," 116.
[166] "[B]y re-establishing the Jewish way of life, the martyrs fulfil a political-patriotic function in 4 Maccabees," argues van Henten, *Martyrs*, 269.

The "earthly" achievement of the martyrs by which they are honored (τετίμηνται) is first expressed negatively, "by the enemies not conquering (τῷ … μὴ ἐπικρατῆσαι) our nation on account of them" (17:20).[167] In Auctor's view, these heroes thwarted Antiochus' attempts to force Israel to assimilate to the Greek way of life. Townshend claims, "The spirit roused by the martyrs led to the rising headed by Judas Maccabaeus and his brethren, and so was the effectual cause of the Temple being purified and its service re-established."[168] This explanation is plausible for 2 Maccabees, in which Judas Maccabaeus' revolt and military victories (8:1–36) follow the martyrdoms (6:18–7:42). However, Townshend's reconstruction is inadequate for 4 Maccabees, which says nothing about Judas and his military resistance. Rather, in 4 Maccabees, "The personal conviction and deeds of the Maccabean martyrs alone bring about the defeat of the tyrant."[169] The epitaph of 17:8–10 calls Israel to remember precisely this achievement, thus bringing the martyrs enduring honor.

Second, the martyrs are honored through "the tyrant being punished (τὸν τύραννον τιμωρηθῆναι, 17:21). This is explained in 18:5: "The tyrant Antiochus has been punished (τετιμώρηται) on earth and, after dying, continues to be chastised (κολάζεται)." Antiochus' punishment brings honor to the martyrs in several ways (cf. (τετίμηνται, 17:20). First, the reference to Antiochus' state, using perfect and present tense-forms,[170] explicitly recalls and contrasts the martyrs' state described in 17:18 (παρεστήκασιν … βιοῦσιν). Second, the tyrant's chastisement vindicates the brothers' claims that Antiochus will be eternally tortured in a manner commensurate with his deeds against them.[171] Third, Antiochus' punishment is an expression of divine vengeance. As ἡ θεία δίκη turned his anger against Israel for her covenantal violations (4:21; cf. Lev 26:25), so now in response to the martyrs' vicarious death God moves to "avenge his children's blood" (Deut 32:43 LXX) and punish "the enemy of heavenly justice" (4 Macc 9:15; cf. 9:32; 11:3; 12:12; 18:22).

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[167] Elsewhere in 4 Maccabees, ἐπικρατέω refers to reason "overpowering" the passions (cf. 1:3, 14, 19, 32–33; 2:4, 11, 14; 3:1; 6:34; 8:1; 13:4).
[168] "4 Maccabees," *APOT* 653–85, citing 667.
[169] van Henten, *Martyrs*, 268. Cf. deSilva, *Commentary*, 82–83.
[170] Present and perfect tense-forms semantically encode imperfective aspect, and often pragmatically imply a stative *Aktionsart*, according to Campbell, *Aspect: Indicative*, 35–37, 187–89, 210–11. According to Fanning, the Greek perfect combines "the Aktionsart-feature of stative situation, the tense-feature of anteriority, and the aspect of summary viewpoint." *Aspect*, 119–20. Alternatively, Stanley Porter argues that the perfect encodes "stative aspect," which conceives the action as "*a given (often complex) state of affairs*." *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 21–22, emphasis original.
[171] Cf. 8:11; 9:9, 24, 32; 10:11; 11:3; 12:12, 18; 18:5.

The purification of the fatherland (τὴν πατρίδα καθαρισθῆναι) is the third means by which the martyrs are honored (17:21). Here Auctor clearly recalls his initial summary of their achievement in 1:11: "They became causes of the downfall of tyranny against the nation, having conquered the tyrant by endurance, *with the result that the fatherland was purified through them*" (ὥστε καθαρισθῆναι δι᾽ αὐτῶν τὴν πατρίδα).

Antiochus' defeat or departure from Israel is linked with the purification of the fatherland (τὴν πατρίδα καθαρισθῆναι) in 1:11 and 17:21. Seeley contends, "The fact that purification of the land occurs as a result of the tyrant's defeat strongly suggests that the impurity at issue was his [Antiochus'] presence as a foreign invader."[172] However, according to 4:21, Antiochus' presence in Israel was the *consequence* of the Jason's sinful reforms (4:19–20).[173] Said another way, Antiochus' persecutions in Israel, in which he compelled each person to eat ritually unclean food at the threat of death, *do not cause but result from Israel's moral uncleanness from sin.* According to Auctor, the πατρίς was cleansed "because the martyrs became a life-in-exchange for the nation's sin" (ὥσπερ ἀντίψυχον γεγονότας τῆς τοῦ ἔθνους ἁμαρτίας).[174] As Bailey observes, the nation's sin "appears to be corporate responsibility for the construction of a gymnasium in Jerusalem and for the abolition of temple service."[175] That is why Eleazar prayed, "Make my blood to be their purification" (6:29).[176] Through these heroes' actions, the nation's peace and Law observance is restored (18:4; cf. 3:20). Their resolute Law obedience thwarted Antiochus' program of forced Hellenization and ultimately drove him from Jerusalem (18:5). Again, the covenantal context of 4 Maccabees 17:21 is crucial to observe. Moses' Song declares that the Lord will "take vengeance and will repay those enemies with justice," and will also cleanse (ἐκκαθαριεῖ)[177] Israel's land (Deut 32:43 LXX).

According to 17:22, the martyrs play an instrumental role in Israel's salvation by "divine Providence" (ἡ θεία πρόνοια). The term πρόνοια is common in Hellenistic philosophy, particularly among the Stoics.[178] But for Auctor, πρόνοια denotes the one true God who stands in covenant relationship with Israel. This is clearly seen in 9:24,

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[172] Seeley, *Death*, 98.
[173] van Henten, *Martyrs*, 153. Cf. §2.2; ch. 4 §4.3.
[174] Reading γεγονότας as a causal participle (cf. NETS). For ἀντίψυχον, cf. 6:29; §2.5; ch. 4 §5.1.
[175] Bailey, "Jesus (Thesis)," 140.
[176] See §2.5; ch. 4 §5.1.
[177] The MT reads וְכִפֶּר אַדְמָתוֹ עַמּוֹ, "and he will atone for his land, his people."
[178] See ch. 2 §2.1; ch. 4 §2.2.

where the first brother exhorts his fellows to fight for piety, "through which the just Providence of our forefathers (ἡ δικαία καὶ πάτριος ἡμῶν πρόνοια), becoming merciful to the nation, may punish the accursed tyrant."[179] The martyrs' earlier prayers that God be merciful (ἵλεως, 6:28; 12:17)[180] anticipate 17:22, where the ἱλαστήριον of the martyrs' deaths is the means (διά)[181] by which the Divine Providence saved Israel.

At this point, a textual problem in 17:22 must be addressed. Codex Sinaiticus reads τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου *τοῦ* θανάτου, while Alexandrinus and Venetus read τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου θανάτου.[182] As Bailey asserts, "This article makes all the difference to the grammar."[183] This becomes clear when the expressions are converted to the nominative:

> Codex א: τό ἱλαστήριον τοῦ θανάτου αὐτῶν ("the propitiation of their death")
> Codex A: ὁ ἱλαστήριος θάνατος αὐτῶν ("their propitiatory death").[184]

Klauck prefers the Alexandrinus text on the strength of manuscript evidence,[185] and deSilva calls it "less problematic."[186] However, Bailey argues convincingly that Sinaiticus preserves the original reading, since Sinaiticus is the earliest manuscript of 4 Maccabees, it preserves the *lectio difficilior,* is preferable stylistically, and was most likely changed by Christian copyists who misunderstood the metaphor.[187] Thus, in the following discussion the longer variant is assumed (cf. Rahlfs), reading ἱλαστήριον as a substantive, as in all other LXX usages.[188]

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[179] This text highlights "the Deuteronomistic theodicy that undergirds the author's theology of atonement," according to deSilva, *Commentary*, 180.
[180] See §2.5.
[181] Sinaiticus reads τῆς in place of διά, "an obvious error" according to deSilva, *Commentary*, 250.
[182] Rahlfs (which follows Sinaiticus) does not include this important variant in the apparatus.
[183] Bailey, "Jesus (Thesis)," 94.
[184] Adapted from ibid.
[185] Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 753. Cf. Swete; van Henten, *Martyrs*, 152 n. 111; Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from Second Temple Judaism to the Fifth Century* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 115. For discussion of the manuscript evidence, see Bailey, "Jesus (Thesis)," 262–63.
[186] deSilva, *Commentary*, 250.
[187] Bailey, "Jesus (Thesis)," 114–23. Cf. Campbell, *Rhetoric*, 219; Williams, *Traditions*, 59 n. 104.
[188] Due to the limitations of this project, the usage of ἱλαστήριον in the NT (Rom 3:25; Heb 9:5) will not be discussed. Among many studies, see Bailey, "Jesus (Thesis)," 77–92, 145–223; van Henten, "Romans 3.25," 101-28; Williams, *Traditions*; Marinus de Jonge, "Jesus' Death for Others and the Death of the Maccabean Martyrs," in *Text and Testimony: FS A.F.J. Klijn* (ed. Tjitze Baarda; Kampen: Kok, 1988), 142–51; Stephen Finlan, *The Background and Content of Paul's Cultic Atonement Metaphors* (Atlanta: SBL, 2004), 123–62; Jarvis J. Williams, "Martyr Theology in Hellenistic Judaism and Paul's Conception of Jesus' Death in Romans 3:21–26," in *Christian Origins and Hellenistic Judaism: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 493–521.

The crucial interpretative question in 17:22 concerns the meaning of ἱλαστήριον, applied to the death of the martyrs. ἱλαστήριον is variously rendered "atoning sacrifice" (NRSV), "expiation" (RSV), "propitiatory" (NETS), "propitiation" (OTP, APOT), and "propitiatory offering" (ESV). However, Bailey has demonstrated that ἱλαστήριον is used in only two ways up to the middle of the second century CE, either to designate (1) the "mercy seat" (כַּפֹּרֶת), the golden lid covering the ark of the covenant, or (2) votive offerings to the pagan deities.[189] The term always refers to the mercy seat in its other twenty-seven LXX occurrences.[190] According to Leviticus 16:15–16, during the Day of Atonement ritual the priest was to sprinkle the goat's blood on and in front of the mercy seat (τὸ ἱλαστήριον; הַכַּפֹּרֶת), thereby making atonement (ἐξιλάσεται; וְכִפֶּר) for the holy place. Philo describes the ἱλαστήριον as "an emblem, if looked at physically, of God's merciful power" (τῆς ὕλεω τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεως, *Mos.* 2.95–96). The second "Hellenistic" use is seen in Josephus' reference to "a propitiatory monument of white stone" (ἱλαστήριον μνῆμα λευκῆς πέτρας, *Ant.* 16:182, own translation). Further, Bailey cites an ancient pagan definition of ἱλαστήρια from the scholion on Apollonius of Rhodes, "gifts capable of appeasing" (sc. the gods).[191]

Does 4 Maccabees 17:22 liken the martyrs' deaths to the Jewish mercy seat or the Greco-Roman propitiatory offering? In favor of the former interpretation, it should be noted first that Auctor would have been familiar with the LXX use of ἱλαστήριον denoting the mercy seat, given his scriptural quotations in 2:5; 18:14–19. Second, as discussed in §2.2, Auctor locates the cessation of temple service under Jason's high priesthood (4:20) and then shortly thereafter introduces the first martyr (5:4). The vicarious deaths of the nine Jewish heroes seem to function as the narrative response to the inoperative cult.[192] Third, ἱλαστήριον is associated with sacrificial imagery such as blood (τοῦ αἵματος), purification (καθαρισθῆναι), ransom (ἀντίψυχον), and sin (ἁμαρτίας) in 17:21–22.[193] Thus Finlan asserts, "I do not know

[189] Bailey, "Jesus (Thesis)," 5–6.
[190] Exod 25:17–22; 31:7; 35:12; 38:5, 7–8; Lev 16:2, 13–15; Num 7:89; Amos 9:1; Ezek 43:14, 17, 20. NETS consistently renders τὸ ἱλαστήριον "the propitiatory."
[191] Bailey, "Jesus (Thesis)," 43–46.
[192] deSilva, *Commentary*, 122.
[193] For example, Exod 30:10 refers to "the blood of the purification of sins, the atonement" (*τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν* τοῦ ἐξιλασμοῦ). Cf. Lev 17:11, "For its blood will make atonement in place of the life" (τὸ γὰρ *αἷμα* αὐτοῦ *ἀντὶ* τῆς *ψυχῆς* ἐξιλάσεται).

of anything but sacrifice that is said to accomplish purification and reconciliation in connection with blood."[194]

In contrast, Bailey contends that ἱλαστήριον in 4 Maccabees 17:22 denotes "the propitiatory offering of their death" or "their death as a propitiatory votive offering."[195] He claims that the rendering "the mercy seat of their death" makes little sense, while the alternative interpretation "is completely in keeping with the use of Greek heroic and athletic imagery elsewhere in 4 Maccabees 17:8–24."[196] Irad Malkin explains,

> Dedications [=votives] consisted in renunciation and long-term symbolic investment in the divine, in expectation of good things to come. Unlike sacrifice, where one 'destroys,' by depositing a perceptible object in a sanctuary one both loses it and makes it eternal.[197]

Thus, the martyrs' deaths are a memorial to their cause (cf. 17:8) and they now live consecrated in God's presence (cf. 17:18–19).[198]

In either the mercy seat or votive offering interpretation, Auctor applies the *concrete* term ἱλαστήριον to the martyrs *metaphorically*. It appears that 4 Maccabees 17:22 and Romans 3:25 are the only known instances where ἱλαστήριον refers to a person.[199] Even Bailey concedes, "[T]he author of 4 Maccabees is apparently using this term as no one else either before or since."[200] While Bailey rightly rejects the NRSV paraphrase "atoning sacrifice,"[201] he does not demonstrate why a metaphorical use of ἱλαστήριον as "mercy seat" or "place of atonement" is less plausible in 17:22 than depicting the martyrs as an inanimate votive offering.[202] Since our Hellenistic-Jewish author would likely have been cognizant of these two uses of ἱλαστήριον, the context must determine which meaning is intended at 17:22. The martyrs' unending life in God's presence (17:18–19) could fit well with the Hellenistic background. However, the book's covenantal context[203] and especially the cluster of sacrificial

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[194] Finlan, *Background*, 202. Cf. Eduard Lohse, *Märtyrer und Gottesknecht; Untersuchungen zur urchristlichen Verkündigung vom Sühnetod Jesu Christi* (2nd ed; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 70–72; Stökl Ben Ezra, *Impact*, 115–16.
[195] Bailey, "Jesus (Thesis)," 142.
[196] Daniel P. Bailey, "Jesus as the Mercy Seat: The Semantics and Theology of Paul's Use of *Hilasterion* in Romans 3:25," *TynB* 51 (2000): 155–158, citing 158. Cf. F. Büchsel, "ἱλαστήριον," *TDNT* 3:318–23, esp. 322.
[197] I. Malkin, "Votive Offerings," *OCD*, 1612–13, citing 1613.
[198] Bailey, "Jesus (Thesis)," 136–38, 142.
[199] Noted by Williams, *Traditions*, 60.
[200] Bailey, "Jesus (Thesis)," 108.
[201] Ibid., 107–8.
[202] Finlan, *Background*, 202–3.
[203] Cf. ch. 4 §2.1, 4.2.

terms and concepts in 17:21–22 (καθαρισθῆναι, ἀντίψυχον τῆς ἁμαρτίας, διὰ τοῦ αἵματος; cf. 1:11; 6:27–29) make the *Jewish* sacrificial background more plausible.[204] Thus, 4 Maccabees 17:22 portrays the martyrs' deaths as the metaphorical place of propitiation, whereby God's anger is appeased and Israel is saved (cf. 4:21; 6:28).

3.5. Summary

We have seen that Auctor offers his most extensive analysis of the martyrs' achievement in 17:7–24. Nine Jewish heroes vindicate Israel by enduring extreme tortures unto death (17:9–10). Auctor stresses that the martyrs' remarkable "victory" results in three important reversals. First, following their shame and torture before the earthly tyrant, they are immediately honored and consecrated before God's heavenly throne (17:12, 18–20). Second, Antiochus' despotic rule in Israel's land is ended, and the tyrant who punished those faithful to God now receives severe punishment from God (17:20–21; cf. 18:5). Third, Israel experiences mercy, purification, and salvation, reversing the earlier divine punishment, pollution of the land, and persecution by the tyrant (17:21–22) resulting from Jason's Hellenizing reforms (4:19–21).

4. Conclusion

Fourth Maccabees 6 and 17 contribute to our understanding of the place of suffering in Auctor's worldview in at least three ways, each of which will be considered further in Chapter 4.

First, suffering is both the *consequence* for Israel's sin and the *means* by which Israel is rescued (4:21; 17:21; 6:28–29). The covenant relationship between God and his people and the Law's instruction are fundamental to Auctor's worldview. Eleazar and the other martyrs endure tortures and die nobly διὰ τὸν νόμον (6:27, 30). Auctor portrays their deaths as vicarious sacrifices, which move God to act propitiously and save his people (6:28–29; 17:21–22).

Second, Auctor lauds the nine heroes as supreme *examples* of his thesis that devout reason is supreme master over the passions, both pleasure and pain (6:31–35; cf. 1:1, 7–11). Eleazar's shameful and painful tortures are vividly portrayed, as is the priest's rational, resolute rejection of Antiochus' overtures that he should save himself through expedient compromise (6:14–23; cf. 5:6–38).

[204] Cf. Finlan, *Background*, 202–4; Stökl Ben Ezra, *Impact*, 115–16; Williams, *Traditions*, 60–63; idem, "Theology," 511.

Third, Auctor summons his audience to *remember* the martyrs' achievement and *imitate* their uncompromising Law devotion. These unlikely heroes—"a feeble, flabby old man, a gaggle of boys, and an elderly widow"[205]—are transformed into conquering athletes who save Israel, present a poignant picture of piety, and enjoy divine vindication (17:7–10, 16, 18). For Auctor's audience, Diaspora Jews confronted regularly with various pressures to accommodate and assimilate to the dominant culture's way of life, the nine martyrs demonstrate that Israel's Torah is the true source of wisdom and should be obeyed and celebrated even in times of pressure and persecution from the nations (cf. 6:17–22; 18:1–2).

[205] Moore and Anderson, "Masculinity," 273.

Chapter 4: Suffering in the Worldview of 4 Maccabees

1. Introduction

Chapter 3 illustrated the importance of suffering in Auctor's writings by examining 4 Maccabees 6:1–30 and 17:7–24. Chapter 4 will first discuss key symbols in Auctor's worldview (§1.1) and then will summarize and synthesize his understanding of suffering using the five worldview questions outlined in the Introduction (§4.3.2).

The first person plural pronouns in these questions highlight the particular outlook espoused by Auctor, which he calls his readers to adopt as well. Auctor addresses first century Diaspora Jews living amidst a pagan society, seeking to maintain their distinctive identity and way of life governed by Torah. DeSilva writes,

> The Maccabean martyrs provide the model for honorable and praiseworthy response to the demands and tensions of the encounter with the Greco-Roman world. 4 Maccabees thus challenges those wavering in their commitment to Judaism as a result of the encounter with Greco-Roman society.[1]

Auctor promotes this alternative worldview through philosophical argument about devout reason, through retelling Jewish stories, and by championing Torah, the central symbol of Diaspora Jews' identity and praxis. This chapter will demonstrate that suffering plays a crucial role in Auctor's worldview, as suffering is woven through the stories he tells and tied to the symbols that define Jewish theology and community life.

1.1. Suffering and Symbols

According to Wright, "Temple, Land, Torah and racial identity were the key symbols which anchored the first-century Jewish worldview in everyday life."[2] In 4 Maccabees, the central symbol is undoubtedly Torah, "the covenant charter of Israel as the people of the covenant god."[3] The Law promotes God's ideal design for humanity, leads to true wisdom and virtue, and enables faithful Jews to master the

[1] deSilva, *Despising*, 142.
[2] Wright, *NTPG*, 224.
[3] Ibid., 227.

passions through devout reason.[4] In 4 Maccabees, Israel suffers many disasters—especially oppressive occupation by a foreign despot—because her apostate leaders disregard Torah and introduce Hellenizing reforms (3:21; 4:19–21). In this context, those who continue to practice circumcision and food laws prescribed by Torah are persecuted severely (4:24–5:3). At the same time, the martyrs' remarkable obedience to Torah ends Israel's divine punishment and leads to her deliverance from foreign oppressors (6:27–29; 17:20–22; 18:3–5).

Auctor refers six times to ἡ πατρίς, "the fatherland" promised to Israel's founding father Abraham (1:11; 4:1, 5, 20; 17:21; 18:4; cf. Gen 13:14–17; 15:18–21), with the Temple located at the center (4:20). In 4 Maccabees, the sin of Israel's leaders results in the fatherland being polluted and the Temple being rendered inoperative (4:19–21).[5] Israel enjoyed "profound peace" in her land, with a foreign king even contributing money to the Temple service (3:20), before Simon's betrayal and especially Jason's Hellenization program brought covenant curses upon Israel and great suffering (3:21–4:1; 4:19–21). In this situation, the suffering and death of Eleazar and the other martyrs symbolically *replaces* Temple sacrifice, purifies the fatherland, and vindicates the Hebrew people (6:27–29; 17:9–10, 21–22).[6]

2. Who Is God and How Is God Involved in our Suffering?

Auctor affirms orthodox Jewish belief in one living and all-wise God, who created the world and ought to be rightly acknowledged and revered by all creatures as the supreme Benefactor (1:12; 5:24–25; 11:5; 16:18). This sovereign Creator has bound himself in covenant to Israel, such that he is known as "the God of our ancestors" (12:17; cf. 9:24). God has given his people the Torah, which accords with their nature and serves as a true, reasonable, and authoritative guide for all of life (2:23; 5:16–25). Auctor portrays Israel's God as "Justice" (ἡ δίκη), who brings retributive punishment on Israel for her leaders' lawlessness (4:13, 21) and against Israel's persecutors (9:9; 11:3; 12:12; 18:22). God is also depicted as "Providence" (πρόνοια), who responds to his people in their distress, vindicates Israel, and punishes her opponents (9:24; 12:19; 17:22; cf. 10:18).

[4] Cf. 4 Macc 2:21–23; 5:16–24; deSilva, *Guides*, 134.
[5] See §4.2–3.
[6] See §5.1; ch. 3 §3.4.

2.1. The Creator and Covenant God of Israel

In Auctor's worldview, the one God is the creator of all things and the true sovereign over his created world, and he has given humanity his Law to live by (2:21–23; 5:25; 11:5). This Law accords with nature (κατὰ φύσιν) and is an expression of the Creator "having sympathy for us" (ἡμῖν συμπαθεῖ, 5:25), like a mother's συμπάθεια for her children.[7] The Creator is also the divine Patron, to whom humanity is obligated to maintain loyalty and ascribe honor.[8]

Though 4 Maccabees does not explicitly refer to God's covenant (διαθήκη) with Israel,[9] Torah nevertheless retains its covenantal character in Auctor's worldview.[10] The Creator of the world has enacted binding legislation (νομοθετῶν ὁ τοῦ κόσμου κτίστης) in Israel (5:25),[11] which the mother calls "the ancestral Law" (τοῦ πατρῴου νόμου; 16:16). These Jewish ancestors have made sacred oaths (τοὺς ἱεροὺς … ὅρκους) concerning keeping the Torah that must not be disregarded (5:29). Therefore Jason's lawlessness (παρανομία) brings divine retribution against Israel (4:19, 21). Conversely, Auctor directly links Law observance (εὐνομία) to the nation's peace and prosperity (3:20; 18:10; cf. Lev 26:3, 6). In his dying breaths, the seventh brother calls on "the God of our fathers (τὸν πατρῷον θεόν) to be merciful to our nation" (12:17). This prayer for mercy is grounded in God's faithfulness to his covenant promises to the patriarchs (cf. Exod 32:12–13 LXX).

2.2. Divine Providence (πρόνοια)

Fourth Maccabees refers three times to personified πρόνοια. In 9:24, the first brother while being tortured exhorts the others to imitate his example and continue to fight for true religion (εὐσεβείας), "by which the just and ancestral Providence (ἡ δικαία καὶ πάτριος ἡμῶν πρόνοια**)**, becoming merciful to the nation, may punish the accursed tyrant."[12] In 13:19, Auctor explains that martyrs' "affections of brotherhood" are apportioned by "the divine and all-wise Providence (ἡ θεία καὶ πάνσοφος πρόνοια)."[13] Finally, in 17:22 Auctor summarizes the divine response to the

[7] Cf. 12:23; 14:13–14, 18, 20; 15:4, 7, 11. On this motif, see Dupont-Sommer, *Le Quatrième livre des Machabées*, 40; deSilva, *Guides*, 130; idem, "Ideal," 58–61.
[8] See §2.4.
[9] Contrast with 2 Macc 1:2; 7:36; 8:15; Wis 18:22.
[10] deSilva, *Guides*, 134; idem, "Ideal," 64. This covenantal dimension of νόμος is overlooked by Redditt, "Nomos."
[11] Cf. νομοθετέω in Exod 24:12; Deut 17:10 LXX.
[12] For the phrase θεία πρόνοια, cf. Philo, *Mut.* 1:25; *Mos*. 1:162; *Flacc.* 1:125; Josephus, *Ant*. 4:157.
[13] On the poignant expression τὰ τῆς ἀδελφότητος φίλτρα, see Klauck, "Love," 150–55.

martyrdoms: "through the blood of these pious ones and the propitiation of their death, the divine Providence (ἡ θεία πρόνοια) saved the previously mistreated Israel."

While the concept of divine Providence permeates Scripture, the term πρόνοια denoting *divine* Providence is rare in the LXX and unattested in the NT.[14] πρόνοια is common in Hellenistic philosophy, particularly among Stoic authors, for whom Providence "is the heart of their theology."[15] Auctor shows familiarity with the common Hellenistic usage of πρόνοια; however, πρόνοια in 4 Maccabees designates *Israel's God* and highlights his power, guidance, and long-term plan for Israel.[16]

Notably, Auctor closely links πρόνοια to mercy (ἵλεως, 9:24) and propitiation (τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου, 17:22).[17] The expectation and achievement of the nine faithful Jews is properly understood against the backdrop of covenant. According to deSilva, Auctor's "presentation of the historical background to the martyrdoms (3.20–4.26) provides a 'narrative demonstration' (3.19) of the validity of the Deuteronomistic covenant."[18] In Deuteronomy 30:1–7, the Lord promises to restore and regather Israel from exile when they return to their God and obey his commands. At this time, God will show mercy (ἐλεήσει) to his people (30:3) and will bring curses upon Israel's enemies (30:7).

2.3. Personified Justice (ἡ δίκη)

Fourth Maccabees refers to God nine times as ἡ δίκη, "Justice."[19] Jason's lawless actions in 4:19–20 arouse the anger of ἡ θεία δίκη, who causes Antiochus to make war on Israel (4:21).[20] The martyrs reject the tyrant's suggestion that "Justice" will be merciful to them if they capitulate (8:14; cf. 8:22). Rather, they stress in their speeches that "Justice" will repay the tyrant with eternal punishment for his crimes (9:9, 15; 11:3; 12:12; cf. 18:22). Auctor thus employs the common Greek idiom δίκη

[14] 3 Macc 4:21; 5:30; 4 Macc 9:24; 13:19; 17:22; Wis 14:3; 17:2. πρόνοια is used occasionally for *human* foresight (2 Macc 4:6; Dan 6:19 OG; Acts 24:2; Rom 13:14). Cf. R. L. Gordon, "PRONOIA," *DDD* 664–67, esp. 666. For Philo's frequent and distinctive usage, see Peter Frick, *Divine Providence in Philo of Alexandria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999). For discussion of coins and inscriptional evidence, see K. Schlapbach, "Providentia," *New Pauly* 12:82.
[15] J. Behm, "προνοέω, πρόνοια," *TDNT* 4:1009–17, citing 1012. For a study of Providence in Hellenistic historiography, see Squires, *Plan*, ch. 2. On the Stoic concept of πρόνοια, see Algra, "Theology," 153–78; Sellars, *Stoicism*, 99–104.
[16] Cf. Gordon, "PRONOIA," 666; cf. *Let. Aris.* 201; Wis. 14:3.
[17] cf. §5.1; ch. 3 §2.5, 3.4.
[18] deSilva, *Guides*, 134.
[19] In 6:28 and 9:32, δίκη denotes punishment (BDAG 250 §1).
[20] See §4.2.

for personified Justice.[21] However, in Auctor's worldview, θεία δίκη is best interpreted as God's retributive justice on his enemies as outlined in Deuteronomy 32:41, 43 LXX (ἀνταποδώσω *δίκην* τοῖς ἐχθροῖς … ἐκδικήσει καὶ ἀνταποδώσει *δίκην* τοῖς ἐχθροῖς).

2.4. Divine Benefactor

Auctor presents God as Benefactor *par excellence*, who has graciously given humanity life and Law.[22] Seneca explains that the practice of giving and receiving benefits "constitutes the chief bond of human society" (*Ben.* 1.4.2). In 4 Maccabees, "As the giver of life, God claims rightly the gratitude, loyalty and service of all the living."[23] In 16:18–19, the heroic mother exhorts her seven sons, "Remember that you have shared in the world and enjoyed life because of God (διὰ τὸν θεόν), and therefore you are obliged (ὀφείλετε) to endure every pain for God's sake" (διὰ τὸν θεόν). The brothers boldly declare, "From our whole hearts let us consecrate ourselves to God who gave us our souls (τῷ θεῷ ἀφιερώσωμεν ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας τῷ δόντι τὰς ψυχάς), and let us use our bodies as a guard post for the Law" (13:13).[24] The martyrs adamantly declare their willing allegiance to God and the divine Law and reject Antiochus' overtures to receive the benefits of his alternative patronage (8:6–8). Seneca explains that in return for a benefit (*gratiam*), one must be willing to endure exile, to shed blood, endure poverty, or be shamefully slandered (*Ep.* 81.27). Thus, Auctor's nine heroes endure extreme suffering out of loyalty to their divine Benefactor, and enjoy the benefits of everlasting life (15:3; 16:22). Conversely, Antiochus has scorned God's good gifts by torturing and killed God's pious servants, and God will justly punish the ungrateful persecutor with everlasting torture (12:11–12).

3. How Does Suffering Relate to our Nature, Task, and Purpose in the World?

"We" for Auctor denotes *Israel*, the Creator God's chosen people, who are heirs to the promises God made to Abraham (6:17, 22; 18:1). The divine Law fundamentally shapes Auctor's conception of Israel's nature, task, and purpose. Israel fulfills God's

[21] cf. P. W. van der Horst, "DIKE," *DDD*, 250–52; BDAG 250 §2; Williams, *Death*, 187. This usage is illustrated at Acts 28:4 (quoting οἱ βάρβαροι), discussed in ch. 6 §3.3.
[22] On divine patronage, see deSilva, *Guides*, 119–20, 127–31. cf. Seneca, *Ben.* 4.9.1; Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 8.14.4. 4 Macc 12:11 and *Arist.* 224 portray even Gentile kings as God's clients.
[23] Ibid., 129.
[24] ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας alludes to Deut 6:5 LXX, as observed by deSilva, *Commentary*, 207.

creative design through Torah obedience and also thereby achieves true wisdom and virtue, the ideals of Greek philosophy (2:23; 5:22–24). Israel must express and maintain her distinct identity vis-à-vis the dominant pagan culture through careful practice of Torah, particularly circumcision and kosher food laws (5:25–27; 6:17–19). Though these practices may bring social pressure or overt persecution from pagans (4:25–26), Israel must maintain loyalty to her heavenly Patron no matter the cost (16:17–23). In this life, afflictions are inevitable for the righteous (18:15). By their commendable endurance (ὑπομονή) and their demonstration of true religion (εὐσέβεια), the nine martyrs show themselves to be moral athletes and true descendants of Abraham (9:21–24; 17:7, 11–16).

3.1. God's People, Abraham's Children

Auctor views Israel as God's chosen people, heirs of the Abrahamic *covenant*, and he calls his kinsmen to demonstrate Abrahamic *conduct* as exemplified by the martyrs. While 2 Maccabees mentions Abraham only once, 4 Maccabees refers to Abraham thirteen times.[25] As discussed in §2.1, the designation "God of our fathers" in 12:17 implicitly recalls God's foundational covenant promises to Abraham's family. Though Auctor applies the honorific titles "children of Abraham" or "offspring of Abraham's seed" to the patriarch's *ethnic* descendants (6:17, 22; 18:1), he lauds the *ethical* example of "the nation's father" (τὸν ἐθνοπάτορα), who hastened to sacrifice his son for God's sake (16:20).[26] The nine heroes who suffer and die for the Law demonstrate "the same soul of Abraham" (τὴν Ἀβραὰμ ὁμόψυχον; 14:20) and are Abraham's true descendants (9:21; 15:28; 17:6; 18:20, 23). Abraham and the other patriarchs now "live to God" and welcome the martyrs and others who suffer for God (7:19; 13:17).[27] Suffering is not abnormal or unexpected for the faithful; rather, Auctor affirms the Psalmist's perspective, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous" (18:15; cf. Ps 33:20 LXX [34:19 ET]).[28]

3.2. Allegiance to God and Torah

Auctor uses νόμος to refer consistently to the Torah, God's revelation.[29] Redditt explains,

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[25] 2 Macc 1:2; 4 Macc 6:17, 22; 7:19; 9:21; 13:17; 14:20; 15:28; 16:20, 25; 17:6; 18:1, 20, 23. Cf. Seim, "Abraham," 28.
[26] Cf. Ibid., 35.
[27] See §6.1.
[28] Smith, "Suffering," 39. Cf. Acts 14:22, discussed in ch. 6 §3.1.2.
[29] Redditt, "Nomos," 251.

> *Nomos* then functions in five ways in 4 Maccabees: to teach the way of Jewish culture, to enable rational living, to encourage the faithful to persevere even in the face of persecution, to condemn/not condemn persons for their behavior, and to issue commands and prohibitions for right living.[30]

According to Auctor, the Law profitably instructs people in both divine and human matters (1:17).

Human beings fulfill God's creative design by living (πολιτευόμενος)[31] in accordance with the divine Law and "will rule a kingdom that is self-controlled, just, good, and courageous" (2:23). Further, the Law promotes εὐσέβεια (5:24), a piognant term that elsewhere refers to the virtue of familial piety (*pietas*);[32] in 4 Maccabees, εὐσέβεια denotes true religion, proper worship of God and adherance to his Law.[33] Auctor describes Eleazar as "a most skillful pilot" who successfully steers "the ship of piety" on the sea of the passions, through the tyrants' storms and unto the haven of immortality (7:1–3).[34]

The martyrs maintain a firm commitment to act on account of (διά) or for (εἰς) the Law (6:27, 30; 11:12). In contrast to Jason's lawlessness (4:19), Eleazar repudiates Antiochus' decree and upholds Torah, which is established by God and accords with nature (5:25). Further, Eleazar stresses that the Law trains him and the others with the courage needed to endure all pain willingly (5:23). Auctor portrays the Jewish sage Eleazar as a "philosopher of the divine life," who guards the sacred Law even unto death and thereby strengthens others' obedience (7:7–9). Eleazar, the seven brothers and their mother all choose to undergo torture and death rather than succumb to the tyrant's demands (9:1). Their example prepares for Auctor's exhortation to his fellow Israelites to "obey this Law" (18:1; cf. 7:9). As deSilva writes, "The author of *4 Maccabees* does not seek assent to a philosophical proposition, but rather seeks commitment to the way of life exemplified by the martyrs … the way of life which, the author claims, fulfils the highest ideals of Hellenistic ethical philosophy."[35]

3.3. Endurance in the Contest of Suffering

Auctor presents the martyrs as noble athletes (6:10; 17:15), who piously endure torture for the sake of true religion (εὐσέβεια) and thereby achieve victory over their

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[30] Ibid., 254.
[31] On πολιτεύομαι, see Muraoka 573.
[32] D'Angelo, "εὐσέβεια."
[33] Cf. W. Foerster, "εὐσεβής, κτλ," *TDNT* 7:175–86, esp. 179.
[34] See Dumke, "Suffering," 122–23."You learn to know a pilot in a storm," according to Seneca, *Prov.* 4.5. Cf. *Marc.* 5.5; ch. 1 §2.3.2.
[35] deSilva, *Guides*, 44.

passions and their persecutors (1:11; 5:23; 7:22; 9:30).[36] Athletic imagery is commonly employed by Greco-Roman philosophers, as well as by early Jewish and Christian authors.[37] Pfitzner explains,

> The terms ὑπομενή and πόνος belong already to the stock vocabulary of the picture of the Agon in the diatribe where the moral athlete is required to remain unmovable in enduring the toils of pain or the blows of fortune…. Victory in the Agon means endurance (ὑπομενή) of pain until death.[38]

In 4 Maccabees, these terms are used to describe the martyrs' contest of suffering and death.[39] Auctor recasts their oppressive persecution as a divine contest (ἀγὼν θεῖος), "a noble fight for true religion" (εὐγενῆ στρατείαν … περὶ τῆς εὐσεβείας, 9:24; 17:11).[40] By virtuously enduring torture unto death, these moral athletes paradoxically "conquer" (νικάω) their torturers (6:10; 7:4; 8:2; 9:6, 30; 16:14).

Shaw argues that 4 Maccabees is "novel" for praising ὑπομονή "both as a behavioral practice and as a high moral ideal."[41] He claims, "The elevation to prominence of the passive value of merely being able to endure would have struck most persons, certainly all those spectators, as contradictory and, indeed, rather immoral."[42] However, Shaw's analysis is questionable. First, his opening illustration (the second-century Greek romance Leukippê) and the secondary literature he cites in favor of his claim (especially note 26) are specifically focused on "endurance" of unwanted *sexual* conquest, which is completely absent from 4 Maccabees. Second, other well-known Jewish texts employ ὑπομονή in favorable sense. According to Sirach 16:13, "The endurance of the godly (ὑπομονὴ εὐσεβοῦς) will never fail." Likewise Philo calls καρτερία and ὑπομονή "the most powerful virtues" (δυνατωτάταις ἀρεταῖς, *Cher*. 78, own translation).[43] Third, ὑπομονή hardly qualifies as a *passive* virtue in Auctor's value system. He casts the persecuting, impious tyrant as weak and unmanly, in contrast to the seemingly weak Jews who demonstrate bold courage and devout reason. Further, Shaw's hypothetical "spectators" who would

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[36] Cf. ch. 3 §2.3, 3.2–3.
[37] For example, Seneca, *Prov*. 2.3; 4.2, 5; *Ep.* 78.16; ch. 1 §3.3.2; Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.24.1–2; Plutarch, *Gen. Soc.* 24.413; Philo, *Alleg. Interp.* 2.103; 3.48; *T. Job* 4:10; 27:3; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7–8. Cf. van Henten, *Martyrs*, 119 n. 152; Pfitzner, *Agon*, 38–69; O'Hagan, "Martyr," 96–97.
[38] Pfitzner, *Agon*, 63–64.
[39] Cf. van Henten, *Martyrs*, 238.
[40] Cf. O'Hagan, "Martyr," 96–97; Boudewijn Dehandschutter, "Martyrium und Agon: über die Wurzeln der Vorstellung vom ΑΓΩΝ im vierten Makkabäerbuch," in *Die Entstehung der jüdischen Martyrologie* (ed. J. W. van Henten, et. al.; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 215–19, esp. 219.
[41] Brent D. Shaw, "Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs," *JECS* 4 (1996): 269–312, citing 278.
[42] Ibid., 279.
[43] Cf. Pss 38:8; 61:6; 70:5 LXX [39:7; 62:5; 71:5 ET]; Jer 14:8; 17:13 LXX.

have allegedly considered praise of ὑπομονή "immoral" do not square with Auctor's presentation of "the world and the life of humanity" beholding the martyrs' divine contest and marveling at their achievement (17:14, 16; 18:3). Auctor even includes Antiochus and his henchmen among those marveling, as the tyrant calls his own soldiers to emulate the martyrs' endurance, which makes them "brave and manly" (17:17, 23–24).[44]

In their noble contest of suffering for the Law, the martyrs "are called for the sake of giving testimony for the nation" (κληθέντες ὑπὲρ τῆς διαμαρτυρίας τοῦ ἔθνους, 16:16). The forensic term διαμαρτυρία signifies that the martyrs' endurance in piety even unto death testifies to "the nation's character and, in particular, to its covenant relationship with God."[45] These heroes consider their tortures as "noble sufferings" (γενναιοτέρων πόνων), which provide "an opportunity to show our endurance for the Law" (11:12). Indeed, the martyrs willingly and gladly submit to torture for God's sake and lighten their pains with the joys of virtue (9:29, 31; 10:20).[46]

4. How Does Suffering Clarify the World's Basic Problem?

In Auctor's worldview, the world's basic problem is *sin*, the failure of human beings to live according to their created ideal as expressed by the Torah (1:29–35; 2:21–23; 5:19–21). Because of the Law's covenantal character, sin has corporate implications as well. Israel's corrupt leaders transgressed the Torah, destroyed Israel's peace, and brought disaster on the nation (3:20–21). Israel's Law was discarded and her unique identity among the nations was threatened by Jason's Hellenizing reforms (4:15–20). These transgressions incur divine retribution and result in Israel's oppression by a pagan tyrant (4:21–26; cf. Deut 28:49–50). *Culpae poena par est*: Israel's leaders welcomed foreign customs and government and marginalized Temple and Torah; therefore, God justly sent an oppressive foreign ruler against Israel. Israel's suffering under Antiochus thus highlighted the problem of Israel's sin and need of divine intervention.

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[44] "Shaw has overstated the novelty of this view of endurance," according to Moore and Anderson, "Masculinity," 257 n. 22."

[45] deSilva, *Commentary*, 234. Cf. O'Hagan, "Martyr," 94–96; van Henten, *Martyrs*, 236–37. Pfitzner suggests that διαμαρτυρία in 16:16 approaches later usage of μαρτυρία for "the bearing of witness in blood." *Agon*, 61. Cf. *Mart. Pol.* 1:1.

[46] Cf. Acts 5:41, discussed in ch. 6 §3.4.1.

4.1. Sin as Failure to Maintain God-Ordained Order

In 2:21–23, Auctor affirms God's special creation of humanity (cf. Gen 2:7) and expounds its anthropological and ethical implications:[47]

> For when God fashioned human beings, he planted in them their passions and habits, but at the same time he enthroned the mind among the senses as a sacred governor over them all, and to this mind he gave the law. The one who adopts a way of life in accordance with it will rule a kingdom that is temperate, just, good and courageous. (NETS)

These passions (τὰ πάθη) and habits (τὰ ἤθη) are not inherently evil but God-given; thus they do not need to be rooted out but governed by the mind and devout reason (cf. 1:29–30; 3:2–5).[48] Dumke claims that 4 Maccabees presents "a wicked element in the world" as the real cause of suffering for the righteous, but this goes beyond the evidence.[49] Auctor does not speculate concerning an evil spirit, heart, or impulse within human beings, but affirms the ability of those who "have regard for piety from a whole heart" to master the passions of the flesh (7:18).[50]

Israel's corrupt leaders, Simon and Jason, and the persecutor, Antiochus, provide negative illustrations of those who sin because they are mastered by passions, not reason (cf. 7:20). Simon and Jason envy Onias' rightful position as high priest and court the favor of pagan rulers to secure power for themselves (4:1–4, 16–18). Further, Jason's Hellenizing reforms promote indiscriminate eating of unclean foods in Israel (4:19; cf. 1:27, 33–35; 5:25–26). Antiochus is arrogant (ὑπερήφανος, 4:15; 9:30) and motivated by money (4:17), and he tortures the martyrs cruelly out of anger (8:2, 9; 9:10). These men cannot rule their own passions and are thus unfit to rule others.[51]

4.2. The Sin of Israel's Leaders

In 4 Maccabees, Law-adherent Jews suffer persecution under a tyrant king, whose presence is an expression of divine judgment against Israel because of her leaders' sin.

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[47] "4 Maccabees articulates an anthropology very similar to Philo's," according to deSilva, "Ideal," 60. Cf. *Leg.* 1.43–55; 3.118.

[48] Cf. David E. Aune, "Mastery of the Passions: Philo, 4 Maccabees and Earliest Christianity," in *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World* (ed. Wendy E. Helleman; Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), 125–58, esp. 135–36. Here 4 Maccabees disagrees with Seneca and other Stoics, who promote the doctrine of *inpatientia* or ἀπάθεια (*Ep.* 9.2; 116.1). For discussion, see Sellars, *Stoicism*, 114–20.

[49] Dumke, "Suffering," 134.

[50] Cf. deSilva, "Ideal," 59–60. Contrast 1QS 3:25–26; 4 Ezra 3:20–22; 4:30; *m. Ber.* 9:5.

[51] Cf. Plato, *Gorg*. 491D–E; Moore and Anderson, "Masculinity," 253–55; deSilva, "Ideal," 67 and n. 22.

Auctor begins his "narrative demonstration of devout reason" (3:19) by succinctly summarizing Israel's original peace and subsequent problems:

> For when our fathers were having profound peace and were doing well because of their Law observance (βαθεῖαν εἰρήνην διὰ τὴν εὐνομίαν οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν εἶχον καὶ ἔπραττον καλῶς), so that (ὥστε) even Seleucus Nicanor, the king of Asia, set aside money for them for the Temple service (τὴν ἱερουργίαν) and accepted their civil polity (τὴν πολιτείαν αὐτῶν), then indeed certain persons attempted a revolution against the public harmony and experienced various calamities. (3:20–21)

Careful observance of the Law (εὐνομία) was the foundation for Israel's ideal situation of peace and prosperity.[52] Auctor's description recalls promised blessings for Israel's obedience:

> If you walk by my ordinances and observe my commandments and do them … I will grant peace (εἰρήνην) in your land. (Lev 26:3, 6 NETS).
>
> And all the nations of the earth … shall be afraid of you. And the Lord your God will make you abound with good things. (Deut 28:10–11a NETS)

Further, Auctor explains that Israel's Law observance results (ὥστε) in a prominent foreign king making financial contributions toward the Temple service and accepting Israel's πολιτεία. This state of affairs recalls Chiram's contributions toward Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 9:11) and particularly Cyrus' decree to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple and Artaxerxes' provisions from the royal treasury (Ezra 1:1–11; 1 Esdr 8:18).[53]

However, Israel's peaceful prosperity soon gives way to "manifold calamities" when certain people attempt a revolution or introduce innovations (νεωτερίσαντες, 3:21).[54] Auctor explains (γάρ) that Simon is the initial troublemaker, who opposes the noble high priest Onias and then betrays the πατρίς by offering Jerusalem treasury funds to King Seleucus (4:1–6).

Though Simon's betrayal failed because of divine intervention (4:9–14), Israel's situation worsened under Seleucus' successor, Antiochus Epiphanes.[55] He appointed Jason as "high priest and ruler of the nation" in place of his brother, Onias,

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[52] Cf. 2 Macc 3:1–3. εὐνομία and εἰρήνη are similarly connected in Josephus, *Ant.* 7:341; 11:216; Philo, *Spec.* 3.131; *Abr.* 261. See van Henten, *Martyrs*, 260–61.
[53] DeSilva suggests a parallel with Ps 68:29 [67:30 LXX]. deSilva, *Commentary*, 113.
[54] For similar usage of νεωτερίζω, see Josephus, *War* 1:4; 2:494.
[55] Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) was the brother of Seleucus IV, not his son as 4:15 reports. See John Whitehorne, "Antiochus," *ABD* 1:269–72, esp. 270.

because Jason offered Antiochus a very large annual compensation (4:16–18).[56] Upon coming to power, Jason "changed the nation's way of life and altered its civil polity in all lawlessness, so that not only was a gymnasium constructed at the very citadel of our fatherland, but the Temple service was also abolished" (4:19–20).[57] Pearson writes, "Jason's gymnasium foundation was indeed a—perhaps *the*—decisive moment in the overt Hellenization of Jewish culture, and it brought with it all kinds of religious, cultural and political implications."[58] The gymnasium's construction in the very center of the land serves as "a rhetorical heightening of the affront to God."[59] In Auctor's presentation, while Jason's reforms render Temple service inoperative, the martyrs die as effective sacrifices on Israel's behalf.[60]

4.3. Divine Judgment on Israel

The sin of Israel's leaders prompts varied divine responses. In 4:10, God *protects* his Temple, sending angels on horseback against the foreign invaders summoned by Simon. However, God *punishes* Israel following Jason's lawlessness: "Because the divine Justice was angered[61] by these acts, he caused Antiochus himself to make war on them" (4:21). Auctor presents the foreign tyrant's presence in the land not as the cause but the *consequence* of the nation's sin and moral uncleanness before God.[62]

Van Henten claims, "The author of 4 Maccabees hardly pays attention to the notion of disciplinary suffering."[63] However, 4 Maccabees refers to Jason's total lawlessness (4:19) and Israel's sin (ἁμαρτία, 17:21), which anger divine Justice (4:21). Thus deSilva writes, "The present episode fits very well into the classic pattern of God using a Gentile nation as the rod of divine chastening."[64] Fourth Maccabees 4:21 recalls the judgment promised in Deuteronomy 28:49–50, "The Lord will bring upon you a nation from far away, from the end of the earth, like the swoop of an eagle, a

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[56] As deSilva notes, Sinaiticus originally read 1,660 talents (χίλια ἑξακόσια ἑξήκοντα τάλαντα), though a later editor changed this number to 3,660. Either amount represents a sizeable increase from 2 Macc 4:8–9 (590 silver talents). deSilva, *Commentary*, 120.

[57] Cf. 1 Macc 1:11–15; 2 Macc 4:9–15; Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 1:70–78.

[58] "Gymnasia and Baths," *DNTB*, 435–36, citing 436. Cf. Robert Doran, "Jason's Gymnasium," in *Of Scribes and Scrolls: FS John Strugnell* (ed. Harold W. Attridge, et al.; Lanham: University Press of America, 1990), 99–109, esp. 106–9.

[59] deSilva, *Commentary*, 121.

[60] Cf. ch. 3 §2.2.

[61] ἀγανακτήσασα is interpreted as a causal participle modifying ἐπολέμωσεν, a connection obscured by NRSV.

[62] Contra Seeley, *Death*, 98. See ch. 3 §2.2.

[63] van Henten, *Martyrs*, 140. Cf. Talbert, *Learning*, 21; Finlan, *Background*, 198.

[64] deSilva, *Commentary*, 122. Cf. Heard, "Maccabean," 165–66; Smith, "Suffering," 36, 40.

nation whose speech you will not hear, a nation shameless in face, which will not marvel at the face of an elder and have no mercy on the young" (NETS). Thus, Jason's Hellenizing reforms and courtship of a foreign benefactor yield not freedom and blessings but slavery and covenantal curses for Israel.

In the narrative world of 4 Maccabees, the *nation* suffers divine punishment for her leaders' breach of covenant, but *individual* Law-observant Jews suffer most.[65] In 2 Maccabees, the martyrs acknowledge, "[W]e suffer for our own sins" (7:32; cf. 7:18). However, in 4 Maccabees they profess their virtuous devotion to the Law (6:27; 9:1, 15; 10:10; 11:5; 12:14) and claim that their deeds "deserve honors, not tortures" (11:6). These righteous sufferers die vicariously for the covenant people's sin (6:28; 17:21; cf. 9:24; 12:17), and they justly receive everlasting honors after death (1:10; 17:20). Ironically, they declare themselves fortunate for the opportunity to display their endurance to the Law "through nobler pains" (διὰ γενναιοτέρων πόνων, 11:12).[66]

5. How Does Suffering Relate to the Solution for the World's Problem?

We have seen that Israel's suffering highlights the problem of her sin and divine chastisement (3:21; 4:19–21). However, by suffering in *obedience* to the divine Law, the nine martyrs reverse Israel's plight and restore her peace (17:9–10; 18:4). The deaths of these unlikely heroes result in Israel's salvation. They move God from wrath to mercy, purify the fatherland, serve as a life-in-exchange for Israel's sin, and somehow expel the tyrant (6:27–29; 17:20–22). Further, their pious endurance through gruesome torture provides a compelling example for Auctor's audience to follow as they face pressure to assimilate (9:6, 23; 16:17; 17:7–8; 18:1–2).

5.1. Israel's Salvation through Suffering

Nine Law-observant Jews save Israel through their representative suffering unto death. This salvation has at least five aspects: (1) divine mercy because of satisfied divine judgment; (2) purification of the polluted πατρίς; (3) a life-in-exchange for the nation's sin; (4) the downfall the persecuting tyrant; and (5) renewed peace and Law observance in Israel.

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[65] Cf. deSilva, "Ideal," 64, 68.
[66] Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 67:4, 13, 16, discussed in ch. 1 §3.3.

First, Eleazar prays ἵλεως γενοῦ τῷ ἔθνει σου (6:28; cf. 9:24; 12:17).[67] This recalls Moses' intercession for Israel after their lawless worship of the golden calf (Exod 32:12). However, Eleazar bases his appeal for divine mercy on the martyrs' deaths as sufficient punishment for the nation (6:28). These heroes experience divine judgment (δίκη) vicariously in Israel's stead.[68]

The ἵλεως word group recurs in the significant yet enigmatic phrase τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου τοῦ θανάτου αὐτῶν in 17:22, discussed at length in Chapter 3 (§3.4).[69] Bailey has demonstrated that ἱλαστήριον has only two known meanings up to the mid-second century CE: the *Jewish* usage referring to the "mercy seat" (cf. Lev 16:13–15 LXX; Philo, *Mos.* 2.95–96), and the *Hellentistic* usage for votive gifts dedicated to the gods (cf. Josephus, *Ant*. 16:182; Scholion to Apollonius of Rhodes 4.1549).[70] Bailey strongly defends the *Hellenistic* interpretation of ἱλαστήριον in 17:22.[71] However, the *Jewish* sacrificial background is more plausible because of the covenantal context of 4 Maccabees and the concentration of sacrificial terminology in 17:21–22, including purification, life-in-exchange, and blood.[72] Auctor presents the martyrs' deaths as the metaphorical place of propitiation, whereby God's justice is satisfied and the nation is saved (cf. 4:21; 6:28–29).

Second, the martyrs effectively cleanse the people and their homeland. Auctor employs the cultic terms *purification* (καθάρσιος) and *purify* (καθαρίζω) to indicate reversal of Israel's moral and ceremonial uncleanness (1:11; 6:29; 17:21).[73] In 6:29, Eleazar prays, "Make my blood *their* purification" (καθάρσιον αὐτῶν) referring to the *people*, and 1:11 and 17:21 refer to the fatherland's cleansing by the martyrs (καθαρισθῆναι δι' αὐτῶν τὴν πατρίδα). Jason's Hellenizing reforms and construction of the gymnasium render the πατρίς unclean, and Antiochus' presence in Israel maintains and magnifies this impurity (4:19–26).[74] While 1 Maccabees credits Judas and his brothers with driving out Antiochus and purifying Israel's defiled sanctuary (4:36–58), 4 Maccabees credits the nine martyrs with cleansing Israel and her land.[75]

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[67] Cf. ch. 3 §2.5.
[68] Smith, "Suffering," 41; Williams, *Traditions*, 45–46.
[69] Assuming א as original, following Bailey, "Jesus (Thesis)," 114–23.
[70] See ibid., 5–6, 31, 43–46, 66–75.
[71] Ibid., 133–42.
[72] Cf. Finlan, *Background*, 202–4; Williams, *Traditions*, 60–63.
[73] Cf. ch. 3 §2.5. Dumke observes a parallel to Ps. Sol. 18:5 (*καθαρίσαι* ὁ θεὸς Ισραηλ εἰς ἡμέραν ἐλέους). "Suffering," 128.
[74] See §4.2–3.
[75] deSilva, *Commentary*, 82; van Henten, *Martyrs*, 150–53.

Third, the martyrs serve as a "ransom" or "life-in-exchange" for Israel.[76] The rare term ἀντίψυχον portrays their deaths in sacrificial terms (cf. Lev 17:11 LXX), perhaps in lieu of the inoperative Temple service (4:20). Eleazar prays, "Take my life as a life-in-exchange for theirs" (ἀντίψυχον αὐτῶν; 6:29), and 17:21 records that their deaths achieve precisely this effect for the nation's sin (ἀντίψυχον γεγονότας τῆς τοῦ ἔθνους ἁμαρτίας).

Fourth, Israel is delivered from Antiochus' tyranny because of the martyrs' virtuous endurance unto death. According to 1:11, "They brought the tyranny against the nation to an end, conquering the tyrant by endurance" (αἴτιοι κατέστησαν τοῦ καταλυθῆναι τὴν κατὰ τοῦ ἔθνους τυραννίδα νικήσαντες τὸν τύραννον τῇ ὑπομονῇ). This summary anticipates the brothers' declaration in 11:24–25: "We six lads have brought your tyranny to an end (καταλελύκαμέν σου τὴν τυραννίδα)! Since you have not been able to persuade us to alter our reason or to force us to eat unclean foods, is not this your downfall" (κατάλυσίς)? They declare themselves to be "champions of virtue" (τοὺς τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀγωνιστὰς, 12:14),[77] demonstrating by their resolve that "only the children of the Hebrews are unconquerable (ἀνίκητοι) concerning virtue" (9:18). Their *personal* piety and victory through devout reason (cf. 6:31–35) have two *corporate* consequences. Their representative obedience and sacrificial death move God to vindicate Israel and take vengeance on her enemies (9:32; 17:10, 20, 22; 18:4–5, 22; cf. Deut. 32:41, 43). Further, their poignant example of loyalty to the Law leads to renewed Law-keeping in Israel.

Thus, the fifth dimension of salvation in 4 Maccabees is the achievement of renewed peace and Law observance in Israel. As observed earlier (§4.2), Auctor begins his narrative by recounting Israel's former ideal situation of profound peace because of their Law observance (3:20). Revolutionaries and corrupt leaders disrupt Israel's peace and prosperity and bring disaster on the nation (3:21; 4:19–21). Auctor credits the martyrs with the reversal of Jason's innovations and the restoration of Israel's former *shalom*:

> And because of them, the nation gained peace (εἰρήνευσεν), and renewing devotion to the Law in the homeland (τὴν εὐνομίαν τὴν ἐπὶ τῆς πατρίδος ἀνανεωσάμενοι), they pillaged their enemies. And the tyrant Antiochus has been punished and though dead continues to be chastized. For as he was not able in any respect to compel the Jerusalemites to adopt foreign customs and to change their way of life from their ancestral customs (ἀλλοφυλῆσαι καὶ τῶν

[76] Cf. ch. 3, §2.5; deSilva, *Commentary*, 59.
[77] On the martyrs as champions, see O'Hagan, "Martyr," 96–100.

> πατρίων ἐθῶν ἐκδιαιτηθῆναι), he then departed from Jerusalem and waged war against the Persians. (18:4–5)

This multifaceted salvation recalls Deuteronomy's promises of restoration after exile. Specifically, Israel experiences divine mercy, healing from sin, and cleansing (Deut 30:3, 6; 4 Macc 6:28–29; 17:21–22). As a result, Israel obeys God's commandments and prospers in the land promised to her ancestors (Deut 30:2, 5–6, 8–9; 4 Macc 18:4). Conversely, Israel defeats her enemies, who justly receive divine judgment and cursing for persecuting God's people (Deut 28:7; 30:7; 32:43; 4 Macc 17:21; 18:4–5; 22).

5.2. The Martyrs' Example

The martyrs' faithful endurance not only illustrates Auctor's philosophical thesis concerning reason's mastery of the passions (cf. 1:8), but it also exemplifies courage and commitment to the divine Law. In 6:18–19, Eleazar stresses that for him to eat defiled food after so many years of loyalty to the Law would be irrational and would set a negative model (τύπος) and pattern (παράδειγμα) for younger Israelites. Rather, Eleazar exhorts his fellow children of Abraham to "die nobly for your true religion" (6:22), a call that he himself embodies (6:30).

Antiochus brutally tortures "the old man" to showcase the folly of disobeying his decrees and motivate the young to receive his benefaction (8:5–6; cf. 12:3–5). However, Auctor stresses that Eleazar's death has precisely the opposite effect on younger Jews. The seven brothers declare that the tyrant should have learned from "our aged instructor" that his intimidation tactics were of no use, and they resolve all the more to despise his tortures and act piously (9:5–6).

The eldest brother, a true Abrahamite[78] who "nobly endured the rackings," summons his brothers to follow his example: "Imitate me, brothers (Μιμήσασθέ με, ἀδελφοί) ... Do not leave your post in my contest, and do not renounce my brotherhood of good courage" (9:21–24). Each brother then meets the same fate, despising their sufferings and stressing their common kinship and training (10:2–3, 9, 15; 11:20–22; 12:16; 13:1). The martyrs stress their solidarity with each other and also with Israel's past heroes.[79] For example, they declare, "Brothers, let us die like brothers (Ἀδελφικῶς) for the Law; let us imitate (μιμησώμεθα) the three youths in

[78] Rahlfs reads Αβραμιαῖος, but ℵ* has Αβρααμ υἱός. See deSilva, *Commentary*, 179.
[79] van Henten, *Martyrs*, 289.

Assyria who despised the same ordeal of the furnace (13:9).[80] Further, the brothers in unison declare their allegiance to the ancestral Law and their ancestors' honor (8:29–9:1).

Seeley claims that the martyrs' deaths are "effective because of their obedience and exemplary nature."[81] Sacrificial metaphors applied to the martyrs are ancillary to this "central affirmation" concerning their obedience and example.[82] Seeley writes, "[T]he vicarious benefit of the martyrs' deaths is imparted mimetically," as their example of obedience "inspires a general adherence to the Law and thus defeats Antiochus" (cf. 18:4).[83] Seeley rightly stresses the importance of the martyrs' exemplary obedience. However, Seeley does not adequately address Auctor's sacrificial terminology such as καθάρσιον, ἀντίψυχον, αἷμα, and ἱλαστήριον (6:28–29; 17:21–22). Further, he does not explain *how* exactly "sacrificial metaphors re-state and elaborate" the "fundamental" pattern of obedience that calls for imitation.[84] Finally, Seeley does not sufficiently consider the narrative context of 4 Maccabees, which presents Antiochus' arrival in Israel as an expression of divine judgment for Jason's reforms (4:19–21) and is called "the nation's sin" (17:21).[85] DeSilva righly observes, "Within the Deuteronomic world-view of the author … God's wrath indeed had to be averted before the divine punishment could be lifted."[86]

In Auctor's worldview, the martyrs achieve multifaceted salvation in Israel (§5.1), and they also exemplify the mastery of the passions through devout reason that he seeks to persuade his audience to follow. Auctor makes this application explicit in 18:1–2: "O Israelite children, descendants of Abraham's seed, obey this Law and live piously in every way, knowing that devout reason is master over the passions—and not only over those within (τῶν ἔνδοθεν) but also over distresses from outside" (τῶν ἔξωθεν πόνων). These heroes brought Israel peace, restored loyalty to the Law, and victory over their enemies (18:4–5).[87] Auctor dramatically retells their story to inspire the same sort of resolve and commitment to the Law among his Diaspora audience

[80] Cf. Dan 3:13–23 LXX; similarly 4 Macc 9:2.
[81] Seeley, *Death*, 97. Followed by C. Marvin Pate and Douglas W. Kennard, *Deliverance Now and Not Yet: The New Testament and the Great Tribulation* (New York: Lang, 2003), 50–51.
[82] Seeley, *Death*, 97–98. Compare the more nuanced discussion by Williams, *Death*, 177–78.
[83] Seeley, *Death*, 14, 92.
[84] Ibid., 98. For further criticisms, see J. W. van Henten, "Review of D. Seeley, *The Noble Death*," *JSJ* 23 (1992): 134–37.
[85] See §4.2–3.
[86] deSilva, *Guides*, 139.
[87] See §5.1.

faced with the perennial challenge of living faithfully without moral compromise while shunning the temptation to assimilate to the dominant cultural practices.[88]

6. How Does Present Suffering Relate to our Expectations for the Future?

In Auctor's worldview, future blessings for piety and punishment for impiety serve as powerful motivators for mastering the passions through devout reason. The martyrs endure present suffering motivated by the prospect of eternal heavenly reward (7:3; 9:8), and they confidently declare that God will justly and eternally punish their torturers (9:9; 12:12). Torture and death cannot truly harm the nine heroes, whose virtue and honor are not tainted but enhanced and displayed through their perseverance in piety (7:9; 9:7–8; 11:12). Fourth Maccabees focuses on the martyrs' present experience of immortality immediately after death (14:5; 18:23). However, the use of Ezekiel 37:3 in 18:17 suggests that Auctor may also affirm a future resurrection, though he does not emphasize this doctrine as much as 2 Maccabees 7, given his own philosophical and rhetorical aims.

6.1. Hope of Heavenly Reward for the Righteous

In 4 Maccabees, the nine martyrs stress that they endure suffering because of their hope of a future heavenly reward and divine punishment on their persecutors.[89] This represents a significant interpretation of the Deuteronomic promises of blessing for obedience and curse for disobedience (cf. Deut 30:1, 19–20). For Auctor and other Jewish authors, God's promises did not fail but "were rather postponed to the eternity beyond physical death."[90] Thus, while the martyrs face death by torture they will afterwards have "the rewards of virtue and shall be with God" (9:8). The brothers anticipate being praised after death by their forefathers (13:17). They approach death "as though running the course to immortality" (ἐπ᾽ ἀθανασίας, 14:5), sailing "into the haven of immortal victory" (ἐπὶ τὸν τῆς ἀθανάτου νίκης λιμένα; 7:3). Auctor's image of the mother surrounded by her seven sons honored in heaven (17:5–6) supersedes the graphic picture of their earlier degradation.[91] These heroes receive the victory prize of "incorruption in long–lasting life" (ἀφθαρσία ἐν ζωῇ πολυχρονίῳ, 17:12), and "now stand before the divine throne" enjoying eternal blessedness (17:18).

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[88] Cf. ch. 3 §1.3.
[89] cf. Dumke, "Suffering," 134.
[90] deSilva, *Guides*, 137.
[91] deSilva, "Perfection," 267.

The martyrs' future hope radically redefines what is truly beneficial (cf. 5:11; 8:5–11) and provides a powerful incentive for enduring suffering for the Law.[92] In fact, the prospect of life after death means that the tyrant cannot truly harm them, and his tortures afford them an opportunity to display their virtuous loyalty to God's Law (9:7–8, 17–18, 30–31; 11:12). Auctor highlights the *martyrs'* experience of immortal life, but such future glory is not restricted to martyrs but shared by the patriarchs and "all who are consecrated" (7:19; 13:17; 16:25; 17:19; cf. Deut 33:3 LXX).[93]

Second Maccabees espouses a clear expectation of future bodily resurrection. The brother who loses his tongue and hands confidently claims that he will get them back again (2 Macc 7:11), while another waits for "the hope God gives of being raised again (πάλιν ἀναστήσεσθαι) by him" (7:14). The mother anticipates a future day when the Creator will give life and breath back to her sons (7:22–23). Nickelsburg writes, "God will heal what Antiochus has hurt; he will bring to life those whom Antiochus has killed. What God created he will recreate—in spite of the king's attempt to destroy it."[94] However, Wright articulates the scholarly consensus that 4 Maccabees demonstrates "a conscious redactional decision to delete all mention of bodily resurrection and substitute a version of the doctrine of the immortal soul, or at least of souls that could become immortal through the pursuit of wisdom."[95]

Fourth Maccabees 1:20–29 introduces an important distinction between the soul (ψυχή) and the body (σῶμα). The martyrs endure incredible bodily pain, yet they overcome through reason (cf. 6:7; 10:19–20; 14:10; 18:3). Though Eleazar's aged body was "no longer tense and firm," nevertheless "he became young again in spirit through reason" (7:13–14).[96] In 14:6, the brothers are motivated "by an immortal soul of piety" (ὑπὸ ψυχῆς ἀθανάτου τῆς εὐσεβείας). After enduring physical torture by

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[92] deSilva, "Ideal," 72–73.
[93] Rightly Smith, "Suffering," 38–39.
[94] George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity* (Revised ed; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 121.
[95] Wright, *Resurrection*, 143; cf. Ulrich Kellermann, *Auferstanden in den Himmel: 2 Makkabäer 7 und die Auferstehung der Märtyrer* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1979), 95–96; Anderson, "4 Maccabees," 2:539; Smith, "Suffering," 38; Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 672; van Henten, *Martyrs*, 129; deSilva, *Guides*, 137; Shmuel Shepkaru, "From After Death to Afterlife: Martyrdom and its Recompense," *AJSR* 24 (1999): 1–44, esp. 15; Claudia Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community, and Self-Definition* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 18; Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 139.
[96] See also 2 Macc 6:30, "I am enduring cruel sufferings *in my body* (κατὰ τὸ σῶμα) while being scourged, but *in my soul* (κατὰ ψυχήν) I gladly suffer these things, because I fear him." Cf. van Henten, *Martyrs*, 128.

Antiochus, the martyrs are vindicated by God and receive "pure and immortal souls" (ψυχὰς ἁγνὰς καὶ ἀθανάτους, 18:22–23).

Clearly, 4 Maccabees expresses the martyrs' future hopes in different terms than 2 Maccabees.[97] However, it does not *necessarily* follow that Auctor denies a bodily resurrection simply because he omits his source's explicit resurrection language. Auctor writes with a different purpose, to stress the superiority of devout reason over the passions, and his portrayal of the martyrdoms directly serves this aim (1:7–12; 6:31–35). Fourth Maccabees stresses the martyrs' *present* vindication as they overcome through devout reason: they purify Israel and achieve victory over her enemies (17:20–21), while receiving the prize of immortality before God's throne (17:12, 18). While 2 Maccabees emphasizes the *final* vindication in resurrection, nevertheless 2 Maccabees 7:36 highlights the martyrs' *present* experience of eternal life: "For now indeed our brothers after enduring a brief suffering have fallen on everlasting life (ἀενάου ζωῆς) under the covenant." This parallel suggests that present eternal life and future resurrection are not mutually exclusive in Auctor's source, which affirms rather "the continuity of post-mortem life even before resurrection."[98] Thus, 4 Maccabees could have affirmed both realities, though Auctor emphasizes the martyrs' *present* experience of immortality.

Scholars often overlook or underestimate the significance of 18:17 for determining 4 Maccabees' future hope. In 18:10–19, Auctor summarizes the father's scriptural teaching to his sons concerning the suffering, divine protection, and vindication which comes to the righteous. According to 18:17, the father "used to confirm Ezekiel, who said, 'Shall these dry bones live?'" This citation follows Ezekiel 37:3 LXX, with the adjective "dry" (ξηρά) taken from 37:4. Ezekiel's prophecy of Yahweh breathing life into dry bones presents to hopeless, exiled Israel (cf. 37:11) a powerful hope of new creation (37:5).[99] Israel will return to her land (37:14, 21), be empowered by the divine Spirit (37:11, 14), cleansed from defilement (37:23), and experience God's presence and renewed covenant (37:23, 27–28).

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[97] For discussion of the relationship of the martyrdoms in 2 and 4 Maccabees to the death of Taxo and his seven sons in *T. Mos.* 9 and to other rabbinic martyrdom accounts, see Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 127–130; Robert Doran, "The Martyr: A Synoptic View of the Mother and her Seven Sons," in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism* (ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg and John J. Collins; Chico, Ca.: Scholars, 1980), 189–221.

[98] Daniel R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 317. Schwartz cites Josephus, *War* 3.374 as an example of two-stage belief in afterlife. See also 1 Clem 50:3–4, which cites Ezek 37:12.

[99] Wright, *Resurrection*, 119.

Though Ezekiel 37 is obviously metaphorical,[100] verses 12–13 suggests that Israel's hopes extend further to life after death, as Yahweh promises to open their tombs and graves. Thus Levey calls Ezekiel 37 the "*locus classicus* of the resurrection in the Hebrew Scriptures."[101]

Interpreters handle Auctor's citation of Ezekiel 37 in different ways. Some do not discuss Auctor's use of Ezekiel 37:3,[102] while many scholars dismiss 18:6–19 as a secondary interpolation because of its perceived inferior Greek, frequent Scripture citations, abrupt introduction, and lack of integration into the narrative.[103] However, Hiebert observes that "there are no evident textual grounds for excising 18,6–19."[104] Over a century ago, Deissmann responded "das Griechisch ist nicht 'schlechter' als vorher" and notes that Auctor appeals to Scripture from chapters 2–3.[105] Further, deSilva claims that this section "fills an appropriate role in the peroration as it stands."[106] He then concedes 18:17 is "the only point at which the author comes close to making room for the resurrection of the dead in his discourse."[107] Likewise, Klauck acknowledges that this text seemingly contradicts the eschatological teaching elsewhere in 4 Maccabees and reasons that Auctor may be reading Ezekiel 37 symbolically.[108] Van Henten comments that "we find the conception of a bodily resurrection" in the Ezekiel 37:3 quotation.[109] He concludes that Auctor "has combined different views about the afterlife of the martyrs" in his presentation which

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[100] Stressed by ibid., 120.
[101] Samson H. Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel* (Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1987), 13, emphasis original. Cf. Daniel I. Block, "Beyond the Grave: Ezekiel's Vision of Death and Afterlife," *BBR* 2 (1992): 113–41.
[102] Wright, *Resurrection*, 142–43; Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 138–40.
[103] Jacob Freudenthal, *Die Flavius Josephus beigelegte Schrift über die Herrschaft der Vernunft (IV Makkabäerbuch), eine Predigt aus dem ersten nachchristlichen Jahrhundert* (Breslau: H. Skutsch, 1869), 155; Dupont-Sommer, *Le Quatrième livre des Machabées*, 153–54; Leonhard Rost, *Judaism Outside the Hebrew Canon: An Introduction to the Documents* (trans. David E. Green; Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 109; Ulrich Fischer, *Eschatologie und Jenseitserwartung im hellenistischen Diasporajudentum* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1978), 87–89; Redditt, "Nomos," 250 and n. 3; Shepkaru, "Martyrdom," 16–17.
[104] Robert J. V. Hiebert, "4 Maccabees 18,6-19: Original Text or Secondary Interpolation," in *Septuaginta—Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten* (ed. Martin Karrer and Wolfgang Kraus; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 439–449, citing 446.
[105] Adolf Deissmann, "Das vierte Makkabäerbuch," in *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments* (ed. Emil Kautzsch; 2 vols.; vol. 1; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1900), 149–76, citing 175.
[106] deSilva, *Commentary*, 257.
[107] Ibid., 264. Similarly O'Hagan writes, "Perhaps some reference to the resurrection slips in almost unnoticed in the account of the father's instruction to his Maccabean sons about suffering and martyrdom." "Martyr," 99.
[108] Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 674.
[109] van Henten, *Martyrs*, 184.

"focuses largely on the analogous divine vindication of martyrs and suffering righteous."[110]

The context suggests the father's question in 18:17, which restates Ezekiel 37:3, is not "very cautious"[111] but expects an affirmative answer in light of the prophetic hope of life beyond death. In 18:18–19 Auctor explains (γάρ) his Ezekiel quotation with Deuteronomy's clear declaration of God's promise and power to give life to Israel: "For he did not forget to teach the song that Moses taught which says, 'I will kill, and I will make alive (ζῆν ποιήσω); this is your life (ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν) and the length of days'" (cf. Deut 30:20; 32:39 LXX). The martyrs now enjoy unending life in God's presence (7:19; 15:3; 16:25; 17:12), and 18:17 seems to imply that one day they will experience resurrection life. Auctor's citation of Ezekiel 37:3 does not *prove* his belief in a final resurrection, but it casts doubt on claims that 4 Maccabees espouses a clear-cut "Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul."[112]

6.2. Expectation of Divine Judgment on Enemies

The martyrs' *temporal* suffering because of their piety is directly contrasted with the *eternal* suffering that awaits their impious persecutors. In 9:8–9, the brothers declare to Antiochus, "For we (ἡμεῖς μέν), through this suffering and endurance, shall gain the prizes accorded virtue and be with God, for whose sake we suffer, but you (σὺ δέ), because of your bloodthirstiness toward us, will endure ample and everlasting torture by fire imposed by divine justice." The reversal is striking. Fire is the most painful of all the tortures that the martyrs endure (14:9–10; cf. 6:24; 9:19; 12:5), and they confidently assert that the tyrant who burns them will be punished forever in like manner.[113] In 12:12, the youngest brother proclaims, "For these deeds, justice will store up for you a fire more fierce and everlasting and tortures, which for all time will not release you" (NETS). Such statements seem to envisage the tyrant's fate as an unending *physical* experience of torture beyond death.[114]

The martyrs anticipate their *future* vindication by God and their persecutors' judgment, while Auctor stresses the *present* realization of this hope.[115] The martyrs achieved victory in their contest against the tyrant (17:12–16) and now enjoy

[110] Ibid.
[111] Contra Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 674 ("sehr vorsichtigen").
[112] Anderson, "4 Maccabees," 539.
[113] Cf. Fischer, *Eschatologie*, 92.
[114] Ibid., 93 ("eine leibhafte Weiterexistenz nach dem Tode hindeuten").
[115] Ibid., 97.

unending life with God (17:18–20), while the tyrant "was punished" (17:21) and continues to experience post-mortem chastisement (18:5). This dual hope of unending life with God and divine justice repaying their persecutors motivates the martyrs to endure suffering with devout reason.

7. Conclusion

Chapters 3–4 have demonstrated that suffering is a critical theme in 4 Maccabees. Auctor focuses at length on the gruesome persecution and remarkable endurance of nine Jewish heroes. Through suffering for the sake of God's Law, they exemplify mastery of the passions and laudable virtue and they also achieve multifaceted salvation on behalf of Israel. We now summarize suffering's function in Auctor's worldview by returning to the worldview questions. As in chapters 2 and 6, this section is written in the first-person plural from the perspective of Auctor and his implied readership.

First, *who is God and how is he involved in our suffering?* We Jews believe that our God created the world, and as the supreme Patron has graciously given us life and his divine Law, which instructs us in true philosophy and should be followed scrupulously (5:19–25, 29; 7:21–22; 16:18). Our God is the divine δίκη and πρόνοια, who shows justice and mercy in accordance with his covenant promises (4:21; 9:24). Israel has suffered greatly for disregarding God's Law, but God has also vindicated those who suffered yet remained loyal to his Law, rescuing Israel and judging our oppressors (9:8–9; 17:21–22).[116]

Second, *how does suffering relate to our nature, task, and purpose?* We are Israel, the Creator's chosen people, Abraham's children (18:1). Our ancestral Law defines our identity and governs our lives. This Law teaches us an alternative way of being in the world, by which we surpass the philosophers in wisdom, virtue, and subjugation of the passions (2:23; 5:22–24; 6:18; 7:7). Our distinctive practices such as circumcision and kosher food laws may bring scorn or suffering from outsiders (4:25–26; 5:7–13), but we must resist pressures to conform and must maintain loyalty to our divine Benefactor, come what may. Through their zeal for the Law and endurance in true religion amidst suffering, the Jewish heroes testify to our nation's character and covenant relationship with God (16:16–17; 17:7).

[116] See §2.

Third, *how does suffering clarify the world's basic problem?* Human beings have sinned against God, their Creator and Benefactor, by failing to honor him and live according to his creative design. Sin is both *personal*, as each individual must uphold the Law and bridle the passions (1:35; 2:21–23), and *corporate*, as Israel as a nation is bound to God by covenant oath (5:29). Israel's corrupt leaders—governed by their passions not devout reason—disrupted Israel's peace and prosperity, polluted the πατρίς, and brought divine punishment on the nation through their lawless, Hellenizing reforms (3:20–21; 4:15–21). Our leaders wanted Israel to live like the nations, and so God sent a foreign tyrant to oppress our nation (4:21–26).

Fourth, *how does suffering relate to the solution for the world's problem?* Nine faithful Jews suffered for the sake of the Law and true religion and thereby saved Israel from divine judgment and foreign oppression. Their vicarious deaths propitiated God's judgment, purified the fatherland, served as a life-in-exchange for the people's sin, and brought an end to Antiochus' tyranny (1:11; 6:27–29; 9:24; 17:20–22). Even now, as we Jews are confronted by the tainted pleasures of pagan culture and potential pain for maintaining our distinct way of life, we should emulate these heroes who demonstrated mastery over the passions and embody what it means to be Abraham's children (9:23; 17:7–10; 18:1–2).

Fifth, *how does present suffering relate to our expectations for the future?* God's promises to bless the obedient and judge the disobedient hold firm for this life and for the next (18:18–19). Therefore, it is supremely advantageous to remain loyal to the Law, even through suffering, for we know that the righteous upon death will enjoy unending life with God (9:8; 17:18–19). Even now, Eleazar, the seven brothers, and their mother have been consecrated to God and given pure, immortal souls (17:20; 18:22). Alternatively, God justly punished Antiochus with eternal tortures, because he did not control his passions but wickedly tortured God's people (12:11–12). Because God will judge the wicked and reward the righteous, we must strive to master our passions and endure suffering for the sake of virtue.

Chapter 5: Suffering in Acts: Exegesis

1. Introduction

The next two chapters will consider the place of suffering in Luke's worldview, with particular attention given to Acts. Chapter 5 will first address some introductory matters regarding the authorship, dating, genre, and purpose of Acts (§1.1–3). Next, we will offer an initial survey of suffering and persecution in Luke-Acts (§1.4). Then we will analyze two texts of particular importance for Luke's perspective on suffering: Stephen's trial and death (Acts 6:8–8:4; see §2) and Saul's conversion and call (9:1–30; see §3). Building on this exegetical foundation, Chapter 6 will summarize the function of suffering in Luke's worldview.

Acts 1:1 situates the work in light of the author's previous account (Τὸν … πρῶτον λόγον), known from the second century as εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Λουκᾶν.[1] The wider narrative of Luke-Acts will be considered in the overview of suffering and persecution in §1.4 and in the worldview synthesis in Chapter 6. However, these chapters will concentrate on Acts for several reasons. Cunningham and Mittelstadt have previously treated the themes of suffering and persecution in Luke's two volumes, which allows us to prioritize Acts in this comparative study.[2] Further, while we affirm the authorial and narrative unity of Luke-Acts, these books have their own structure, genre, and emphases, and early interpreters read Luke and Acts as distinct works by the same author.[3] Focusing on Acts will enable us to highlight Luke's particular emphasis in his second volume on the outworking of God's purposes through the Spirit-empowered followers of the crucified, risen, and reigning Lord Jesus, who bear witness to Jesus among the nations amidst suffering and opposition.

1.1. Author and Date

Before proceeding further, we must justify Luke's inclusion in our first-century conversation about suffering. Early church tradition consistently ascribes the

[1] The earliest manuscript of the Third Gospel, Papyrus 75, includes this ascription.
[2] Cunningham, *Tribulations*; Mittelstadt, *Spirit*. For further survey of scholarship, see Introduction §2.3.
[3] See C. Kavin Rowe, "Literary Unity and Reception History: Reading Luke-Acts as Luke and Acts," *JSNT* 29 (2007): 449–57; Donald A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (2nd ed; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 203; Thompson, *Acts*, 25–26.

anonymous third Gospel and Acts to Luke the physician.[4] The common address to Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1) and numerous inter-textual links strongly suggest common authorship of these volumes.[5] The author does not present himself as an apostle or eyewitness of Christ, but claims to have closely followed eyewitnesses and others in composing his "orderly account" (ἀκριβῶς καθεξῆς σοι γράψαι, Luke 1:1–3). He frequently quotes from the LXX, writes in good literary Greek, and demonstrates detailed knowledge of the political and social climate of the first century CE.[6] Scholars have offered plausible arguments for the author as God-fearer or proselyte Gentile Christian[7] or a converted Diaspora Jew,[8] but the evidence is inconclusive.

In several places in Acts, beginning in 16:10, events are narrated in the first-person plural.[9] Campbell summarizes the four most common explanations for these enigmatic "we passages": (1) author-as-eyewitness; (2) source-as-eyewitness; (3) fictional eyewitness; or (4) (literary) conventional eyewitness.[10] He emphasizes the literary function of the "we passages" in placing "the narrator character at the scene, an eyewitness to and a participant in the events narrated."[11] However, as Martin Hengel writes,

> [T]he remarks in the first person plural refer to the author himself. They do not go back to an earlier independent source, nor are they a mere literary convention, giving the impression that the author was an eyewitness. From the beginning, this is the only way in which readers … could have understood the 'we' passages.[12]

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[4] Cf. *Muratorian Canon* 2–8; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1. Luke is mentioned in Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Philem 1:24.
[5] For a recent challenge see Patricia Walters, *The Assumed Authorial Unity of Luke and Acts: A Reassessment of the Evidence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For detailed critique of Walters and defense of the narrative unity of Luke-Acts see Joel B. Green, "Luke-Acts or Luke and Acts? A Reaffirmation of Narrative Unity," in *Reading Acts Today: FS L. Alexander* (ed. Steve Walton, et. al.; London: T&T Clark, 2011), 101–19.
[6] Carson and Moo, *Introduction*, 290. Cf. Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Introduction and 1:1–2:47* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 402–24.
[7] Keener, *Acts*, 403–5.
[8] Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5.
[9] 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16. In Codex D, the first "we" passage is 11:28; cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 344–45.
[10] William S. Campbell, "The Narrator as 'He,' 'Me,' and 'We': Grammatical Person in Ancient Histories and in the Acts of the Apostles," *JBL* 129 (2010): 385–407.
[11] Ibid., 386, 406.
[12] Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1979), 66.

Thus, while Campbell and others rightly consider the literary function of the "we passages," the first person plural most likely implies the author's presence with Paul for these events.[13]

Scholars typically consider the following criteria for dating Acts:

(1) the so-called "we passages";

(2) references to Acts in other writings;

(3) Luke's knowledge or lack thereof of Paul's letters or Josephus;

(4) the cultural, religious, and political situation reflected in Acts;

(5) relationship to Luke's Gospel (and in turn to Mark);[14]

(6) the lack of inclusion of the outcome of Paul's Roman trial.

Recent commentators have defended at least four views, listed from most popular to least:[15] (1) centrist position (70s–80s);[16] (2) early date (60s);[17] (3) composition in the 90s;[18] (4) early second century.[19]

As argued earlier, the "we" passages (criterion 1) suggest that Luke sometimes traveled with Paul and wrote Acts within living memory of these events.[20] Polycarp, *Phil.* 1:2 includes a likely allusion to Acts 2:24 (criterion 2),[21] and 1 Timothy 5:18

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[13] For arguments supporting this reading, see Colin J. Hemer and Conrad H. Gempf, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989), 308–34; Claus-Jürgen Thornton, *Der Zeuge des Zeugen: Lukas als Historiker der Paulusreisen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 83–197; Witherington, *Acts*, 52–54, 480–86; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Luke the Theologian: Aspects of his Teaching* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), 1–26; Eckhard Plümacher, *Geschichte und Geschichten: Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte und zu den Johannesakten* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 85–108; David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 456; Keener, *Acts*, 406–14. For alternative views see Charles K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; London: T&T Clark, 1994, 1998), 1:xxv–xxx; Stanley E. Porter, "The 'We' Passages," in *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting* (ed. David W. Gill and Conrad H. Gempf; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 545–74; Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 392–96.

[14] Scholars preferring the consensus date for Acts in the 80s to an earlier date in the 60s do so because Luke's Gospel depends on Mark, commonly dated to the late 60s or soon after 70, and several texts in Luke (esp. 21:20–24) seem to presuppose Jerusalem's destruction. Cf. Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 273; Witherington, *Acts*, 60–61.

[15] Cf. Keener, *Acts*, 384. For an extensive survey, see Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge, 2006), 359–63.

[16] For early 70s, see Keener, *Acts*, 383–401. For 80–90, see Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 85–86. For late 80s–early 90s, see Barrett, *Acts*, 2:xliii.

[17] For dating about 64, see Richard N. Longenecker, "Acts," in *Luke–Acts* (ed. David E. Garland; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 665–1102, esp. 699–701. For cautious affirmation of a late 60s position, see Bock, *Theology*, 38–41.

[18] Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 330.

[19] Pervo forcibly argues for dating Acts c. 115, in *Dating*, 343–46.

[20] Keener, *Acts*, 400–1.

[21] Ibid., 396-97. Cf. Pervo, *Dating*, 20.

cites Luke's Gospel (10:7) as γραφή.[22] Pervo has recently argued at length in favor of Acts' dependence on Paul's letters and Josephus (criterion 3).[23] However, Hemer observes that Luke and Josephus often conflict where their histories touch, which "scarcely favors" Lukan dependence.[24] Paul's speeches in Acts (especially 13:38–39; 20:18–35) share clear affinities with Paul's letters.[25] Walton persuasively concludes, "Luke knows Pauline tradition independently of the epistles" and he "seeks to pass on and commend Paul's tradition."[26] Keener detects a "strong apologetic for Paul, which makes most sense when his memory burned most brightly yet remained most susceptible to challenge."[27] These and other arguments suggest that Acts was composed sometime between 62–90 CE and make a second century date quite unlikely.

1.2. Genre and Interpretative Approach

The genre of Acts has been variously described as a "historical novel,"[28] "biographical monograph,"[29] and most plausibly as "historical monograph."[30] Specifically, Acts is perhaps best categorized as "biblical history," as Luke's language themes, models, literary procedures, indeed "his very concept of history" are influenced by the LXX historical writings.[31]

In the Introduction (§2.3), we noted that scholars differ in their approaches and criteria for discerning Luke's "theology."[32] Gaventa rightly argues, "Lukan theology is intricately and irreversibly bound up with the story he tells and cannot be

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[22] Cf. B. Paul Wolfe, "The Sagacious Use of Scripture," in *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles* (ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Terry L. Wilder; Nashville: B&H, 2010), 199–218, esp. 212–13.
[23] Pervo, *Dating*, 51–199.
[24] Hemer and Gempf, *History*, 95. Cf. Keener, *Acts*, 399–400.
[25] For a summary of interpretations, see Steve Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle: The Portrait of Paul in the Miletus Speech and 1 Thessalonians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 14–17; Keener, *Acts*, 233–37.
[26] Walton, *Leadership*, 212.
[27] Keener, *Acts*, 393; cf. 223–24, 400.
[28] Pervo, *Profit*, 137.
[29] Richard Burridge, "The Genre of Acts–Revisited," in *Reading Acts Today: FS L. Alexander* (ed. Steve Walton, et. al.; London: T&T Clark, 2011), 3–28.
[30] Peterson, *Acts*, 15. Keener offers a recent, thorough defense of reading Acts as ancient historiography in Keener, *Acts*, 51–147.
[31] Brian S. Rosner, "Acts and Biblical History," in *The Book of Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting* (ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 65–82, citing 68. Cf. Sterling, *Historiography*, 63; Thompson, *Acts*, 20–21.
[32] For useful summary and critique of different approaches, see Beverly R. Gaventa, "Toward a Theology of Acts: Reading and Rereading," *Interp* 42 (1988): 146–57, 146–57; I. Howard Marshall, "How Does One Write on the Theology of Acts?," in *Witness to the Gospel* (ed. I. Howard Marshall and David G. Peterson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 3–16.

separated from it. An attempt to do justice to the theology of Acts must struggle to reclaim the character of Acts as a narrative."[33] Peterson summarizes nine editorial techniques and literary strategies that contribute to Luke's narrative theology and its hortatory implications: (1) editorial summaries; (2) inclusions; (3) use of key terms; (4) use of Scripture; (5) speeches with patterns of repetition; (6) narrative repetition; (7) parallel accounts; (8) contrasting accounts; and (9) significant geographical, cultural, and social indicators.[34] Chapters 5–6 will largely adopt this narrative-critical approach to analyzing Acts. However, given our focus on suffering's function in Luke's worldview, we will also highlight other features, such as Luke's use of symbols[35] and insights from historical and social scientific studies.

1.3. Purpose of Acts

Interpreters have suggested various purposes for Luke-Acts, though there is a growing consensus that Luke writes for legitimation and apologetic purposes.[36] Luke's prologue suggests that the Gospel and probably also Acts (cf. 1:1) are addressed primarily to believers who have been instructed concerning the Christian faith but may have received some misinformation or have lingering questions concerning God's unfolding purposes and their present identity as the church (Luke 1:4). Among other things, Luke's narrative may address questions prompted by the gospel message concerning a crucified and risen Messiah and the inclusion of Gentiles into God's people.[37] Perhaps Luke's readers themselves are facing persecution of some kind.[38] So Luke writes his "orderly account" (1:3) to give confidence or certainty (ἀσφάλεια, 1:4) to readers about "who we are and how we got here."[39] Luke "legitimates" the suffering community of Christ followers as the eschatological people of God in and through whom God's ancient promises of salvation are being realized.[40]

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[33] Gaventa, "Theology," 150.
[34] Peterson, *Acts*, 42–47.
[35] See ch. 6 §1.1.
[36] Mark L. Strauss, "The Purpose of Luke-Acts: Reaching a Consensus," in *New Testament Theology in Light of the Church's Mission: FS I. Howard Marshall* (ed. Jon Laansma, et al.; Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2011), 135–50; cf. Maddox, *Purpose*; Philip F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 16–23.
[37] Cf. Brian Rapske, "Opposition to the Plan of God and Persecution," in *Witness to the Gospel* (ed. I. Howard Marshall and David G. Peterson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 235–56, esp. 236.
[38] Robert P. Menzies, "The Persecuted Prophets: A Mirror Image of Luke's Spirit-Inspired Church," in *Spirit and Christ: FS Max Turner* (ed. I. Howard Marshall, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 52–70.
[39] Strauss, "Purpose," 141.
[40] Ibid., 143. Cf. Thompson, *Acts*, 19–20. Modica argues that Luke portrays Jesus and his followers as "martyrs" in order to "legitimize the early movement." Joseph B. Modica, "The Function and Purpose

1.4. Suffering and Persecution in Luke-Acts: An Initial Overview

Earlier we defined suffering as *the individual or group experience of bearing physical, psychological, economic, and/or social pain, distress or loss.*[41] Luke presents suffering as a holistic and multifaceted reality, as illustrated by Paul and Silas' beating and imprisonment in Philippi without trial or regard to their social status (Acts 16:22–24; cf. Introduction §3.2.1). They suffer physical pain, public humiliation, and likely psychological distress. Here we will survey further examples of suffering in Luke-Acts, including instances of persecution, oppression and injustice, natural adversity, and retributive suffering.

Persecution plays an important role in Luke-Acts, as in 4 Maccabees.[42] Examples of persecution in Acts include arrests and imprisonments (4:2), false accusations (6:13–14), beatings (5:40), murder plots (9:23), and killings (12:2). Persecution usually entails some *physical* harm inflicted by someone else, whether threatened or actual, though it often includes psychological, economic, and social dimensions.

Examples of suffering from *political injustice* include Jesus' crucifixion (Luke 23:20–25) and Paul's prolonged imprisonment (Acts 24:26–27), and 16:16–18 mentions a girl's economically motivated slavery (16:16).[43] Luke stresses that God's coming righteous judgment will ultimately answer these present injustices, which offers hope to sufferers and a sober warning to perpetrators of injustice.[44]

The supreme example of persecution and injustice in Luke's Gospel comes in Jesus' passion. Jesus announces that he "must suffer many things" (Luke 9:22), but Luke's description of his physical suffering and death is quite reserved and matter-of-fact, particularly when compared with Jewish martyr narratives such as in 2 and 4 Maccabees.[45] Luke affirms Jesus' ignominious, painful death—"there they crucified him" (23:33)—but he emphasizes the relational, emotional, and social dimensions of Jesus' suffering. He is betrayed and denied by close friends, as he predicted (22:22, 31–34, 47–48, 57–62). Jesus alone fully grasps the suffering he must face, and he

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of Suffering, Persecution, and Martyrdom in Luke-Acts: An Exegetical and Theological Inquiry" (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1995), 146, cf. 228–31. Interpretations of Jesus' death as martyrdom are critiqued in Brian J. Tabb, "Is the Lukan Jesus a Martyr? A Critical Assessment of a Scholarly Consensus" (paper presented at the ETS Annual Meeting, Milwaukee, 2012).

[41] See Introduction §3.1.2.

[42] Cf. Introduction §3.1.3; ch. 3 §1.4.

[43] See ch. 6 §4.1, 3.

[44] See ch. 6 §6.2.1.

[45] Compare ch. 3 §2.3–5 (on 4 Macc 6:1–30). Cf. Joel B. Green, *The Death of Jesus: Tradition and Interpretation in the Passion Narrative* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1988), 320.

experiences profound anguish (ἀγωνία) in prayer (22:44),[46] while his disciples quarrel (22:24), misunderstand him (22:38, 51), and sleep from grief at his time of greatest need (22:45–46). Jesus is forcefully arrested like a bandit (λῃστής, 22:52), then mocked, beaten, reviled, and falsely accused by opponents who seek to humiliate him and destroy his public identity and credibility (cf. 22:63–65; 23:2, 10–11, 35–36, 39).[47]

Luke's writings offer examples of *natural adversities*,[48] hardships resulting from calamity, personal or corporate loss or disappointment and not from human antagonism. Elizabeth's barrenness is mentioned prominently in the Gospel's opening scene (1:7),[49] and the end of Acts features a violent storm and shipwreck (27:13–44). In between these bookends of suffering, people suffer from disease and unclean spirits (Luke 7:21), fever (4:38), leprosy (17:12), blindness (18:35), lameness and paralysis (Acts 8:7), poverty (Luke 16:20), and famine (Acts 11:27–30).

However, in Luke's worldview none of these instances of suffering is strictly natural, political, or economic, but has underlying spiritual realities. Therefore suffering is not neutral or "indifferent" (ἀδιάφορα) in Luke's worldview, as it is for Seneca.[50] Rather, Luke presents human suffering as a fundamental expression of the world's brokenness because of sin against God and Satan's oppression. At the same time, the suffering of Jesus and his followers is part of the *reversal* and *redemption* of this brokenness. For example, a woman is unable to straighten her back because of "a spirit of weakness" (πνεῦμα … ἀσθενείας). After healing her, Jesus describes the woman as previously bound by Satan (ἣν ἔδησεν ὁ σατανᾶς) for eighteen years (Luke 13:11, 16; cf. Acts 10:38; 26:18). Further, Luke highlights the central role of Jesus' redemptive suffering in the outworking of God's sovereign purposes (Luke 9:22; Acts 4:28; cf. ch. 6 §2.2–3). God then empowers suffering believers to proclaim the gospel (4:29–31; 9:16; cf. ch. 6 §3.3; 5.4). God and Jesus demonstrate power and compassion to heal and restore sufferers (Luke 1:25; Acts 10:38; cf. ch. 6 §5.3), and will ultimately end and reverse suffering and right all injustice (3:20–21; 17:31; 24:25; cf. ch. 6 §6.2–3).

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[46] For defense of the originality of Luke 22:43–44, see Appendix 1.
[47] Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 406–7.
[48] This term is used by Estridge, "Suffering," 257–58.
[49] The suffering attending barrenness is discussed §2.3.1; cf. Introduction §3.2.
[50] Rightly Brookins, "Dispute," 37–42.

Luke views some suffering as *punitive*, an expression of divine judgment, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:5, 10), Herod (12:23), Elymas (13:11), and Israel's Babylonian exile (7:43). However, Jesus makes clear in Luke 13:2–5 that not all suffering should be interpreted as punishment for sins personally committed. Luke-Acts records numerous instances of healing and reversal of suffering, but not all are healed or spared from suffering and death (Luke 4:25–27; 13:1–5; 16:20–22). While Paul experiences divine deliverance time and again, at the close of Acts he waits under house arrest in Rome. In Acts 12:1–11, one apostle is beheaded while another is miraculously rescued from prison, which illustrates the complexity of Jesus' teaching in Luke 21:16–18: "some of you they will put to death … [b]ut not a hair of your head will perish."[51] Thus Thompson writes, "The sometimes contrasting outcomes for God's people found side by side caution against simplistic answers concerning why in the book of Acts some suffer and others are delivered."[52]

Luke 8:43–48 illustrates the multifaceted nature of suffering, as well as the comprehensive salvation brought by Jesus. Verse 43 introduces a woman who for twelve years suffered from untreatable hemorrhaging. This condition rendered the woman ritually unclean and perpetually impure, "with the consequence that she had lived in isolation from her community these twelve years."[53] Additionally, she was financially destitute, having spent all her resources in search of a cure.[54] Jesus' response takes account of this complex suffering. She experiences immediate *physical* healing (ἰάθη παραχρῆμα; 8:47). Then Jesus addresses her, "Daughter, your faith has saved (σέσωκεν) you; go in peace" (εἰρήνην; 8:48). Jesus addresses her warmly as "daughter" (θυγάτηρ), suggesting a new relational identity determined by her faith (8:48).[55] The woman's "salvation" includes physical healing, which the parallel in Mark 5:34 emphasizes (cf. NIV11, CEB), but in Luke's account "salvation" includes an experience of the eschatological *shalom* brought by Jesus.[56]

Luke stresses that God's purposes are (or will be) fulfilled and the Gospel advances through danger, suffering, and persecution.[57] However, Pervo is surely

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[51] Kelhoffer fails to take into account this complexity when he claims that James' death is "a remarkable exception" to Luke 21:18. *Persecution*, 285. Cf. Tabb, "Review of Kelhoffer."
[52] Thompson, *Acts*, 61.
[53] Bruce, *Acts*, 347. Cf. Neyrey, "Universe," 287–88.
[54] For discussion of the textual problem in 8:43, see Metzger, *Commentary*, 121.
[55] Rightly Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 349.
[56] Luke 1:79; 2:14; 7:50; Acts 10:36; cf. Isa 9:6–7; 52:7; 57:19; Cf. ch. 6 §5.1, 3; John Nolland, *Luke* (3 vols.; Dallas: Word, 1989, 1993), 1:360, 420.
[57] "Persecution is the occasion of divine triumph," according to Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 338.

mistaken to assert Luke's so-called "theology of glory" necessarily means that "[s]uffering does not really exist in these tales."[58] As Gaventa argues, Luke's confidence in the ultimate success of God's Word proclaimed by Jesus' suffering followers "is not the same as triumphalism and does not negate the continued presence of persecution and rejection in the narrative of Acts. For Luke, both God's triumph and the rejection by the world are part of the 'time of the church.'"[59]

2. Exegesis of Acts 6:8–8:4

2.1. Introduction

Having surveyed the theme of suffering in Luke-Acts, we now focus on two key passages in Acts. 6:8–8:4 has been chosen for close analysis for three reasons. First, while Peter and the other apostles encounter persecution in Acts 4–5, the opposition to Stephen's ministry culminates in deadly violence (7:54–8:1). Second, Stephen's trial and execution is clearly patterned after Jesus' passion.[60] Third, Stephen's persecution serves an important transitional role in the narrative, instigating great persecution against the Jerusalem church (8:1b) and ironically further proclamation of the Word by scattered believers (8:1b, 4–5; 11:19–20).

Acts 6:8–8:4 raises numerous literary, historical, and theological challenges, which cannot be addressed here. We will focus on Luke's portrayal of Stephen's suffering and death and the resulting persecution against the Jerusalem church. This study will proceed four stages: (1) Stephen's witness and escalating opposition (6:8–15); (2) Stephen's defense speech (7:1–53); (3) Stephen's violent death (7:54–8:1a); and (4) the immediate consequences of his death (8:1b–4).[61]

2.2. Opposition to Stephen's Witness (6:8–15)

Luke devotes vast space to Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin (7:1–53); however, the comparably brief introduction of Stephen and his opponents in 6:8–15 is particularly important for Luke's portrayal of Stephen's suffering. Our analysis will be focused around two questions. First, how should the parallels between Stephen's and the apostles' ministry and opposition be explained? Second, what is the source and nature of the opposition to Stephen?

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[58] Pervo, *Profit*, 27.
[59] Gaventa, "Theology," 157.
[60] See §2.4.2.
[61] For similar outlines, see Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 267, 317; Longenecker, "Acts," 810–35.

2.2.1. Stephen and the Apostles

Following the appointment of the Seven and a summary statement highlighting the Word's progress (6:1–7), Luke focuses on Stephen, one of Seven (6:3, 5). The narrative of Stephen's ministry and opposition begins with a background summary of his powerful ministry (6:8).[62] Stephen's description as πλήρης χάριτος καὶ δυνάμεως recalls his earlier introduction as "a man full (πλήρης) of faith and the Holy Spirit" (6:5).[63] Stephen's powerful wonders and signs recall the miracles performed by the apostles (2:43, 5:12; cf. 2:19; 4:30), Jesus (2:22), and Moses (7:36). Like these precursors, Stephen's ministry is divinely attested and incites persecution from his own people.

> Mittelstadt observes a common narrative pattern in Acts 4–7:
>
> Each of Jesus' witnesses performs miracles (Acts 3.1–10; 5.12–16; 6.8) which provokes antagonists (4.1–3; 5.27; 6.12) and leads to an assembly before the Sanhedrin (4.5–7; 5.27; 6.12).… Each episode reaches a climax through the persecution suffered by the witness which is also followed by renewed proclamation of God's word (4:31; 5:42; 8:1–4).[64]

Stephen's wisdom, Spirit-filled speech, and great signs thus establish his "credibility as an interpreter of the biblical story,"[65] since he "shares qualities of God's most important messengers,"[66] including persecution.[67] As Pervo observes, "Each episode leads to greater violence and mounting tension. The officials first warn, then whip, and finally kill."[68]

2.2.2. Stephen's Persecution and Trial

In Acts 6, a new group of opponents is introduced who bring new charges against Jesus' followers.[69] Stephen's adversaries, probably like Stephen, are Hellenistic Jews from the synagogue (6:9).[70] The sentence construction in 6:9 is challenging, though

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[62] The imperfect ἐποίει signals that 6:8 serves as background for the opposition in 6:9, introduced by the aorist (ἀνέστησαν). Cf. Campbell, *Basics*, 44.
[63] Barnabas is similarly described in Acts 11:24. The variant reading πλήρης *πίστεως* in 6:8 (cf. KJV) is influenced by 6:5.
[64] Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 111. For similar analysis, cf. Pervo, *Profit*, 19–20; Estridge, "Suffering," 193, 244, 260; Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 204; Jean Zumstein, "L'apotre comme martyr dans les Actes de Luc," *RTP* 112 (1980): 371–90, esp. 374, who leaves open the question of an organizing literary pattern.
[65] Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 104.
[66] Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986, 1990), 2:83.
[67] Cf. Richard B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Exposition* (London: Methuen, 1901), xlix; M. D. Goulder, *Type and History in Acts* (London: SPCK, 1964), 74, 86–87.
[68] *Profit*, 19–20.
[69] Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 111.
[70] Alexandru Neagoe, *The Trial of the Gospel: An Apologetic Reading of Luke's Trial Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 159–60; Barrett, *Acts*, 1:324.

most likely only *one* synagogue is in view, called "Synagogue of the Freedmen," composed of formerly enslaved Diaspora Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia, now in Jerusalem.[71] The synagogue's opposition to Stephen recalls Jesus' rejection in his hometown synagogue (Luke 4:28), as well as his predictions concerning such opposition to his followers (12:11; 21:12).[72]

Stephen's conflict begins as a dispute (συζητοῦντες). Though 6:9 does not specify the subject of debate, the charges against Stephen in 6:13–14 and the parallel in 9:29 suggest that Jesus' messiahship and its radical implications are central to the conflict.[73] Stephen's opponents "were unable to stand against the wisdom and the Spirit (τῇ σοφίᾳ καὶ τῷ πνεύματι) by which he was speaking." This narrative aside recalls Jesus' promises in Luke 12:12 ("the Holy Spirit will teach you") and 21:15 ("I will give you a mouth and wisdom [σοφίαν], which none of your opponents will be able to stand against [ἀντιστῆναι] or contradict").[74]

τότε in 6:11 signals a new development in Stephen's conflict with the synagogue.[75] Opponents "secretly instigated" (ὑπέβαλον)[76] men to accuse Stephen of "speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God." This charge recalls similar accusations against Jesus in Luke 5:21 (τίς ἐστιν οὗτος ὃς *λαλεῖ βλασφημίας*;) and later at his trial (Matt 26:65; Mark 14:64; not in Luke).[77] "Moses" in 6:11 refers by metonymy to the Law, as verses 13–14 make clear (*τοῦ νόμου* … τὰ ἔθη ἃ παρέδωκεν ἡμῖν *Μωϋσῆς*).[78]

This antagonism builds in 6:12, as Stephen's opponents "stirred up (συνεκίνησαν) the people, the elders, and the scribes," who took physical action. They

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[71] Note the singular, ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς. This view takes the initial καί as epexegetical. Cf. NIV11; Barrett, *Acts*, 1:323–25; Peterson, *Acts*, 239–40. Alternatively, Jervell claims that trouble comes "aus verschiedenen Synagogen in Jerusalem," with two groups of Diaspora Jews coming together. Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 225. Cf. Stephen K. Catto, *Reconstructing the First-Century Synagogue: A Critical Analysis of Current Research* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 166.

[72] Dennis Sweetland writes, "What happens in Acts is what was mentioned in Luke 12 and 21." "Discipleship and Persecution: A Study of Luke 12:1–12," *Bib* 65 (1984): 61–80, citing 77 n. 79.

[73] Cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 125.

[74] Cf. Tannehill, *Unity*, 2:83; Matthew L. Skinner, *The Trial Narratives: Conflict, Power, and Identity in the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 118. On the longer Western text in 6:10–11, see Metzger, *Commentary*, 297–98.

[75] Cf. Peterson, *Acts*, 241; Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2010), 37-42.

[76] On ὑποβάλλω, see BDAG 1036; Barrett, *Acts*, 1:325–26. Cf. *Mart. Pol.* 17:2.

[77] Witherington writes, "Here is compelling evidence that Luke had Acts in mind while writing his Gospel, and edited certain items out of his Markan source about Jesus' Passion, but wrote up the Stephen story using language reminiscent of the Markan Passion account." *Acts*, 253. Cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 127.

[78] Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 225. Cf. Josephus, *War* 2.145.

"came upon and forcibly seized" (ἐπιστάντες συνήρπασαν) Stephen and "led him to the council" (ἤγαγον εἰς τὸ συνέδριον). These hostile actions recall similar measures against the apostles (4:1, ἐπέστησαν; 5:27, Ἀγαγόντες … ἐν τῷ συνεδρίῳ) and Jesus (Luke 22:66, ἀπήγαγον αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ συνέδριον αὐτῶν). The leaders' antagonism is unsurprising (cf. 4:5, 23), but thus far in Acts ὁ λαός had responded positively to the apostles and Stephen's ministry (2:47; 4:21; 5:12–13, 25–26; 6:8).[79] Readers of Luke's Gospel may recall a similar shift in popular sentiment during Jesus' trial, as "the people" who had listened to Jesus teaching in the Temple (Luke 21:23) join the chief priests and rulers in calling for his crucifixion (23:13, 18–25).[80]

In 6:13–14, formal charges are leveled against Stephen. Luke introduces Stephen's accusers as "false witnesses," signaling to readers that their testimony is unreliable, but also, ironically, that *they* are the ones speaking "against Moses and God" (cf. Exod 20:16; Deut 19:16–19). This mention of false witnesses again recalls Jesus' trial (Mark 14:56–57; Matt 26:60–61; not in Luke).

Stephen is accused of speaking unceasingly "against the Holy Place and the Law" (6:13).[81] These charges reiterate and specify earlier accusations in 6:11 and are clarified further in 6:14 (note γάρ). As Table 3 illustrates, 6:11, 13–14 include essentially only *two* charges against Stephen, which are each repeated and specified. In 6:14, it becomes clear that Stephen is accused of claiming that *Jesus* will destroy the Temple and will alter the Mosaic Law,[82] thereby challenging two of Israel's fundamental identity markers.[83] It is crucial to stress that Luke presents these charges against Stephen as *false* (ψευδεῖς).[84] The nearest parallel comes in Luke 21:6 (οὐκ ἀφεθήσεται λίθος ἐπὶ λίθῳ ὃς οὐ καταλυθήσεται); however, Jesus is nowhere presented as saying that *he* would destroy the Temple. The charge that Jesus intended to change the customs Moses handed down, which harkens back to Antiochus IV's reforms (1 Macc 1:49; 4 Macc 18:5), appears equally spurious.[85] Luke presents Jesus as following the Law's customs (Luke 2:22–24, 27, 39; 5:14), maintaining its

[79] Cf. Earl J. Richard, *Acts 6:1-8:4: The Author's Method of Composition* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978), 319.
[80] Cf. John T. Carroll, "Luke's Crucifixion Scene," in *Reimaging the Death of the Lukan Jesus* (ed. Dennis D. Sylva; Frankfurt: Hain, 1990), 108–24, 108.
[81] Some MSS add τούτου after ἁγίου, under the influence of 6:14; the omission is well supported (P^{74} א A D E Ψ 0175 M lat).
[82] τὰ ἔθη here denotes laws, including written and oral tradition, according to Barrett, *Acts*, 328.
[83] Cf. Neagoe, *Trial*, 161–62; Dennis D. Sylva, "The Meaning and Function of Acts 7:46-50," *JBL* 106 (1987): 261–75, citing 268–69. On Jewish symbols, see ch. 4 §1.1; ch. 7 §3.1; Wright, *NTPG*, 224–32.
[84] Cf. Matt 26:60–61; Mark 14:57–58; Neagoe, *Trial*, 162.
[85] Cf. Acts 21:21 for similar rumors about Paul.

authority and permanence (10:26; 16:17), and fulfilling the Law (24:44). In 7:2–53, "Stephen intends to bring his own true witness, not answer someone else's trumped-up charges."[86] Stephen will ironically and incisively demonstrate that *his opponents* have neither rightly understood the Temple's nature and purpose (7:46–50) nor kept the Law themselves (7:53).[87]

Table 3: Stephen's Charges (Acts 6:11–14)

Charge 1: Against God's Temple	*Charge 2: Against the Mosaic Law*
Blasphemies against God (v. 11)	Blasphemies against Moses (v. 11)
Speaking against this holy place (v. 13)	Speaking against the Law (v. 13)
Claims Jesus the Nazarene will destroy this place (v. 14)	Claims Jesus will change the customs Moses delivered to us (v. 14)

Before Stephen addresses the council, they see "that his face was as an angel's face" (6:15). This editorial comment serves at least three functions. First, Stephen's change of countenance signals that he is "an authoritative spokesperson for God."[88] Second, Stephen's glorious appearance anticipates his heavenly vindication in 7:55–57. Third, the double reference to "face" (πρόσωπον) in 6:15 suggests an allusion to Exodus 34:29–35, where Israel "saw Moses' face, that it was charged with glory" (εἶδον … τὸ πρόσωπον Μωυσῆ ὅτι δεδόξασται, 34:35 LXX) as he descended from the mountain after receiving the Ten Words.[89] Contextual considerations further strengthen this allusion to Exodus 34. Acts 6:14 references Moses handing down customs to Israel. Further, Acts 7:30, 38 mentions "an angel" who appeared to Moses at the burning bush (cf. Exod 3:2) and at Sinai (cf. 7:53). Additionally, Stephen's wisdom and powerful words and deeds (6:8, 10) anticipate a similar portrayal of Moses in 7:22. Thus, Stephen is not *opposed to* Moses but *cast as* Moses, both by his glorious face and his rejection by Israel (cf. Acts 7:27, 39).[90]

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[86] Witherington, *Acts*, 258.
[87] See James P. Sweeney, "Stephen's Speech (Acts 7:2-53): Is it As 'Anti-Temple' As Is Frequently Alleged?," *TJ* 23 (2002): 185–210; Steve Walton, "A Tale of Two Perspectives? The Place of the Temple in Acts," in *Heaven on Earth* (ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Simon J. Gathercole; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), 135–49.
[88] Luke T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical, 1992), 110.
[89] Cf. Peterson, *Acts*, 243.
[90] This interpretation of 6:15 is not considered by Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology, and Soteriology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 96–98.

2.3. Stephen's Defense Speech (7:1–53)

Following the high priest's brief question in 7:1 ("Are these things so?"), Stephen launches into the longest speech in Acts. Stephen's *tour de force* through Israel's history begins with Abraham and the patriarchs (7:2–16), centers on Moses (7:17–43), and concludes with a discussion of the tent of meeting and the Temple (7:44–50) and a climactic indictment of his hearers (7:51–53).[91] Two themes stand out in Stephen's speech which are quite fitting in light of the charges against him:[92] Israel has failed to worship God rightly and has consistently resisted and persecuted God's leaders.

Numerous studies have considered Luke's redaction and literary purposes,[93] the speech's historicity,[94] rhetoric,[95] and portrayal of the Temple.[96] However, our focus will be on Stephen's portrayal of suffering and persecution in Israel's story, and its relationship to Jesus and Stephen's persecution.[97]

2.3.1. Suffering and Persecution in Israel's History

Other studies have rightly observed references to Israel's persecution and rejection of her appointed leaders in Stephen's speech.[98] However, we will advance the discussion by treating the speech's portrait of suffering more holistically. Stephen references at least four distinct categories of suffering: (1) natural adversities; (2) suffering from political oppression; (3) suffering resulting from conflict and opposition within Israel; and (4) retributive or disciplinary suffering.[99]

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[91] This outline is closest to that of Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (2 vols.; Freiburg: Herder, 1980–82), 1:446–47. For other proposals, see Marion L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville: Westminister John Knox, 1994), 58–59.

[92] We thus take issue with Martin Dibelius' influential view that Stephen's speech is largely irrelevant and incomprehensible in its context, in *The Book of Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 69–71.

[93] Richard, *Acts 6:1-8:4*; John J. Kilgallen, *The Stephen Speech: A Literary and Redactional Study of Acts 7, 2-53* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1976); Heinz-Werner Neudorfer, "The Speech of Stephen," in *Witness to the Gospel* (ed. I. Howard Marshall and David G. Peterson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 275–94.

[94] J. Julius Scott, "Stephen's Speech: A Possible Model for Luke's Historical Method?," *JETS* 17 (1974): 91–97; Hemer and Gempf, *History*, 415–27.

[95] George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 121–22; Soards, *Speeches*, 57–70; Witherington, *Acts*, 260–61.

[96] Sweeney, "Stephen's Speech," 185–210; Sylva, "Acts 7:46-50," 261–75. Witherington's conclusion seems on target: "Stephen's speech is *not* Law or temple critical, it is people critical on the basis of the Law and the Prophets, and of a proper theology of God's presence and transcendence and so a proper theology of God's dwelling place." *Acts*, 275.

[97] On the terms suffering and persecution, see the Introduction §3.1.

[98] Cf. House, "Suffering," 322; Estridge, "Suffering," 133–34; Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 206–14; Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 105–10.

[99] For further discussion, see §1.4.

First, in 7:2–16 Stephen highlights examples of *natural adversity* in the patriarchal history.[100] First, Abraham was called to leave his own land and family to live as a sojourner (7:2–4; cf. Gen 12:1, 4).[101] While not emphasized in Acts, Abraham's departure from his homeland and relatives likely entailed some social pain, distress, or loss. Second, he was childless until God's promise was finally realized through Isaac's birth (Acts 7:5, 8; cf. Gen 11:30, 15:3; 18:10). Wenham writes, "Without children the man had no one to perpetuate his name and the wife enjoyed little prestige and much frustration."[102] Sarah's barrenness is particularly painful and perplexing since the couple is "repeatedly promised a child by God, but there is great delay in the fulfillment of that promise."[103] Third, Stephen recounts the "great affliction" (θλῖψις μεγάλη) stemming from the famine (λιμός) in Egypt and Canaan (Acts 7:11; cf. Gen 41:53–42:5).[104] This famine threatens the survival of Jacob's family and prompts their journey to Egypt (cf. Gen 42:2). It is noteworthy that this λιμός is described as θλῖψις μεγάλη, since θλῖψις elsewhere in Acts is limited to or includes persecution (7:10; 11:19; 14:22; 20:23). In mentioning these "natural afflictions" (sojourning, childlessness, and famine), Stephen consistently highlights God's providential preservation of his people in suffering and the fulfillment of the divine promise in the face of insurmountable obstacles (7:7–8, 10, 12–13, 17).

Second, suffering caused by *political oppression* emerges as an important theme in 7:17–34. Stephen recalls God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would sojourn "in a foreign land," whose inhabitants "would enslave (δουλώσουσιν) and mistreat (κακώσουσιν) them for four hundred years" (7:6; cf. Gen 15:13–14). Then 7:19 recounts Pharaoh's cunning exploitation (κατασοφισάμενος)[105] and mistreatment (ἐκάκωσεν) of "our fathers," which resulted in forced exposure of their infants, including Moses (7:21; cf. Exod 1:1–2:10). After Moses' flight to Midian (7:29), he is told that God has seen Israel's mistreatment (κάκωσιν), heard their groaning (στεναγμοῦ), and will deliver them" (ἐξελέσθαι, 7:34). κάκωσις ("mistreatment," NRSV; "oppression," NIV11) alludes to Exod 3:7, 17 LXX and recalls the cognate κακόω in Acts 7:19. Likewise, στεναγμός alludes to Exod 2:24

[100] The designation *natural adversity* is defined and clarified in §1.4.
[101] For discussion of the chronology in Acts 7:4 and Genesis 11:26–32, see Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 366–68.
[102] Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (Waco: Word, 1987), 273.
[103] Ibid.
[104] The famine reference in 7:11 anticipates Agabus' prediction in 11:28, discussed in ch. 6 §4.4.
[105] On κατασοφίζομαι, see L&N §88.147.

LXX and here denotes groaning "caused by severe misery and oppression."[106] In Stephen's speech, Israel's oppression under foreign rule is predicted and planned by God (7:6, 17) and is the occasion for God's judgment of the oppressors (7:7) and salvation of his persecuted people (7:34).

Third, Stephen draws particular attention individual leaders in Israel's history who are approved by God but experience *persecution* by their kinsmen. Conzelmann states, "Joseph is often understood as a type of the innocent. But it is precisely the sufferings of Joseph that are all but ignored."[107] However, Stephen refers both specifically and generally to Joseph's "afflictions" in 7:9–10. His brothers sold him motivated by jealousy (ζηλώσαντες), but God was present with Joseph and delivered him ἐκ πασῶν τῶν θλίψεων αὐτοῦ. Joseph was given "grace and wisdom" before Pharaoh, made ruler over Egypt, and positioned to provide for his family during the famine (7:10–14). Joseph's χάρις and σοφία (7:10) recall the earlier portrait of Stephen (6:3, 8, 10). Likewise, Joseph's brothers' jealousy (ζηλώσαντες) alludes to Gen 37:11 LXX (ἐζήλωσαν) and also resonates with Luke's emphasis on the Jewish leaders' jealousy (Acts 5:17; 13:45; 17:5).[108]

Next, Stephen highlights Moses' divine appointment and persecution by his "brothers," who did not recognize "that God was giving them salvation (σωτηρίαν) by his hand" (7:25). Moses' fellow Israelites "thrust aside" (ἀπώσατο) and rejected (ἠρνήσαντο) Moses, questioning his legitimacy as their ruler and judge (7:27, 35; Exod 2:14 LXX). But their rejection is countered by divine affirmation of Moses as "ruler and redeemer," who led Israel out of Egypt "by performing wonders and signs" (7:36). Yet opposition to Moses' leadership continued and intensified as Israel "refused to obey him, but thrust him aside (ἀπώσαντο), and turned in their hearts to Egypt" (7:39; cf. Exod 16:3; Num 14:3; Ezek 20:8). Verses 40–43 link the people's rejection of Moses with their rejection of God and idolatry, beginning with the golden calf incident (cf. Exod 32:1–6).[109]

Fourth, Stephen refers briefly to Israel's *disciplinary* suffering in response to their idolatry: "God turned away and handed them over to worship the host of heaven" (7:42). Stephen then cites the prophetic warning of judgment adapted from Amos

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[106] L&N §25.143; cf. Josephus, *War* 5:32; 6:272.
[107] Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 53.
[108] On the polemical character of Acts 7:9–16, see Earl J. Richard, "The Polemical Character of the Joseph Episode in Acts 7," *JBL* 98 (1979): 255–267. However, Richard overstates his conclusion that Stephen gives "a farewell speech to Judaism" (p. 265).
[109] Cf. ἀπωθέω in 4 Kgdms 17:20; Jer 6:19; Ezek 5:6; 20:13, 16, 24 LXX.

5:27 LXX, "I will send you into exile beyond Babylon" (Acts 7:43). Amos warned of "exile beyond Damascus," likely referring to the northern kingdom's Assyrian captivity. However, addressing Jerusalem Jews, Stephen modifies the quotation to refer poignantly to Judah's Babylonian exile, which was attended by the destruction of Solomon's temple (cf. 2 Kings 25:8–11).[110] Watson claims that this speech "is partly encoded" and addresses the Jews' *continuing* exile under foreign domination.[111] However, Stephen's (and Luke's) point is not, "Until the Jews follow God's law and repent, they will suffer" under Rome, awaiting Jesus' return as "the political Messiah."[112] Rather, as we will see, Stephen stresses his accusers' culpability for Jesus' unjust death but also dramatically testifies to the Son of Man's vindication and inaugurated heavenly reign (7:51–56).[113]

2.3.2. Israel's Persecution of the Righteous One

Stephen refers repeatedly to οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν (7:11–12, 15, 19, 38–39, 44–45), highlighting his shared heritage with his hearers. However, this shifts dramatically in 7:51, when Stephen climactically indicts his opponents by linking them with their recalcitrant ancestors who persecuted the prophets (ὡς οἱ *πατέρες ὑμῶν* καὶ ὑμεῖς). Stephen presents Israel's story as "one of rejection and intense persecution and martyrdom of Spirit-led agents."[114] Verse 52 summarizes, "Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute?"[115] This pattern of persecution *within* Israel has culminated in the betrayal and murder of Jesus, ὁ δίκαιος (7:52).

Stephen effectively turns the tables on his accusers.[116] Though Stephen stands charged with speaking against Moses (6:11), it is rather his accusers "who received the Law as delivered by angels and did not keep it" (7:53).[117] Like the wilderness generation who opposed Moses, they are "stiff-necked" (cf. Exod 33:3, 5; 34:9 LXX), "uncircumcised in heart and ears" (cf. Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16), and "always resist the

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[110] See Craig A. Evans, "Prophecy and Polemic: Jews in Luke's Scriptural Apology," in *Luke and Scripture* (ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 171–211, esp. 196; I. Howard Marshall, "Acts," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 513–606, esp. 565–66.
[111] Alan Watson, *The Trial of Stephen: The First Christian Martyr* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 80.
[112] Ibid., 82.
[113] For similar critique of Watson, see Neagoe, *Trial*, 163 n. 48.
[114] Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 110.
[115] Cf. Luke 6:23; 11:47, 49–51; 13:33–34.
[116] Peterson, *Acts*, 265.
[117] 7:53 is best understood vis-à-vis the Jewish tradition concerning angels' involvement in the giving of the Law (Deut 33:2 LXX; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2; *Jub*. 1:27–2:1; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.136. Contra Fletcher-Louis, *Angels*, 98–105.

Holy Spirit" (7:51; cf. Isa 63:10). Thus, "speaking in prophetic language (v. 51), Stephen denounces his audience for being prophet-killers (v. 52) and is himself killed as he narrates a prophetic vision (v. 55f)."[118]

2.4. Stephen's Death (7:54–8:1a)

Following Stephen's prophetic censure, his opponents respond with violent rage and thereby confirm Stephen's assessment that they follow their ancestors' example in persecuting the prophets (7:51). The narrative shifts back and forth between the persecutors and Stephen, and it is easy to see the stark and ironic contrast between them. Stephen is full of the Holy Spirit (7:55; cf. 6:3, 5), while his adversaries resist the Spirit (7:51). They murdered Jesus (v. 52), whom Stephen sees at God's right hand (vv. 55–56). Stephen beholds the glory of God and the exalted Jesus (vv. 55–56), but the crowd stones Stephen for blasphemy (7:58; cf. 6:11).[119] Stephen looks for divine vindication (vv. 55–56), while the crowd suspends legal process in favor of mob violence (vv. 57–58). Both cry out with a loud voice (κράξαντες/ ἔκραξεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ), but while the crowd seeks blood, Stephen seeks divine leniency for his persecutors (7:57, 60).

Three questions are of particular importance for understanding the significance of Stephen's suffering and death. First, what is the function of Stephen's heavenly vision? Second, how should parallels be explained between the trials and deaths of Stephen and Jesus? Third, to what extent does Stephen's suffering *legitimate* him as a true witness and *discredit* his opponents?

2.4.1. Stephen's Vision of the Son of Man (7:55–56)

The hostility toward Stephen reaches fever pitch in 7:54, as the crowd "was enraged in their hearts (διεπρίοντο ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν) and ground their teeth (ἔβρυχον τοὺς ὀδόντας) at him." Luke's wording recalls the council's response to Peter and the apostles in 5:33 (ἀκούσαντες διεπρίοντο καὶ ἐβούλοντο ἀνελεῖν αὐτούς), though Gamaliel's advice tempered their violence (5:34–40). In 7:54–60, no voice of moderation is heard, and in Luke's estimation, Stephen's opponents are now "found opposing God" (θεομάχοι εὑρεθῆτε, 5:39).

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[118] Miller, "Prophecy," 173.

[119] On stoning for blasphemy, see Bock, *Acts*, 312–13. Luke "had no idea how judicial stonings were carried out," according to Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 296. However, Joseph Fitzmyer responds, "Haenchen naively predicates Mishnaic judicial prescriptions of pre-70 Judea without a word to justify such gratuitous extrapolation." *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 391.

In 7:55, Stephen is described as "being full of the Spirit" (ὑπάρχων πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου; cf. 6:3, 5), which grounds his heavenly vision.[120] Fourth Maccabees 6:6 similarly portrays Eleazar looking to heaven while being tortured,[121] and in *Mart. Isa.* 5:6–7, Isaiah has a divine vision while being sawed in two. But Stephen's vision goes further than these examples. Like Abraham (cf. Acts 7:2), he sees "the glory of God and Jesus standing at God's right hand," and then interprets this vision in 7:56. Stephen's gaze into heaven (ἀτενίσας εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν) recalls 1:10, where the disciples look on at Jesus' ascension (ὡς ἀτενίζοντες ἦσαν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν). The opening of the heavens (οὐρανοὺς διηνοιγμένους) denotes a God-given revelatory experience, as in Luke 3:21, Acts 10:11.[122]

Stephen sees τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ δεξιῶν ἑστῶτα τοῦ θεοῦ, which recalls Luke 22:69 (*ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* καθήμενος *ἐκ δεξιῶν* τῆς δυνάμεως *τοῦ θεοῦ*).[123] Jesus' declaration combines allusions to Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 109:1 LXX.[124] While "Son of Man" occurs repeatedly in the Gospels, the expression occurs only here in Acts.[125] Barrett cautions against putting "too much stress on the Christological significance of the vision."[126] But the obvious parallel between Acts 7:56 and Luke 22:69, as well as the crowd's reaction in 7:57–58, suggest precisely the opposite conclusion. Stephen's vision recalls Peter's earlier proclamation of Jesus' heavenly exaltation as ruler, savior, and Lord (2:33–34; 5:31; cf. 1:9–11). But while Peter *declares* Jesus' exaltation, Stephen is an *eyewitness* of it.[127] Things are just as Jesus said they would be (Luke 22:69).[128] He has fulfilled Daniel 7:13–14 and received everlasting dominion as the Son of Man, and he will receive and vindicate his witness.[129]

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[120] Cf. Martin M. Culy and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2003), 145.
[121] Cf. ch. 3 §2.3.
[122] In place of διηνοιγμένους (א A B C), some manuscripts include the more common term ἀνεωγμένους (P^{74} D* E Ψ *Byz*).
[123] Cf. Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62.
[124] David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Luke," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 251–414, citing 391–92.
[125] υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου occurs three times outside the Gospels, never as a clear title (Heb 2:6; Rev 1:13; 14:14).
[126] Barrett, *Acts*, 1:383.
[127] Neagoe, *Trial*, 170.
[128] Peter Doble, "The Son of Man Saying in Stephen's Witnessing: Acts 6:8–8:2," *NTS* 31 (1985): 68–84, esp. 76.
[129] Steve Walton, "'The Heavens Opened': Cosmological and Theological Transformation in Luke and Acts," in *Cosmology and New Testament Theology* (ed. Jonathan T. Pennington and Sean M. McDonough; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 60–73, esp. 67.

Further, it is striking that the Son of Man is seen *standing* (ἑστῶτα) at God's right hand (7:55–56), since one expects him to be *sitting* (καθήμενος) according to Psalm 110:1 and Luke 22:69. Scholars have offered various interpretations of this.[130] According to Barrett, Stephen sees "an actual but personal and individual *parousia* taking place for the benefit of Stephen himself, and distinct from the universal *parousia* of the last day."[131] But this intriguing view must be rejected, because (1) παρουσία does not occur in the text, (2) it is confusing to employ this technical term but change the meaning, and (3) this interpretation is inconsistent with Lukan eschatology (cf. Acts 1:11).[132] Alternatively, Chibici-Revneanu argues that Acts 7:56 combines two motifs. First, Jesus shares God's throne as the vindicated Son of Man. Second, Jesus' standing position presents him as a righteous martyr vindicated in heaven (cf. Rev 5:6; 7:9; 4 Macc 17:18).[133]

Consideration of the Son of Man references in Luke's Gospel may illumine Acts 7:55–56. Jesus' promise in Luke 12:8–9 is the most suggestive parallel to Stephen's vision: "I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before people, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before God's angels, but the one who denies me before people will be denied before God's angels." Elsewhere Jesus stresses the Son of Man's destiny of suffering (9:22) and announced that his followers would be "blessed" when they too endure persecution "on account of the Son of Man" (6:22). Thus, in Acts 7:56 "Jesus has stood to give the ultimate witness to the first μαρτυς—the one who witnessed even unto death."[134] The suffering and exalted Son of Man now assumes "the standing posture … of a witness" in the heavenly court.[135] Stephen receives divine blessing and vindication, while his opponents are liable to the Son of Man's judgment (Luke 9:26; 12:9; cf. Acts 10:42; 17:31).

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[130] For a summary of interpretations, see Barrett, *Acts*, 1:384–85; Nicole Chibici-Revneanu, "Ein himmlischer Stehplatz: Die Haltung Jesu in der Stephanusvision (Apg 7.55–56) und ihre Bedeutung," *NTS* 53 (2007): 459–488.
[131] Charles K. Barrett, "Stephen and the Son of Man," in *Apophoreta, FS Ernst Haenschen* (ed. Walther Eltester; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964), 32–38, citing 36.
[132] "Jesus in Act 7.55–56 eben nicht wiederkommt, sondern im Himmel bleibt," according to Chibici-Revneanu, "Stehplatz," 465.
[133] Ibid., 487–88.
[134] Witherington, *Acts*, 275. Cf. Tannehill, *Unity*, 2:98–99; Allison A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 132.
[135] C. F. D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1967), 90. Cf. *Ascen. Isa.* 9:35–36.

2.4.2. Parallels between Jesus and Stephen

Witherington writes, "One of the overarching impressions of the material in Acts 6:8–8:3 is that Luke is deliberately writing this story to indicate how Stephen's last days and end parallel those of his master, Jesus."[136] Parallels between the passions of Jesus and Stephen have been well documented.[137] Both Jesus and Stephen (1) appear before the συνέδριον (Luke 22:66; Acts 6:12, 15); (2) are accused by false witnesses (Mark 14:56–58; Acts 6:13–14); (3) are charged with blasphemy (Mark 14:64; Acts 6:11; cf. 7:58); and (4) cry with a loud voice at their deaths (Luke 23:46; Acts 7:60).

Additionally, Stephen's final three sayings each echo Jesus' words in Luke's gospel. (5) Jesus promises and Stephen testifies to the Son of Man's exalted position (Luke 22:69; Acts 7:56). (6) Jesus prays, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (τὸ πνεῦμά μου; Luke 23:46), and Stephen similarly calls out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (τὸ πνεῦμά μου; 7:59). (7) Finally, Stephen's appeal, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (7:60) thematically parallels Jesus' prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).[138] Stephen's dying words not only recall Jesus' earlier statements; they are addressed *to* the risen, vindicated Lord.

How should these parallels be explained? For some, Jesus' suffering and death provide a paradigm *imitated* by his followers. Beck writes, "As a martyr Jesus dies for the cause of his own teaching in obedience to the way of life that he has laid on his disciples. In this he is their pattern."[139] Others prefer to describe this correspondence between Jesus and his disciples as a *continuation*. Cunningham writes, "[T]he rejection of Jesus *continues on* in the opposition and persecution of his disciples."[140]

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[136] Witherington, *Acts*, 252. Cf. Barrett, *Acts*, 1:320; James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 263–64.

[137] cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 253; Anselm Schulz, *Nachfolgen und Nachahmen; Studien über das Verhältnis der neutestamentlichen Jüngerschaft zur urchristlichen Vorbildethik* (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1962), 268; Moessner, "New Light," 234; Tannehill, *Unity*, 99; Craig C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Division within the Earliest Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 59; Charles K. Barrett, "*Imitatio Christi* in Acts," in *Jesus of Nazareth* (ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 251–62, esp. 254.

[138] On the authenticity of 23:34, see Appendix 1. Graham Stanton rightly observes that "Acts 7:60 and Luke 23:34 do not have a single word in common," and Stephen does not mention his opponents' ignorance. *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 35.

[139] Brian E. Beck, "Imitatio Christi and the Lucan Passion Narrative," in *Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament* (ed. William Horbury and Brian McNeil; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 28–47, esp. 47. Cf. Pate and Kennard, *Deliverance*, 463; John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green, *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), 81, who call Jesus' death paradigmatic.

[140] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 212. Cf. Robert O'Toole, "Parallels between Jesus and His Disciples in Luke-Acts: A Further Study," *BZ* 27 (1983): 195–212, esp. 211–12; Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 115.

Conzelmann acknowledges parallels but stresses that the idea of imitation is blended with other ideas.[141]

However, these interpretations are not mutually exclusive. Cunningham rightly observes that Luke emphasizes Jesus' *continued* work in and through his followers,[142] suggested already in Acts 1:1.[143] Jesus states that his disciples "will be hated by all for my name's sake" (Luke 21:17) and will bear witness amidst persecution (21:12–13), promises fulfilled in Stephen's trial and execution.[144] Further, Jesus acknowledges his suffering witness Stephen (7:56) and later interprets Saul's persecution of the church as "persecuting me" (9:4).[145] Nevertheless, Stephen's trial, witness, and death appear to be deliberately patterned after Jesus' passion.[146] Further, Jesus' initial passion prediction is immediately followed by a summons for costly discipleship (Luke 9:22–23).[147] Thus, "Jesus' way is normative for his followers."[148]

2.4.3. Stephen's Suffering as Legitimation

To what extent does Stephen's suffering and death serve to *legitimate* him as a true witness and *discredit* his opponents? James Kelhoffer contends, "[I]n Luke's presentation Stephen's killing does not serve to legitimize Stephen, whose standing requires no additional confirmation. Rather, his killing calls into question his killers' standing as devout Jews."[149] He follows Conzelmann, who suggests that Luke does not present Stephen as a martyr but rather offers "a picture of Israel (based on the Deuteronomic history) which portrays Israel as the wrongdoer."[150] However, there is strong evidence to suggest that Stephen's suffering *does* corroborate his legitimacy as a true witness.[151]

First, Stephen's poise in persecution serves as a narrative fulfillment of Jesus' promises in Luke 12:11–12; 21:12–19. Stephen's opposition originates from the synagogue (Acts 6:9; cf. Luke 12:11; 21:12) and he appears before the Jewish authorities (Acts 6:12; 7:1; cf. Luke 12:11). Yet they "were unable to stand against

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[141] Conzelmann, *Theology*, 233.
[142] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 212.
[143] ὧν *ἤρξατο* ὁ Ἰησοῦς ποιεῖν, on which see Thompson, *Acts*, 49.
[144] See §2.2.
[145] See §3.2.
[146] Contra Watson, *Trial*, 85–87.
[147] See ch. 6 §3.1.
[148] Talbert, *Learning*, 88. Cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (2 vols.; Garden City: Doubleday, 1981, 1985), 1:784.
[149] Kelhoffer, *Persecution*, 297.
[150] Conzelmann, *Acts*, 57.
[151] On legitimation, see §1.3.

the wisdom and the Spirit (ἀντιστῆναι τῇ σοφίᾳ καὶ τῷ πνεύματι) by which he was speaking" (Acts 6:10), a clear allusion to Luke 21:15 (σοφίαν … ἀντιστῆναι) and 12:12 (τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα διδάξει … ἃ δεῖ εἰπεῖν).[152] Finally, Stephen's death serves as the first fulfillment of Jesus' prediction "some of you they will put to death" (Luke 21:16).[153] These narrative fulfillments corroborate Stephen's legitimacy as a disciple and anchor his suffering within the divine plan.[154] Further, Stephen's indictment of his people as stiff-necked, uncircumcised in heart, resistant to the Spirit, and just like their murderous fathers is confirmed immediately in his martyrdom (7:51–8:1). Neagoe writes, "Stephen's cause is proved right precisely through his apparent defeat."[155]

Second, Stephen is portrayed as a persecuted prophet, full of the Spirit and wisdom (6:3, 5, 10; 7:55), who works signs and wonders (6:8), and receives divine revelation (7:55–56). He chides his accusers for persecuting the prophets like their ancestors (7:51). Finally, Stephen is persecuted by his own people (7:57–58), as were Joseph (7:9), Moses (7:35), and Jesus (7:52). Cunningham explains:

> In one short passage there are a number of persecutions all linked together: those of the prophets, Jesus, Stephen and the church. The fate of Israel's prophets is persecution. Jesus is persecuted just like the prophets of old … In saying that all Israel's prophets are persecuted and in casting Stephen in a prophetic mold, Luke prepares the reader for Stephen's fate as well.[156]

Thus, Stephen's persecution continues the pattern of Israel persecuting the prophets, who bear God's approval and speak God's word. The culmination of this motif comes in the murder of Jesus, "the righteous one," the one announced by the prophets (7:51) and proclaimed by Stephen (7:56), who now suffers the same fate as his Lord. Thus, Stephen's prophetic speech in Israel and suffering unto death instigated by Israel ironically confirms his legitimacy as "a faithful devotee of the God of their ancestors."[157]

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[152] Cf. A. J. Mattill, *Luke and the Last Things: A Perspective for the Understanding of Lukan Thought* (Dillsboro, N.C.: Western North Carolina Press, 1979), 51; Doble, "Acts 6:8–8:2," 72.
[153] Brigid C. Frein, "Narrative Predictions, Old Testament Prophecies and Luke's Sense of Fulfilment," *NTS* 40 (1994): 22–37, esp. 33. See ch. 6 §3.2.
[154] Cf. Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 296.
[155] Neagoe, *Trial*, 169–70.
[156] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 208–9. cf. Braumann, "Mittel," 135–36.
[157] Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 106. Cf. Keith Warrington, "Suffering and the Spirit in Luke-Acts," *JPBR* 1 (2009): 15–32, esp. 27–28.

2.5. Consequences of Stephen's Death (8:1b–4)

Witherington remarks, "There can be little doubt that Luke sees the death of Stephen as engendering a crisis for the earliest Christians and a turning point."[158] Much scholarly ink has been spilled over 8:1b, which raises important questions regarding the history of early Christianity. Was there "severe persecution," or is this a Lukan construct to serve his literary purposes? Who was persecuted—the Hellenists only or the entire Jerusalem church? Who instigates this persecution—the authorities or the Hellenists?[159] Such questions cannot be treated in detail here.[160] Rather, we will focus on the consequences of Stephen's death, as presented in 8:1–4. In these verses, three points are clear. First, Luke presents "a great persecution" against the Jerusalem church following Stephen's death. Second, this persecution results in the scattering of believers throughout Judea and Samaria, where they proclaim the Word. Third, Luke directly links Saul to the persecution of Stephen and the wider church.

2.5.1. Great Persecution (8:1)

Acts 8:1 records, "And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem." "On that day" clearly links Stephen's murder (τῇ ἀναιρέσει αὐτοῦ, 8:1a) with "great persecution" (διωγμὸς μέγας) against the Jerusalem church.[161] Similarly, in 11:19 Luke mentions "those scattered from the affliction (θλίψεως) which arose concerning Stephen." The expression διωγμὸς μέγας occurs in the NT only here and suggests a severe, violent persecution against both Hellenists and Hebrews in the Jerusalem church (note πάντες, 8:1).[162] This summary reference to persecution in 8:1 is illustrated in 8:3, which describes Saul pursuing disciples moving from house to house.

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[158] Witherington, *Acts*, 252.

[159] These questions are adapted from Hill, *Hellenists*, 32.

[160] See the careful and persuasive study by Steve Walton, "How Mighty a Minority Were the Hellenists?," in *Earliest Christian History: History, Literature, and Theology: Essays from the Tyndale Fellowship in Honor of Martin Hengel* (ed. Michael F. Bird and Jason Maston; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 305–27, 305–27.

[161] Codex D adds καὶ θλίψις after διωγμὸς μέγας, likely due to the parallel with 11:19.

[162] Rightly Walton, "Hellenists," 320-21. Contra Dunn, who claims the persecution "was primarily directed against the Greek-speaking followers of Stephen and not against the new sect as a whole." *Beginning*, 277, cf. 274–78. Cf. Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1983), 13.

2.5.2. Scattering and Proclamation (8:1, 4)

The "scattering" (διασπείρω) of Jerusalem believers in 8:1 is quite significant in the storyline of Acts.[163] Luke reintroduces οἱ διασπαρέντες in 8:4 and 11:19 and highlights their proclamation of the Word. Scattered believers move "throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" (8:1), and travel as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (11:19). "Judea and Samaria" explicitly recalls Jesus' programmatic promise in 1:8 that the disciples will be his witnesses in all Judea and Samaria. Thus the διωγμός μέγας and the church's scattering following Stephen's death is the unlikely yet providential occasion for the Word's advancement according to the program set forth in 1:8.[164]

The use of μὲν οὖν in these two texts also deserves comment. In 8:4, οὖν indicates a new development that draws from and builds upon the previous scene, where Jerusalem believers are persecuted and scattered (8:1), while μέν points forward to 8:5 (δέ), where Philip's ministry in Samaria is introduced.[165] Similarly in 11:19, οὖν with the new subject (οἱ διασπαρέντες ἀπὸ τῆς θλίψεως τῆς γενομένης ἐπὶ Στεφάνῳ) signals a new development from the earlier persecution and scattering (8:1), while μέν anticipates a related development to follow,[166] namely certain scattered believers begin to speak to Greeks in Antioch about Jesus (11:20). These points provide exegetical justification for Cunningham's claim that Stephen's persecution "serves as a catalyst of mission" and illustrates the theme of divine triumph amidst opposition.[167]

2.5.3. Saul the Persecutor (7:58–8:3)

Luke directly links Saul to Stephen's death and the wider church's persecution. At the scene of Stephen's stoning "a young man named Saul" is introduced in 7:58, as "a fine touch of Luke's dramatic instinct."[168] The witnesses to Stephen's stoning symbolically laid their garments at Saul's feet, which may suggest that he "was already the acknowledged leader in the opposition to the early church."[169]

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[163] In Acts "persecution is often the springboard for travel," according to Pervo, *Profit*, 28.
[164] Cf. ch. 6 §5.4.1; House, "Suffering," 322; Peterson, *Acts*, 275; Thompson, *Acts*, 57.
[165] Cf. Runge, *Grammar*, 43, 55.
[166] Ibid., 75–76. Cf. BDAG 630 §2e, 736 §2; Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Textual Connections in Acts* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 143, 146.
[167] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 214.
[168] Barrett, *Acts*, 1:386.
[169] Peterson, *Acts*, 268. Cf. Brice C. Jones, "The Meaning of the Phrase 'And the Witnesses Laid Down Their Cloaks' in Acts 7:58," *ExpT* 123 (2011): 113–18.

Saul's role as an antagonist of the church becomes more prominent in 8:1, 3.[170] In Luke's narrative, a statement of Saul's approval (8:1a) immediately follows Stephen's death (7:60). His role in the persecution against the Jerusalem church (8:1b) is singled out for mention in v. 3, "But Saul was trying to destroy the church; entering one house after another, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison" (NET).[171] The final phrase of 8:3 (παρεδίδου εἰς φυλακήν) directly recalls Luke 21:12 (παραδιδόντες εἰς … φυλακάς).[172] This intertextual link suggests that Saul's persecution is a further fulfillment of Jesus' prediction, which provides coherence to Luke's wider narrative and expressly ties the church's adversity to God's plan.[173]

2.6. Summary

In Acts 6–7, Stephen is opposed, falsely charged, and then stoned by an angry mob. Though accused of speaking against the Temple and the Law, Stephen is persecuted ultimately for his proclamation of Jesus as the righteous one, killed by his opponents but vindicated as the exalted Son of Man. Stephen is executed *because of* his identification with Jesus, and his trial and death are closely *patterned after* Jesus' Passion. Stephen recounts examples of natural adversity and political oppression in Israel's history and focuses particularly on Israel's tragic pattern of persecuting her prophets and God-given leaders (especially Joseph and Moses), culminating in the murders of Jesus and his witness Stephen. Far from undermining his credibility, Stephen's persecution by the Jews *legitimates* him as a true witness. Stephen's death prompts a great persecution and scattering of the Jerusalem church (8:1, 4), and these adversities do not thwart but ironically advance the church's proclamation in accordance with Jesus' promise in 1:8.

[170] Haenchen's allegation that there is an inexplicable "sudden jump" between Saul's description in 7:58 and 8:3 is overly skeptical. Haenchen, *Acts*, 298. As Pervo notes, "Ancient readers may have been less perplexed by Paul's rapid advance than are contemporaries." Pervo, *Acts*, 201.
[171] The imperfect ἐλυμαίνετο in 8:3 is likely conative.
[172] Cf. 22:4, "I persecuted this Way unto death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women."
[173] See Frein, "Predictions," 35–37.

3. Exegesis of Acts 9:1–30

3.1. Introduction

Saul's[174] transformation is a pivotal turning point in Acts. 9:1–30 portrays Saul's dramatic reversal from persecutor *of* Jesus and his church (9:1–5) to one who bears and suffers *for* Jesus' name as a member of his church (9:15–16). Acts 9 and 13–28 focus extensively on his life, ministry, and suffering "in city after city" (κατὰ πόλιν, 20:23).

Acts 9 opens with Saul's persecution and attempted destruction of the church (9:1–2) but closes with a statement of the church's peace, prosperity, and progress (9:31). In between, Saul is remarkably confronted, commissioned, and changed by the risen Lord Jesus. This section focuses on the narrative function of Saul's suffering in Acts 9, with particular attention given to Jesus' statement in verse 16, "For I will show to him how much he must suffer (δεῖ αὐτὸν … παθεῖν) on account of my name." Our study will proceed in four stages: (1) the radical transformation of Saul the persecutor (9:1–9); (2) Saul's call via Ananias (9:10–16); (3) Paul's first-person accounts of his conversion and call (Acts 22, 26); and (4) Saul's proclamation, persecution, and preservation (9:19b–30).

3.2. The Transformation of Saul the Persecutor (9:1–9)

In 9:1, Luke reintroduces Saul as "*still* (ἔτι) breathing threats and murder against the Lord's disciples," linking his planned persecution in Damascus with his previous activities in Jerusalem (8:1, 3).[175] However, Saul's murderous mission is interrupted through divine intervention. After seeing a light from heaven, Saul is addressed by name: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute (διώκεις) me? … I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (ἐγώ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς ὃν σὺ διώκεις, 9:3–5; cf. 22:6–8; 26:13–15).

Jesus discloses that Saul's violence against the Way amounts to persecution of the risen, exalted Lord. The possessive genitive τοῦ κυρίου in 9:1 anticipates the close association between the Lord and his church that is explicated in 9:4–5. Adams allows that Jesus' words are an "expression of solidarity" and indicate a "bond of empathy … between Christ and those persecuted on his behalf," which Jesus announces in

[174] Luke uses the Hebrew name "Saul" until Acts 13:9 and his Roman name "Paul" thereafter. See Colin J. Hemer, "The Name of Paul," *TynB* 36 (1985): 179–183. We will employ these names interchangeably, but where possible will follow Luke's pattern of usage: "Saul" in 7:58–13:9a, and "Paul" thereafter.

[175] Cf. §2.5.3

Luke 10:16: "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects the one who sent me."[176] Cunningham clarifies, "The disciples of Jesus are persecuted *because* they are identified with his name. The persecution of Jesus *continues on* in that of his disciples, and they are persecuted *like* him."[177] Longenecker goes further, arguing that 9:4–5 highlights "the organic and indissoluble unity" between Christ and his people.[178] On the Damascus Road, Saul encounters Jesus, the one he persecuted, who he will know from now on as ὁ κύριος.[179]

The contrast is stark. Saul actively persecutes the disciples with murderous intent (9:1–2) but is immobilized following his encounter with the Lord Jesus (9:8).[180] He approaches Damascus looking for disciples of Jesus to lead away (ἀγάγῃ) bound (9:2), yet it is Saul who enters Damascus led by the hand (χειραγωγοῦντες; 9:8). He intends harm toward the disciples (9:1), but he waits three days until a *disciple* ministers to him (9:17). Peterson notes, "Paul paradoxically joins *the Way* because of what happens to him when he is 'on the way' (vv. 17, 27, *en tē hodō*) to persecute Christians in Damascus."[181]

Scholars differ in how to define the change Saul undergoes in Acts 9. Stendahl rightly argues that Acts 9 does not emphasize Paul's psychological struggle or restoration of a plagued conscience.[182] However, he wrongly asserts that Paul is not converted but only called to a new work among Gentiles.[183] Gaventa explains Saul's experience in Acts 9 as a *pendulum conversion*, in which he "swings from violent opponent of the church to its loyal disciple."[184] As Kern reasons, "His faith in Jesus is neither an outgrowth nor a natural result of prior commitments: rather than natural it is born of the supernatural. He must therefore reappraise his past, reject his present,

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[176] Adams, "Suffering," 110–11.
[177] *Tribulations*, 221, emphasis original.
[178] Longenecker, "Acts," 854.
[179] 9:5; cf. 9:28. The immediate context and christological connotations of κύριος elsewhere in Luke-Acts suggest the translation "Lord." Cf. Peterson, *Acts*, 304; Timothy W. Churchill, *Divine Initiative and the Christology of the Damascus Road Encounter* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2010), 241–42. Contra Beverly R. Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 149; James D. G. Dunn, "ΚΥΡΙΟΣ in Acts," in *The Christ and the Spirit: Collected Essays of James D. G. Dunn* (2vols.; vol. 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 241–253, 1:241–253, citing 248.
[180] Beverly R. Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 60.
[181] Peterson, *Acts*, 303, italics original.
[182] Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *HTR* 56 (1963): 199–215, esp. 200.
[183] Ibid., 204–5.
[184] Gaventa, *Darkness*, 148.

and completely re-evaluate his view of God and what he is doing in the world."[185] As will be shown, Saul's radical transformation is *confirmed* in his move from persecutor of Jesus' disciples to persecuted disciple of Jesus.

3.3. Saul's Calling via Ananias (9:10–19)

Acts 9 recounts both Saul's *conversion* and his *call* to bear Jesus' name.[186] His calling to be Jesus' "chosen instrument" (σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς) is mediated through Ananias in 9:15–16, who is informed that Saul will both "bear" and "suffer for" Jesus' name. Our analysis of verses 15–16 is driven by three questions. First, what is the meaning of the phrase "to bear my name" (9:15)? Second, in what sense is Saul's suffering for Jesus' name "necessary" (9:16)? Third, what is the function of γάρ in 9:16?

3.3.1. Bearing Jesus' Name (9:15)

In 9:15–16, the Lord Jesus delineates Saul's new vocation. While Jesus earlier declared, "It will be told *you* what you must do" (9:6, NASB), this information is not communicated directly to Saul but to Ananias.[187] The command πορεύου (9:15), reiterates Jesus' previous instruction (πορεύθητι, 9:11) and signals Ananias' need to "get going" toward Saul.[188] The command is followed immediately by the rationale:[189] "For this man is my chosen instrument" (ὅτι σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς ἐστίν μοι οὗτος). While the noun ἐκλογή occurs only here in Luke-Acts, the cognates ἐκλεκτός and ἐκλέγομαι are employed to indicate God's gracious choice for salvation (cf. Luke 18:7; Acts 13:17; 15:7) or for a particular role or task (cf. Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2, 24; 6:5; 15:22, 25). In 9:15, Saul's election "refers to his ministry, not to his conversion."[190] Saul's task is clarified by the infinitival phrase τοῦ βαστάσαι τὸ

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[185] Philip H. Kern, "Paul's Conversion and Luke's Portrayal of Character in Acts 8–10," *TynB* 54 (2003): 63–80, citing 79. Cf. Barrett, *Acts*, 1:442.

[186] Cf. Peterson, *Acts*, 300; Anna M. Schwemer, "Erinnerung und Legende: Die Berufung des Paulus und ihre Darstellung in der Apostelgeschichte," in *Memory in the Bible and Antiquity* (ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck, et al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 277–98, esp. 281 n. 23; Jens Schröter, "Paulus als Modell christlicher Zeugenschaft: Apg 9,15f. und 28,30f. als Rahmen der lukanischen Paulusdarstellung und Rezeption des 'historischen' Paulus," in *Reception of Paulinism in Acts* (ed. Daniel Marguerat; Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 53–80, esp. 62–63. Saul's calling is presented in terms reminiscent of the OT prophets, according to Marguerat, *Historian*, 192–93.

[187] As Churchill shows, Jesus does indicate to Saul what he must do (9:6), but this is not explicit in the narrative until Acts 26:16–18. Churchill, *Initiative*, 227.

[188] On the shift from aorist (9:11) to present imperative (9:15), see K. L. McKay, "Aspect in Imperatival Constructions in New Testament Greek," *NovT* 27 (1985): 201–26, esp. 206–7, 210.

[189] NIV (1984, 2011) leaves ὅτι untranslated.

[190] Peterson, *Acts*, 309. Cf. Barrett, *Acts*, 1:456. Contra Gerhard Lohfink, *The Conversion of St. Paul: Narrative and History in Acts* (trans. Bruce J. Malina; Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1976), 94; Raymond F. Collins, "Paul's Damascus Experience: Reflections on the Lukan Account," *LS* 11 (1986): 99–118, esp. 113.

ὄνομά μου.[191] Here βαστάζω is used figuratively for Saul bearing or carrying Jesus' name.[192]

Lohfink contends that 9:15 refers to Saul's future *confession* of Christ in court, which validates his conversion, while "Paul's missionary activity proper … stands far in the background."[193] However, βαστάσαι τὸ ὄνομά μου likely carries clear *missiological* connotations for two reasons. First, Jesus' words in 9:15–16 find initial fulfillment in 9:22–25, long before his formal trial proceedings.[194] Second, Paul interprets his calling missiologically in 22:15 (ἔσῃ *μάρτυς* αὐτῷ) and especially in 26:16–17 (εἰς οὓς ἐγὼ *ἀποστέλλω* σε).[195] Acts 9:15 does prepare readers for Paul's later defense speeches in Jerusalem before Jews (22:1–21) and in Caesarea before King Agrippa (26:1–23), in accordance with Luke 21:12, "you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake." However, as Tannehill observes, "If Paul must confess Christ before Jewish and gentile accusers, that is because his mission is directed to both of these groups."[196]

3.3.2. Suffering for Jesus' Name (9:16)

Saul's "bearing" Jesus' name is closely tied to his suffering ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματός μου (9:16).[197] The NT and LXX regularly employ πάσχω with "an unfavorable sense *suffer, endure*."[198] In Luke-Acts, πάσχω typically refers to Jesus' suffering, which is repeatedly said to be "necessary" (δεῖ … παθεῖν).[199] By declaring that Paul "must suffer" (δεῖ … παθεῖν, 9:16), Luke employs language otherwise reserved for Jesus' suffering and thereby "forcefully indicates the continuity between Paul and his Lord in terms of the persecution that he will undergo."[200] Further, Paul will suffer for Jesus' name, which recalls Jesus' prediction in Luke 21:12, 17 and the apostles' example in Acts 5:41.[201]

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[191] τοῦ βαστάσαι functions epexegetically, modifying σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς. Cf. Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 223.
[192] Cf. BDAG 171 §2c.
[193] Lohfink, *Conversion*, 94. Cf. Christoph Burchard, *Der dreizehnte Zeuge: Traditions- und kompositions-geschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Lukas' Darstellung der Frühzeit des Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 100–1; Neagoe, *Trial*, 187. For critique, see Adams, "Suffering," 50.
[194] See §3.5.
[195] See §3.4.
[196] *Unity*, 2:119.
[197] Rightly Moessner, "Script," 233.
[198] BDAG 785.
[199] Luke 9:22; 17:25; 24:26; Acts 17:3; cf. Luke 22:15; 24:46; Acts 1:3; 3:18.
[200] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 224.
[201] Cf. Acts 15:26, discussed in ch. 6 §3.3.

Cosgrove has pointed out that the use of the "divine δεῖ" in Luke-Acts functions in four key ways. First, it expresses "the rootedness of the kerygmatic history … in God's plan."[202] Second, the "divine δεῖ" functions as "a summons to obedience."[203] Third, it stresses "God's guarantee of his plan."[204] Fourth, "the logic of the divine δεῖ in Luke-Acts involves a dramatic-comedic understanding of salvation history as a stage set time and again for divine intervention."[205] Additionally, Rothschild asserts that δεῖ in Luke-Acts usually highlights "the credibility of an unfamiliar, controversial or otherwise implausible event of the narrative."[206]

Each of these five functions is demonstrable in 9:15–16. First, Saul as Jesus' chosen emissary furthers God's plan to bear witness unto the end of the earth (1:8; 9:15; 13:47; 28:28).[207] Second, the Lord summons Saul to necessary obedience (9:6, 16). Cosgrove writes, "the 'must' of his Christian life finds its counterpart in the misguided 'must' of his past Jewish life."[208] Third, the mention of Saul's election (σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς), the emphatic pronoun (ἐγώ) and future tense verb (ὑποδείξω) assure Ananias of the *certainty* of Jesus' plan for Saul, which includes suffering (9:15–16; cf. 20:23). Fourth, Saul's conversion is the most extraordinary and powerful divine reversal in Acts. Finally, δεῖ signals the "credibility" of Saul's unlikely transformation from persecutor to persecuted witness. Rothschild claims, "Here δεῖ aims at validating all upcoming episodes in which Paul will experience hardship and suffer."[209] While her claim is generally true, we may go further. The next section will demonstrate that the necessity (δεῖ) of Saul's suffering serves to establish his credibility as Jesus' chosen instrument in the eyes of Ananias and the church persecuted by Saul.

3.3.3. Relationship of 9:15 and 16

The precise relationship between 9:15 and 9:16 is disputed, and the *crux interpretum* is the meaning of γάρ in verse 16. Adams understands this γάρ as a *simple connective* that establishes "loose" and "non-definitional" relationship between Saul's suffering

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[202] Charles H. Cosgrove, "The Divine ΔEI in Luke-Acts: Investigations into the Lukan Understanding of God's Providence," *NovT* 26 (1984): 168–90, citing 183.
[203] Ibid., 183.
[204] Ibid., 189.
[205] Ibid., 190.
[206] Clare K. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts and the Rhetoric of History: An Investigation of Early Christian Historiography* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 194.
[207] Cf. Jervell Apg
[208] Cosgrove, "Divine," 177. Cf. δεῖ in 26:9.
[209] Rothschild, *Rhetoric*, 204.

and mission.[210] Adams' reading is untenable on grammatical and contextual grounds. In Koine Greek, γάρ is typically used to express cause or clarification, and rarely occurs as a "loose" connector.[211] Additionally, this interpretation does not fit with Luke's broader narrative, which consistently ties Paul's experience of persecution to his mission.[212]

Cunningham suggests that γάρ here carries an *explanatory* sense. He writes, Paul's suffering "is a constitutive part of the previous revelation concerning Paul's mission."[213] This position is consistent with the normal usage of γάρ and also fits well with the wider narrative of Acts, though it is not the most compelling interpretation, as will be shown below.

Other interpreters have understood γάρ in 9:16 *causally*, though Cunningham objects that "it is not at all obvious exactly what 'suffering for the name' provides the ground or reason for in the preceding clause."[214] Michaelis argues that Saul's sufferings validate his calling as σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς: "The apostle has to show that he is a bearer of Christ, and he does this by his sufferings."[215] The difficulties with Michaelis' interpretation are two-fold. First, he assumes an unusual syntactical relationship, with γάρ modifying an epexegetical infinitival phrase and not a main verb. Second, Acts does not clearly present Paul's sufferings as proof of his apostleship or calling, as in 2 Corinthians 11:23–33. Rather, "Luke might be expected to say the reverse, 'Paul will suffer because he will bear my name.'"[216]

More likely, γάρ in 9:16 serves as a second reason for the Lord's command to Ananias in 9:15 (πορεύου).[217] Peterson writes, "The meaning is that Ananias can go to Saul not only because of what is revealed about his calling in 9:15 but also because of what God will show to Saul about the suffering entailed in this calling."[218] This interpretation is preferred for three reasons: (1) γάρ very commonly indicates the

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[210] Adams, "Suffering," 35. Cf. NIV11, NRSV, NJB, HCSB, which leave γάρ untranslated.
[211] Cf. BDAG 189–90; L&N §89.23; LSJ 338–39; John D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles* (2nd ed; Oxford: Clarendon, 1954), 56–67; Max Zerwick, *Biblical Greek: Illustrated by Examples* (trans. Joseph Smith; Rome: Scripta Ponticii Instituti Biblici, 1963), 159.
[212] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 227.
[213] Ibid., 228.
[214] Ibid., 226.
[215] W. Michaelis, "πάσχω," *TDNT* 5:904–24, citing 919.
[216] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 226.
[217] This interpretation is acknowledged but quickly dismissed by Günter Klein, *Die zwölf Apostel: Ursprung und Gehalt einer Idee* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 149; Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 226.
[218] Peterson, *Acts*, 308 n. 42.

reason or basis for what precedes;[219] (2) this reading is consistent with the syntactical parallel in 10:45–46b; and (3) interpreting γάρ as a further reason for Ananias to go to Saul best fits the apologetic thrust of the passage.

10:45–46a is the only other instance in Acts outside of 9:15–16 where a ὅτι ground clause is followed by γάρ:

(45a) καὶ ἐξέστησαν οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς πιστοὶ ὅσοι συνῆλθαν τῷ Πέτρῳ,

(45b) ὅτι καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἔθνη ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐκκέχυται·

(46a) ἤκουον γὰρ αὐτῶν λαλούντων γλώσσαις καὶ μεγαλυνόντων τὸν θεόν.

10:45b and 10:46a present two reasons for the Jewish believers' amazement (10:45a). with 10:46a (hearing them speaking in tongues and praising God) supplying evidence for the Spirit's outpouring on the Gentiles (cf. 11:15–18). In 9:15–16, the ὅτι and γάρ clauses function similarly as parallel grounds for the imperative πορεύου:

(15a) εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ κύριος· πορεύου,

(15b) ὅτι σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς ἐστίν μοι οὗτος τοῦ βαστάσαι τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐνώπιον ἐθνῶν τε καὶ βασιλέων υἱῶν τε Ἰσραήλ·

(16) ἐγὼ γὰρ ὑποδείξω αὐτῷ ὅσα δεῖ αὐτὸν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματός μου παθεῖν.

As in 10:45–46, the γάρ clause in 9:16 grounds 9:15a and offers specific evidence for the surprising claim in 9:15b.

Further, it is significant that 9:15-16 directly responds to Ananias' stated reservations about going to Saul, the notorious persecutor (9:13–14). Ananias likely functions as "the community's (and reader's) spokesperson in voicing reluctance and fear at so rapidly accepting into fellowship this murderous fellow."[220] He is μαθητὴς ἐν Δαμασκῷ (9:10), who represents the μαθηταί (9:1, 19, 25, 26). The six-fold repetition of μαθητής in 9:1–31 signals Luke's emphasis on the impact of Saul's conversion and call on Jesus' disciples.[221]

In summary, we have argued that Jesus' word about Saul's necessary suffering serves as a second reason why Ananias should "go" toward the former persecutor. This interpretation incorporates Cunningham's observation that Saul will bear Jesus' name *by* suffering. However, the syntactical parallel in 10:45–46 and the apologetic context of Acts 9 suggest that γάρ in 9:16 primarily functions *causally* as a second reason for the imperative πορεύου.

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[219] See n. 211.
[220] Johnson, *Acts*, 169.
[221] Cf. Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 130.

Thus, 9:1–31 records a kind of double conversion. While the primary focus is on the conversion of *Saul*, the secondary focus is on the *church's* conversion to embrace this persecutor as a disciple (9:26) who will "become the agent of the universal mission."[222] This is why Saul's divine calling (9:15–16) is mediated through Ananias and offered as a direct *response* to his fears about going to "this man" (9:13). Tannehill writes, "Ananias must be persuaded to do his job. The disclosure of Saul's future role serves this purpose in 9:15–16."[223] Ananias recalls "*how much* evil (ὅσα κακά) he had done to the saints" (9:13), but now Jesus himself will show Saul "*how much* (ὅσα) he must suffer" (9:16). Ananias notes Saul's intention to bind "all who call upon *your name*" (9:14), but Jesus highlights Saul's complete reversal as his chosen instrument who will bear and suffer for *his name* (9:15–16). This promise of Saul's future suffering serves an apologetic function, confirming Saul's legitimacy to Ananias, who immediately ministers to his former nemesis, calls him "*brother* Saul," and baptizes him. Section five will show that Saul's suffering serves a similar legitimizing role in 9:19–30.

3.4. Paul's Interpretation of his Conversion and Call (Acts 22, 26)

Acts 22:3–21 and 26:4–18 present Paul's first-person intra-narrative commentary on his conversion and call in his defense speeches.[224] There have been various attempts to explain these and other variations between the three accounts on the basis of divergent sources.[225] However, many interpreters have rightly focused on Luke's narrative purposes for recounting Saul's conversion/call three times with significant variations.[226] Marguerat analyzes variations in the triple account using Sternberg's

[222] Marguerat, *Historian*, 196.
[223] Tannehill, *Unity*, 2:116.
[224] Parallel accounts in Gal 1:13–24 and 1 Tim 1:12–16 will not be considered here.
[225] The seminal early article is Emanuel Hirsch, "Die drei Berichte der Apostelgeschichte über die Bekehrung des Paulus," *ZNW* 28 (1929): 305–312. For the history of research, see Churchill, *Initiative*, 218–222; Collins, "Damascus," 104–5; Lohfink, *Conversion*, 33–46. Ben Witherington proposes that Paul is likely the source for Acts 9 and 22, while Acts 26 is Luke's account of Paul's trial, in "Editing the Good News: Some Synoptic Lessons for the Study of Acts," in *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* (ed. Ben Witherington III; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 335–44, citing 340–41.
[226] Cf. David M. Stanley, "Paul's Conversion in Acts," *CBQ* 15 (1953): 315–338, esp. 315; Charles W. Hedrick, "Paul's Conversion/ Call: A Comparative Analysis of the Three Reports in Acts," *JBL* 100 (1981): 415–432, esp. 428; Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, "Recurring Narration as a Lukan Literary Convention in Acts: Paul's Jerusalem Speech in Acts 22, 1–22," in *New Views on Luke and Acts* (ed. E. Richard; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1990), 94–105.

taxonomy of possible variations in biblical narrative (amplification, suppression, interpolation, grammatical transformation, and substitution).[227]

In Acts 22 and 26, Paul *amplifies* his past persecution of Christians (22:3–5; 26:9–11; cf. 9:1–2).[228] In 22:3–5, Paul highlights his zealous persecution of Christians, thereby powerfully identifying with the Jewish crowd, which by attacking Paul "is now playing the role that Paul previously played," and who are now invited to reassess Paul and Jesus.[229] Before Agrippa, Paul explains that he was convinced "I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth," including imprisoning Christians, punishing them in synagogues, and persecuting them to foreign cities (26:9–11; see Table 4).

It is widely observed that Paul's autobiographical accounts *suppress* Ananias' mediating role (9:10–19).[230] In 22:13–16, Ananias functions not as "the restorer of Saul's integrity, but the interpreter of his calling,"[231] and Ananias is unmentioned in ch. 26. Paul reiterates his missionary calling at 22:15 and 26:16–17 (cf. 9:15); however, he does not mention Jesus' prophecy of his necessary suffering (9:16) and his initial experiences of persecution (9:23–30), a point often overlooked.[232]

There seem to be at least five reasons why Saul's calling to suffer for Jesus' name is omitted in his first-person accounts. First, 9:15–16 programmatically previews and interprets Saul's future ministry and suffering.[233] The narrative progression in Acts has made repetition of Jesus' words in 9:16 "superfluous."[234]

Second, later accounts omit the prediction of Saul's suffering because the audience, situation, and rhetorical strategy are different in Acts 9, 22, and 26. Jesus' words in 9:16 are addressed directly to Ananias, a representative disciple who questions the persecutor's legitimacy. In Paul's first-person accounts, he is defending himself (ἀπολογία, 22:1; ἀπολογέομαι, 26:1, 2, 24) against unfounded charges (cf. 21:27–28) before the Jewish crowds and King Agrippa.

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[227] Marguerat, *Historian*, 183–86. Cf. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 387–93.
[228] Kelhoffer, *Persecution*, 339–40.
[229] Tannehill, *Unity*, 2:279, 282. Cf. Rosenblatt, "Narration," 102.
[230] Cf. Marguerat, *Historian*, 185; Collins, "Damascus," 106; Witherington, "Editing," 342.
[231] Marguerat, *Historian*, 197. Cf. Tannehill, *Unity*, 2:275–76.
[232] E.g. Hedrick, "Conversion," 415-432; Collins, "Damascus," 99–118; Witherington, "Editing," 335–44.
[233] See §3.5.
[234] Marguerat, *Historian*, 197.

Table 4: Paul as Persecutor and Persecuted Disciple in Acts

Paul as Persecutor (26:10–11)	*Paul as Persecuted Disciple*
Jerusalem location	9:29; 21:27–36
Imprisonment of believers	16:24; cf. Luke 21:12
Chief priests' involvement	25:2, 15
Intent to kill	9:23–24, 29; 23:15, 21, 27; 25:3
"In every synagogue"	13:45, 50; 14:2; 17:5; 17:13; 18:6; 19:9; cf. Luke 21:12
Intent that disciples blaspheme	13:45; 18:6
Persecution	13:50; cf. Luke 21:12
Persecution in foreign cities	14:19

Third, in Acts 22 and 26 Paul *embodies* the prophecy of 9:16, as he is falsely accused (21:28; 26:2, 7), subjected to mob violence (21:30–32; 26:21), arrested and imprisoned without legal warrant (21:33), and rejected by his fellow Jews (22:22; cf. 22:18). Paul's own sufferings strikingly recall his previous persecution of Christians (see Table 4).[235]

Fourth, instead of summary statements about Saul's suffering in 9:16, Acts 22 and 26 relate *specific* instances of his suffering for Christ germane to the speeches' context. In 22:18, Paul recounts Jesus' warning that those in Jerusalem "will not accept your testimony concerning me," which is immediately confirmed in 22:22 (cf. 9:29). In 26:6–8, Paul states that he stands trial for his hope in the promised resurrection.

Finally, 26:16–17 recounts the Lord's promise to rescue Paul (ἐξαιρούμενός σε)[236] from the Jews and Gentiles to whom he is sent as a witness (μάρτυς). This promise recalls Jeremiah 1:8 LXX, "I am with you to deliver you" (μετὰ σοῦ ἐγώ εἰμι τοῦ ἐξαιρεῖσθαί σε).[237] Adams writes, "Instead of the prospect of suffering, the Lord now holds out the assurance of escape…. Acts 26:17 in no way contradicts the

[235] Cf. Kelhoffer, *Persecution*, 339.
[236] In Acts, ἐξαιρέω consistently denotes deliverance from danger (7:10, 34; 12:11; 23:27). Cf. BDAG 344; contra L&N §30.90.
[237] Cf. Barrett, *Acts*, 2:1160.

previous prophecy of tribulation; indeed, that prophecy is presupposed in the very mention of deliverance."[238]

Thus, in chapters 22 and 26 Paul does not restate his calling to suffer for Jesus' name because Luke's three accounts of Paul's conversion and call serve different narrative functions, legitimating Paul before the church he persecuted (ch. 9), before Jews who zealously oppose Paul as he formerly opposed the Way (ch. 22), and before Agrippa weighing charges against Paul (ch. 26). Paul does not repeat Jesus' words from 9:16 but *embodies* this programmatic prophecy, bearing witness to Jesus while in chains (21:33; 22:18; 26:22, 29), while experiencing divine preservation through persecution (26:16–17).

3.5. Saul's Proclamation, Persecution, and Preservation (9:19b–30)

As Johnson observes, Acts 9:15 serves as "a programmatic prophecy for Paul's career," which serves to provide "authorial commentary on the events which follow."[239] However, it is better to understand *both* verses 15 and 16 as programmatic, given their close syntactical relationship and the reference to Paul's necessary suffering (δεῖ). Paul brings God's saving message to the Gentiles (13:46–47; 28:28), he testifies to Christ's work before King Agrippa (26:22–29), and from the beginning (9:20) to the end (28:23) of his ministry Paul tries to persuade his fellow Jews and repeatedly encounters rejection and hostility. In Acts, persecution consistently accompanies Paul's proclamation.

After being baptized and regaining his sight, the one who approached Damascus "still breathing threats and murder *against* (εἰς)[240] the Lord's disciples" (9:1) appears *with* (μετά) the Damascus disciples (9:19b). Immediately Saul "began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues" (9:20).[241] His preaching prompts amazement and questions about the former persecutor's authenticity and intentions (9:21).

Verses 22–23 affirm Saul's legitimacy and signal the initial fulfillment of his programmatic calling (9:15–16). Saul powerfully, persuasively proclaims Jesus as Messiah, thereby "confounding (συνέχυννεν) the Jews," who then plan to kill Saul. After Saul learns of their plot (ἐπιβουλή), he escapes with the help of "his disciples" (οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ).[242] Thus "the prophecy that Saul would suffer on behalf of the

[238] Adams, "Suffering," 17.
[239] Johnson, *Acts*, 12, 165. Cf. Frein, "Predictions," 33.
[240] Here εἰς indicates disadvantage, according to Culy and Parsons, *Acts*, 170.
[241] ἐκήρυσσεν is translated as ingressive, following NASB, NET.
[242] 20:3, 19; 23:30 record other Jewish plots (ἐπιβουλή) to harm Paul. Cf. Estridge, "Suffering," 266.

name begins to be fulfilled.… The cycle is complete: The persecutor has become the persecuted."[243]

In 9:26–30, this pattern of preaching, plot, and rescue repeats in Jerusalem, where Saul rose to prominence as a persecutor of the church (8:1, 3).[244] Again, the scene begins questions about Saul's legitimacy as a μαθητής: "All were afraid of him, because[245] they did not believe that he was a disciple" (v. 26). Saul is validated as an authentic disciple of Jesus in three ways. First, Barnabas mediates between the erstwhile persecutor and the believing community (9:27; cf. 9:17). Second, Saul preaches boldly (παρρησιαζόμενος) in Jesus' name at Jerusalem, as at Damascus (9:27–28). Third, Jewish opposition to Saul confirms his identification with Jesus and his persecuted church (9:29; cf. 9:4–5). Saul's opponents are τοὺς Ἑλληνιστάς, here denoting Greek-speaking non-Christian Jews.[246] Likely this is the same group responsible for Stephen's death, of which Saul was a prominent figure.[247] Again Saul eludes his persecutors in 9:30 (cf. 9:25). In the previous scene, the plot was made known to *Saul* and *his* disciples helped him escape.[248] However, in 9:30 "the brothers" learn about the plot and move to ensure Saul's safety. The mention of οἱ ἀδελφοί here coming to Saul's aid suggests that Saul's suffering finally demonstrates to the believing community that he is now "brother Saul" (9:17).

Saul's initial ministry and persecution in 9:19b–30 not only fulfills Jesus' prophecy in 9:15–16, but it also establishes a pattern for his future, as he encounters and escapes Jewish opposition and the Word advances (9:31).[249] Adams writes, "Commensurate with Paul's tribulation is the help that comes from God," which he calls a "dialectic of adversity and divine aid."[250] In both Damascus and Jerusalem, Paul is opposed by fellow Jews and rescued *through* the intervention of Jesus' followers (9:23–25, 29–30).

The pivotal narrative of Saul's transformation concludes (μὲν οὖν) significantly with a summary statement recounting the peace, strengthening, and

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[243] Gaventa, *Darkness*, 65. Cf. Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (2 vols.; Zürich: Benziger, 1986), 1:307.
[244] Cf. §2.5.3; Schwemer, "Erinnerung," 289.
[245] Reading πιστεύοντες as a causal participle (cf. NET, NRSV, ESV).
[246] Some manuscripts read Ἕλληνάς ("Greeks"), though internal and external evidence favors Ἑλληνιστάς ("Hellenists"). Cf. Barrett, *Acts*, 1:470.
[247] Peterson, *Acts*, 315.
[248] On οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ, see Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 286.
[249] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 229–33.
[250] Adams, "Suffering," 30. Cf. 26:17, 22.

growth of the church (9:31).[251] The church's building up in 9:31 directly reverses 8:1–3, where Saul persecutes and harasses the church. Additionally, this summary's geographical reference καθ' ὅλης τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ Γαλιλαίας καὶ Σαμαρείας echoes Jesus' promise that his Spirit-empowered followers will be witnesses ἐν πάσῃ τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ καὶ Σαμαρείᾳ (1:8). Moreover, Saul's calling to bear Jesus' name among the Gentiles (9:15) anticipates his unique role in advancing Jesus' mission ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς (1:8; 13:47; Isa 49:6 LXX).[252] As House observes, "Paul's activities are cast in the light of suffering from the start," and affliction both characterizes and authenticates his ministry throughout.[253]

3.6. Summary

In summary, the announcement of Saul's suffering in Acts 9:16 has three essential functions in Luke's narrative. First, Saul's suffering legitimates his transformation in the eyes of Ananias and the persecuted church he represents. They must embrace Saul's new identity as Jesus' emissary because of *how* Saul will carry out his new vocation, through suffering *for* Jesus. Second, Saul's suffering is integrally tied to his missionary calling to bear Jesus' name before Gentiles, kings, and fellow Jews (9:15; cf. 26:19–23). Third, 9:15–16 serve as a programmatic prophecy for Paul's career, establishing a pattern of proclamation, persecution, and divine preservation, which is illustrated in his early ministry in Damascus (9:20–25) and Jerusalem (9:26–30). Like Jesus, the apostles, and Israel's prophets, Saul's persecution comes primarily from fellow Jews.[254] However, Saul's suffering for Jesus' name uniquely authenticates his transformation into a disciple of Jesus persecuted by the very same group he formerly represented as a zealous persecutor (22:3–5; 26:9–11). Thus, *legitimation* is perhaps the most striking feature of Saul's suffering in Acts 9.

4. Conclusion

The narratives of Stephen's trial and death and Saul's conversion, call, and early ministry contribute to our understanding of Luke's perspective on suffering in at least three ways, which will feature prominently in Chapter 6.

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[251] Cf. Longenecker, "Acts," 865. Levinsohn notes that μὲν οὖν "introduces a state which results naturally from the outcome of the previous incident as a whole." *Connections*, 142.
[252] Cf. Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 283.
[253] House, "Suffering," 322.
[254] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 313.

First, both narratives highlight Jesus' profound *identification* with his suffering people. In Acts 7:55–60, Stephen is an eyewitness of Jesus' heavenly vindication, and he prays to the Lord Jesus, who stands bearing witness to Stephen. According to 9:4–5, persecuting Jesus' church amounts to persecuting Jesus himself, and Saul is summoned to suffer for Jesus' name (9:16).

Second, Stephen and Saul's persecution by the Jews *legitimates* them as authentic leaders of God's people and witnesses who speak God's Word. Stephen is rejected and killed by the Jewish people but approved by God, like Israel's prophets and Jesus (7:51–52). Saul's calling to suffer for Jesus and his initial experiences of opposition validate him as a genuine follower of Jesus before Ananias and the very churches Saul persecuted in Damascus and Jerusalem (9:16–17, 23–25, 29–30; cf. 8:3; 9:1–2).

Third, the church's persecution by Jews ironically leads to further *proclamation*, in accord with Jesus' promise (1:8). Luke credits believers scattered by the great persecution in Jerusalem (8:1) with evangelizing Samaria (8:4–8), Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (11:19–21). Saul's conversion from persecutor to persecuted preacher results in peace, strengthening, and multiplication of the church in Judea, Galilee and Samaria (9:31). Ultimately, this former persecutor will proclaim and suffer for Jesus' name in city after city, before Jews and Gentiles, unto the end of the earth (9:15–16; 13:47; 20:23–25; 28:31).

Chapter 6: Suffering in Luke's Worldview: Synthesis

1. Introduction

Chapter 5 analyzed Luke's account of Stephen's trial and death (Acts 6:8–8:4) and Saul's transformation from persecutor to persecuted disciple (9:1–30). Chapter 6 will summarize suffering's function(s) in Luke's worldview, using the worldview questions presented in the Introduction (§4.3.2). The first person plurals in these questions focus specifically on Luke's perspective, which he calls his readership, late first century Christians, to share. While this chapter will principally focus on suffering in Acts, key texts from the Third Gospel will also be considered, particularly those that serve a programmatic or anticipatory role for the narrative in Acts, including Simeon's oracle (Luke 2:34–35), Jesus' passion predictions and summons to costly discipleship (9:22–26, 44; 14:26–27; 17:25; 18:31–33), and the Passion Narrative (chs. 22–23).

1.1. Suffering and Symbols

Before turning to the worldview questions, let us briefly consider two *defining symbols* of early Christianity and their relationship to suffering, namely baptism and the Lord's Supper. These symbolic activities, practiced by the earliest followers of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus, rehearse foundational gospel stories and express and reinforce central elements of their worldview and corporate identity.[1]

Water baptism is a central feature of John's ministry of preparation for the Lord, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:3–8, 16; Acts 1:5; 19:4). John's baptism is particularly associated with "repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Luke 3:3). Following Jesus' resurrection and ascension, those who respond to the gospel in repentance and faith are baptized "in the name of Messiah Jesus" (Acts 2:38; cf. 8:16; 10:48; 19:4), which signifies their cleansing from sin (22:16) and initiation into a new community of believers in the Lord Jesus (2:41–47). In Luke 12:50, Jesus enigmatically declares, "I have a baptism in which to be baptized

[1] On praxis and symbols in early Christianity, see Wright, *NTPG*, 359–69; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), esp. chs. 3, 5.

(βάπτισμα … ἔχω βαπτισθῆναι), and how distressed I am until it is accomplished."[2] Here βάπτισμα does not refer to Jesus' water baptism (cf. 3:21) but refers metaphorically to the judgment and calamity he must soon undergo in his divinely determined death (cf. 9:22).[3] As Saul's example demonstrates, baptism signifies a radical change of priorities and practice, as well as incorporation into the community of persecuted believers who follow and identify with the suffering, exalted Lord Jesus (9:17–30; cf. 9:4–5).[4]

In Luke 22:15–20, Jesus reinterprets the Passover meal in light of his imminent suffering and in anticipation of the coming fullness of God's kingdom. The broken, distributed bread signifies Jesus' body "given for you," and "the cup poured out for you" signifies the initiation of the new covenant in Jesus' blood (22:19–20).[5] Acts 2:42 recounts Jerusalem believers devoting themselves "to the breaking of bread" (cf. 2:46). Scholars divide over whether this phrase refers generally to Christian table fellowship[6] or specifically to the Lord's Supper,[7] though perhaps Luke's summary description includes both elements.[8] In 20:7, believers gather to break bread "on the first day of the week," which likely refers to the sharing of the Lord's Supper,[9] by which Christians remember Jesus' suffering and death on their behalf (cf. Luke 22:19).

2. Who Is God and How Is God Involved in our Suffering?

Luke views God as sovereign Creator, who is transcendent over his creation yet intimately involved with it (cf. Acts 14:15–17; 17:24-27). For Luke, God's sovereignty is worked out in redemptive history, which proceeds according to his plan. This God has chosen Abraham and promised to show mercy to his descendants, in keeping with his covenant promises (Luke 1:54–55, 68–73; Acts 3:25–26; 7:2–8; 13:26). Israel has endured suffering and oppression (cf. Acts 7:19, 34) and longs for

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[2] Cf. Mark 10:38.
[3] Cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:995–97.
[4] As Johnson writes, "Christian baptism not only signalled passage from one population to another but generated a new form of identity." *Experience*, 77. Cf. Rom 6:3–5; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:5; 1 Pet 3:21.
[5] See §5.2.1. On the difficult syntax of 22:20, see Martin M. Culy, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Joshua J. Stigall, *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 672. The disputed text of 22:19b–20 is discussed in Appendix 1.
[6] Cf. CEB, "their shared meals"; Bock, *Acts*, 150–51.
[7] Cf. NLT, "sharing in the Lord's Supper"; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 270–71.66
[8] Cf. Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte*, 1:130; Barrett, *Acts*, 1:164–66; Keener, *Acts*, 1003–4.
[9] Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 502; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 835. Cf. 1 Cor 11:23–26.

salvation, consolation, and redemption (Luke 1:68–74; 2:25, 30, 38). Luke-Acts makes clear that Israel's hopes for eschatological deliverance have been decisively realized (Luke 3:4–6) through the birth, ministry, tragic rejection and death, resurrection, and heavenly enthronement of God's son Jesus the Messiah.

2.1. God's Identity

Luke presents God as "living" (ζῶντα, Acts 14:15), "the sovereign Lord (δέσποτα), who made heaven and earth" (Acts 4:24; cf. Ps 145:6 LXX), who is thereby "Lord (κύριος) of heaven and earth" (Acts 17:24; cf. Luke 10:21).[10] The sovereign Creator sustains humanity and governs the nations (17:26), but is known particularly as "the Lord God of Israel" (Luke 1:68; cf. Acts 13:17), "the God of our fathers" (Acts 3:13; 5:30; 22:14; cf. 7:32; Exod 3:6), who makes and keeps covenant promises to Abraham and his descendants (Luke 1:54–55, 68–73; Acts 3:25–26; 7:2–8; 13:26).[11] This God "has visited and redeemed his people" (Luke 1:68; cf. 2:38; 7:16) and "raised up a horn of salvation ... in the house of his servant David" (1:69) through the miraculous birth of Jesus, who is not only the Davidic king but "the Son of God" (1:32–33, 35; cf. 3:22). Thus, as Bock writes, "God is the major actor in Luke-Acts. It is his program that brings the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ."[12]

Luke presents Jesus as sharing in the identity and activity of Israel's God. He is declared to be God's beloved son, in whom he is pleased (Luke 3:21; cf. 9:35).[13] In his Gospel, Luke repeatedly presents Jesus as κύριος (7:13, 19; 10:1, 41; 11:39; 13:15; 17:6; 22:61; 24:3) and thereby makes "an essential claim about the relation between Jesus and the God of Israel: Jesus of Nazareth is the movement of God in one human life so much so that it is possible to speak of God and Jesus together as κύριος."[14] Luke also ascribes to Jesus divine actions: he heals the sick (4:40), forgives sins (5:23–24), raises the dead (7:14), offers salvation (19:9), pours out God's Spirit (Acts 2:33; cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 2:17; Joel 3:1 LXX), receives prayer (Acts 7:55–60), and will come in judgment (Acts 10:42; 17:31).[15] Thus, "Luke considered Jesus as

[10] On the terms ascribed to God in Luke-Acts, see Bock, *Theology*, 126.
[11] "The very centre of Luke's theology is his notion about *God* as the God of Israel," according to Jervell, *Theology*, 18, emphasis original.
[12] Bock, *Theology*, 99. Similarly Steve Walton, "The Acts—of God?," *EvQ* 80 (2008): 291–306, esp. 303.
[13] For OT allusions in 3:21, see Pao and Schnabel, "Luke," 279–81.
[14] C. Kavin Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 217–18.
[15] Bock, *Theology*, 175–76.

Yahweh's co-equal and co-regent."[16] At the same time, Luke presents Jesus as "the one who serves" (Luke 22:27; cf. 12:35–38), expressing his exalted status "in the shape of his service."[17] In context, Jesus' "service" entails suffering in accordance with God's plan and dying on others' behalf (22:15, 19–21).[18]

2.2. God's Plan

"Luke undoubtedly believed that God was indeed watching over all events, exercising universal providence."[19] This conviction is suggested by Luke's opening reference to "the things that have been fulfilled among us" (1:1 NIV11). For Christian readers the passive participle πεπληροφορημένων implies divine activity,[20] and may suggest "the motif of fulfilled prophecy,"[21] not simply the beginning of a new story but the continuance of an old one.[22] Luke takes special interest in the fulfillment of OT prophecy (cf. 24:44) and new prophecies given in the course of the narrative itself (cf. 24:6–8). In addition to prophetic fulfillment, Luke signals the outworking of God's plan in various ways, including but not limited to references to God's "plan" (βουλή),[23] "will" (θέλημα),[24] or hand (χείρ),[25] frequent appeals to "necessity" (δεῖ),[26] and divine guidance or intervention via miracles, dreams, epiphanies, and angelic visitations.[27]

Luke's repeated references to the accomplishment of God's purposes serve his aim of reassuring readers such as Theophilus (cf. Luke 1:4), who may be troubled by claims that Israel's Scriptures are fulfilled by "a dead Savior and a persecuted

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[16] Doug Buckwalter, "The Divine Saviour," in *Witness to the Gospel* (ed. I. Howard Marshall and David G. Peterson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 107–23, citing 123.
[17] Green, *Luke*, 769. Cf. Buckwalter, "Saviour," 123.
[18] Cf. Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1065.
[19] Squires, *Plan*, 26.
[20] Cf. Loveday Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1-4 and Acts 1.1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 113.
[21] Squires, *Plan*, 23–24. Cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:293; David G. Peterson, "The Motif of Fulfilment and the Purpose of Luke-Acts," in *The Book of Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting* (ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 83–104, esp. 87–88.
[22] Joel B. Green, "The Problem of a Beginning: Israel's Scriptures in Luke 1–2," *BBR* 4 (1994): 61–85, citing 66.
[23] Luke 7:30; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 5:38; 13:36; 20:27.
[24] Luke 22:42; Acts 13:22; 21:14; 22:14.
[25] Luke 1:66; Acts 4:28, 30; 7:50; 11:21; 13:11.
[26] Of the forty Lukan uses of δεῖ, divine necessity is suggested in Luke 9:22; 12:12; 13:33; 17:25; 21:9; 22:37; 24:7, 26, 44; Acts 1:16; 3:21; 4:12; 5:29; 9:6, 16; 14:22; 16:30; 17:3; 19:21; 23:11; 27:24. Cf. W. Grundmann, "δεῖ, δέον ἐστί," *TDNT* 2:21–25. Parallel uses of δεῖ by Josephus (*Life* 209; *J.W.* 2:545; *A.J.* 5:312; 10:89) are suggested by Adolf Schlatter, *Das Evangelium des Lukas* (2nd ed; Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1960), 54, 587, 652. Cf. Squires, *Plan*, 46–52.
[27] See Cosgrove, "Divine," 168–90; Bock, *Theology*, chs. 5–6.

community of God that included Gentiles."[28] This fulfillment motif also serves as a "legitimation device," reinforcing the coherence and antiquity of the Christian story and enabling believers to respond to outsiders' objections.[29]

In Luke-Acts, God's plan incorporates suffering in at least three key ways. First, Jesus' innocent and unjust suffering and death fulfills OT and narrative prophecies and is necessary (δεῖ) within God's plan.[30] Second, Paul must suffer on account of Jesus' name (9:16) and must testify in Rome, as he is reminded three times in the context of rejection or suffering (19:21; 23:21; 27:24). Third, other believers must speak before hostile authorities (Luke 12:11–12) and must endure adversity to enter God's kingdom (Acts 14:22).[31] In these texts, appeals to the divine plan *clarify* God's purposes in unsettling situations and *encourage* God's people to faithful endurance.[32] The remainder of this section will focus on Luke's portrayal of Jesus' necessary suffering.

2.3. Jesus' Suffering in God's Plan

Luke is quite explicit that Jesus' rejection, suffering, and death do not thwart but accomplish God's plan.[33] However, suffering is not the *terminus* of the divine purpose for Jesus, as the apostles emphatically declare, "God raised him up" (Acts 2:24; 10:40; 13:29). Programmatic narrative prophecies by Simeon (Luke 2:34–35) and Jesus (9:22, 44; 18:31–33; 22:37), as well as appeals to the divine βουλή (Acts 2:23; 4:28), anticipate and explain Jesus' suffering.

2.3.1. Simeon's Oracle

Luke 2:34–35 "provides the first hint of Jesus' destined rejection."[34] Simeon is introduced as "a righteous and devout man, awaiting the consolation of Israel," with whom the Spirit is present (2:25–27).[35] It is thus fitting to understand his prophecy in verses 29–35 as programmatic, anticipating and interpreting the ensuing narrative events in Luke's diptych.[36] Simeon's first oracle (2:29–32), rich with Isaianic imagery,

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[28] Bock, *Theology*, 29.
[29] Peterson, "Fulfilment," 103. Cf. Squires, *Plan*, 191–92.
[30] Luke 13:33; 17:25; 22:37; 24:7, 26, 44; Acts 2:23–24; 4:27–28; 17:3.
[31] Additionally, Luke 21:9 speaks of the necessity of wars and tumults before "the end."
[32] Similarly Squires writes that the plan of God motif "serves as a multifaceted means by which Luke strives to explain, strengthen and expand the faith of the readers of his two-volume work." *Plan*, 1.
[33] Cf. Moessner, "Script," 221; Schütz, *Christus*, 86.
[34] Frein, "Predictions," 26.
[35] Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 33–35. Cf. Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 44.
[36] Cf. Luke T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1991), 16; Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 44.

focuses on God's salvation and revelation, in keeping with his expectation of Israel's παράκλησις (2:25).[37] But his second oracle (2:34b–35) announces that division, dispute, and distress will come for Mary and her child.

First, Simeon tells Mary, "See, this child is appointed for the falling and rising (εἰς πτῶσιν καὶ ἀνάστασιν) of many in Israel" (2:34). Πτῶσις often carries negative connotations of calamity and judgment,[38] and here it anticipates Jesus' application of Psalm 118:22, "Everyone who falls (ὁ πεσών) on that stone will be broken to pieces" (Luke 20:18; cf. 21:24). According to Cunningham, "the falling … is a picture of judgment, while the rising pictures God's blessing."[39] Yet Luke, consistent with other NT authors, uses ἀνάστασις consistently to denote *resurrection*.[40] Thus Wright asserts, "Israel as a whole is going to 'fall' and 'rise again' in and through him.[41] This reading is attractive, given the earlier reference to Israel's consolation (2:25). Further, when πίπτω and ἀνίστημι occur together in the LXX, the reference is often to the same individual or group that falls and then either rises (Prov 24:16; Amos 9:11; Mic 7:8) or does not rise (Amos 5:2; 8:14).[42] However, in Isa 26:19, "falling" and "rising" refer to the contrasting fates of the wicked and righteous: "The dead *shall rise* (ἀναστήσονται), and those who are in the tombs *shall be raised* (ἐγερθήσονται) … but the land of the impious *shall fall* (πεσεῖται)" (NETS).[43] Further, Jesus declares in Luke 12:51 that he has come to bring division (διαμερισμόν), even between families (12:52–53). Thus, 2:34 more likely envisions Jesus bringing about ultimate *division* in Israel, with εἰς πτῶσιν καὶ ἀνάστασιν highlighting two contrasting eschatological outcomes: judgment and resurrection.[44]

Second, the Messianic child stands "as a sign spoken against" (εἰς σημεῖον ἀντιλεγόμενον, 2:34). Σημεῖον refers not to "a confirmation of a message, but a divine

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[37] See Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (London: Chapman, 1977), 458–59. Cf. David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 40, 98, 100; Peter Mallen, *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 65–66.
[38] Cf. Matt 7:27; Nah 3:3; Zech 14:12, 18; Isa 17:1; 51:17, 22; Jer 6:15 LXX.
[39] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 46.
[40] Cf. Luke 14:14; 20:27, 33, 35–36; Acts 1:22; 2:31; 4:2, 33; 17:18, 32; 23:6, 8; 24:15, 21; 26:23. Fitmyer acknowledges that ἀνάστασις "usually means 'resurrection,'" but claims that in 2:34 "its meaning is rather more generic and contrasted with *ptosis*." Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:429.
[41] Wright, *Resurrection*, 650; cf. 435–36.
[42] Acts 15:16 (quoting Amos 9:11) uses πίπτω in this sense with reference to David's fallen booth, though Luke does not include the double ἀναστήσω in Amos 9:11 LXX.
[43] See also Ps 19:9 LXX [20:8 ET].
[44] An eschatological context is noted by André Feuillet, "L'épreuve prédite à Marie par le vieillard Siméon (Luc, II 35a)," in *À la Rencontre de Dieu: FS Albert Gelin* (Le Puy: Mappus, 1961), 243–63, 246.

action taking on concrete form."[45] The opposition (ἀντιλέγω) to the Messianic sign may recall Israel's portrayal as a "contrary (ἀντιλέγοντα) people" in Isaiah 65:2 LXX (cf. Rom 10:21), and anticipates verbal antagonism toward Paul (Acts 13:45; 28:19) and the Christian sect (28:22).

Third, Simeon declares to Mary, "And a sword will pierce your own soul too" (καὶ σοῦ δὲ αὐτῆς τὴν ψυχὴν διελεύσεται ῥομφαία). Two interpretations are most common.[46] Many understand the sword as a metaphor of judgment, what Brown and Fitzmyer call "the sword of discrimination,"[47] appealing to Ezekiel 14:17 LXX for support. However, Ezekiel's imagery of severe judgment on the land bears little contextual or thematic resemblance to Luke 2:35.[48] According to Coleridge, Mary functions not as the embodiment of Israel but a paradigmatic believer, who "faced with the supreme sign of her own son … will herself be subject to the divine judgment proclaimed by Simeon."[49] He argues imprecisely that the sword is both "a metaphor of judgment" and also a picture of Mary as "interpreter" of God's sign.[50]

Others argue, "Mary stands with her son as one opposed."[51] This interpretation is strengthened and refined by observing a neglected allusion to Psalm 21:21 LXX [22:20 ET]: "Deliver my soul from the sword" (ῥῦσαι ἀπὸ ῥομφαίας τὴν ψυχήν μου).[52] This text shares common vocabulary and imagery with Luke 2:35, and the Evangelist alludes to Psalm 21:8–9, 19 LXX [22:7–8, 18 ET] at the crucifixion scene (Luke 23:34–35).[53] However, this allusion is ironic: Ps 21:21 LXX is an urgent prayer for divine rescue from violence and imminent death, but Luke 2:35a has no prayer for rescue but emphatically declares that Mary herself will suffer acute pain. Earlier Mary exclaimed, "My soul (ἡ ψυχή μου) magnifies the Lord" (1:46), but now she is told that her ψυχή will be pierced with suffering. Jesus will be opposed (2:34), and Mary herself will experience the painful cost of association with Jesus—the Son

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[45] François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50* (trans. Christine M. Thomas; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 104. Cf. 11:30.
[46] For a survey of interpretations, see Brown, *Birth*, 462–66.
[47] Cf. Ibid., 463–66; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:429–30.
[48] Rightly Bovon, *Luke 1*, 105; Nolland, *Luke*, 1:122.
[49] Mark Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative: Narrative as Christology in Luke 1-2* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 177. Cf. Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 42–43.
[50] Coleridge, *Birth*, 176–77.
[51] Nolland, *Luke*, 1:121–22; cf. Feuillet, "L'épreuve," 249; Warrington, "Suffering," 23.
[52] A possible allusion to Psalm 22:20 is mentioned in passing by Michael Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 142; Graham H. Twelftree, *People of the Spirit: Exploring Luke's View of the Church* (London: SPCK, 2009), 101 n. 1. An allusion to Psalm 22 is dismissed by Brown, *Birth*, 462; Feuillet, "L'épreuve," 256.
[53] Cf. Pao and Schnabel, "Luke," 396–97.

of God and her own son (2:35a; cf. 1:35; 9:23). Here Simeon's prophecy hints at the particularly painful impact Jesus' rejection will have on his mother, which recalls Auctor's reflections in 4 Maccabees 14:12, "For the mother of the seven young men endured the tortures of each one of her children."[54]

Thus, Simeon's second oracle strikes the first note of suffering, division, and opposition in Luke-Acts, preparing readers for the unexpected fulfillment of the prophesied New Exodus salvation. Shortly after Jesus declares his fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1–2, he is driven out of Nazareth and nearly murdered (4:29–30). Beginning in 5:21 and culminating in Jesus' trial and crucifixion (23:2, 10, 35), Jesus' primary antagonists are Jewish religious leaders. Indeed, this opposition continues into Acts, as Jesus' disciples are imprisoned (4:3; 5:18), threatened (4:18), and flogged (5:40). As Luke's narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that those who oppose Jesus and his followers are in danger of "falling" (2:34; cf. 20:18),[55] while Jesus "rises" and his persecuted followers declare their resurrection hope (2:34; cf. 24:6–7; Acts 24:15).

2.3.2. Jesus' Passion Predictions

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus makes three formal announcements of the coming suffering, rejection, and death of the Son of Man:

> The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. (9:22; cf. Matt 16:21; Mark 8:31)
>
> Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered over to human hands. (9:44; cf. Matt 17:22–23; Mark 9:31)
>
> See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked, shamefully treated, and spat upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise. (18:31–33; cf. Matt 20:18–19; Mark 10:33–34)

Like Simeon's oracle, these passion predictions serve a programmatic function, predicting and interpreting ensuing narrative events. Here we will discuss three emphases of these texts: (1) the *necessity* of Jesus' suffering within God's plan; (2) the *nature* of Jesus' impending suffering; and (3) the disciples' *incomprehension* of Jesus' necessary suffering.

First, Jesus' passion predictions highlight the divine *necessity* of Jesus' suffering. In 9:22, the so-called "divine δεῖ" indicates that Jesus' coming passion is

[54] Cf. 4 Macc 15:22; ch. 3 §1.4.
[55] Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 39.

rooted in God's mysterious yet certain plan (cf. 17:25; 24:7, 26; Acts 26:23).[56] Luke 18:31 presents Jesus' impending suffering as the culmination or intended goal (τελεσθήσεται) of scriptural prophecies about the Son of Man (cf. 22:37; 24:44).[57] Thus Jesus not only foresees his death but also discloses his knowledge of God's secret will and links his future death with past prophecies.[58]

Second, these predictions progressively disclose the *nature* of Jesus' suffering. The initial summary πολλὰ παθεῖν in 9:22 embraces all "that reflects the unwelcoming face of the reception given to Jesus' person, his message, and his ministry."[59] Specifically, this suffering entails Jesus' rejection (ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι) and killing (ἀποκτανθῆναι) by the chief priests, elders, and scribes (9:22).[60] The term ἀποδοκιμάζω—"to regard as unworthy/unfit and therefore to be rejected"[61]—recurs in 17:25, where Jesus announces he must be "rejected (ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι) by this generation" (cf. 7:31; 9:41; 11:29–32, 50–51). This prediction is fulfilled when these three groups gather together in the Temple to question Jesus (20:1). Jesus then tells an indicting parable and climactically cites Psalm 118:22 (117:22 LXX), "The stone that the builders rejected [ἀπεδοκίμασαν] has become the cornerstone" (Luke 20:17).[62] This intersection of Jesus' narrative prediction with the witness of Psalm 117:22 LXX makes doubly plain for Luke's readers that Jesus' persecution by the Jewish leaders is anchored firmly in the divine plan.

The second prediction in 9:44 discloses that the Son of Man will be betrayed or delivered over (παραδίδοσθαι). As Cunningham observes, Luke frequently uses παραδίδωμι in the context of persecution.[63] Jesus is "betrayed" by Judas (22:4, 6, 21–22, 48) and "delivered over" to death at his trial (23:25; 24:7, 20; cf. Acts 3:13), and his followers are "delivered over" to synagogues and prisons (Luke 21:12, 16; Acts 8:3; 12:4; 21:11; 22:4; 28:17). But in 9:44, as in 18:32 and 24:7, the passive παραδίδωμι may imply divine activity, suggested further by μέλλει in 9:44.[64]

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[56] On δεῖ, see ch. 5 §3.3.2.
[57] Cf. Cosgrove, "Divine," 183.
[58] Frein, "Predictions," 29–30.
[59] Nolland, *Luke*, 2:465. On πάσχω, see ch. 5 §3.3.2.
[60] These three groups made up the Sanhedrin (cf. 22:66), as noted by most commentators.
[61] BDAG 110.
[62] Peter appeals to Psalm 118:22 in Acts 4:11 before the same group in Jerusalem (cf. 4:5–6).
[63] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 89.
[64] Cf. Ibid., 89–90; Norman Perrin, "The Use of (παρα)διδόναι in Connection with the Passion of Jesus in the New Testament," in *Der Ruf Jesu und die Antwort der Gemeinde: FS J. Jeremias* (ed. Eduard Lohse, et al.; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 204–12, citing 210. On μέλλω, see Siegried Schulz, "Gottes Vorsehung bei Lukas," *ZNW* 54 (1963): 104–16, esp. 107–8.

Jesus' most detailed passion prediction comes in 18:31–33 as Jesus' "journey" to Jerusalem nears completion (cf. 9:51; 13:33–34).[65] First, παραδοθήσεται γὰρ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν in 18:32 recalls 9:44 and specifies the Gentiles' involvement in Jesus' passion. Second, Jesus will endure verbal and physical abuse and shaming: "he will be mocked (ἐμπαιχθήσεται), shamefully treated (ὑβρισθήσεται), and spat upon (ἐμπτυσθήσεται). And after flogging him, they will kill him" (μαστιγώσαντες ἀποκτενοῦσιν αὐτόν; 18:32–33). In the Passion Narrative, the guards (22:63), Herod (23:11), and the soldiers (23:36) mock Jesus. Specifically, they seek to humiliate Jesus and destroy his public identity and credibility as prophet, king, and savior (22:64; 23:11, 36).[66] Ironically, by their mocking Jesus' opponents fulfill his prediction in 18:32 and validate him as a true prophet.

Third, Luke stresses the disciples' *incomprehension* of Jesus' words about his coming passion:

> But they were not understanding (ἠγνόουν) this saying, and it was concealed from them that they may not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying. (9:45; cf. Mark 9:32)
>
> But they understood none of these things (οὐδὲν … συνῆκαν). This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said. (18:34)

In these texts Luke highlights the disciples' ignorance and fear, as well as the underlying reason for their incomprehension. The significance of Jesus' saying "was concealed (ἦν παρακεκαλυμμένον) from them that (ἵνα) they may not perceive it" (9:45), and 18:34 adds that they did not grasp or comprehend (ἐγίνωσκον) what was said. Nolland rightly observes, "Luke sees more here than a simple intellectual failure to understand," and he attributes the disciples' incomprehension to Satanic influence.[67] This is possible (cf. 8:12; 22:31), but the passive participles παρακεκαλυμμένον (9:45) and κεκρυμμένον (18:34) likely hint of divine agency.[68] Ironically, Luke presents disciples' ignorance of God's plan as integral to that plan.[69] Jesus has authority over evil spirits (9:42), and in 10:21–22 Jesus affirms the Father's role in concealing (ἀπέκρυψας) and revealing (ἀπεκάλυψας). The disciples'

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[65] Cf. Thompson, *Acts*, 42.
[66] On "status degradation rituals," see Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Gospels*, 406–7. Compare the similar public shaming of Eleazar in 4 Macc 6:1–3, discussed in ch. 3 §2.3.
[67] Nolland, *Luke*, 2:514.
[68] "Gott hat es so gewollt, er hat das Geheimnis des Leiden-Müssens vor ihren Augen verhüllt," according to Josef Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1977), 310.
[69] David P. Moessner, "Reading Luke's Gospel as Ancient Hellenistic Narrative," in *Reading Luke* (ed. Craig G. Bartholomew, et al.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 125–51, esp. 141.

incomprehension concerning Jesus' coming suffering is reversed only when the risen Jesus opens their minds to understand the Scriptures (24:45).

2.3.3. Divine βουλή

Acts 2:23 and 4:27–28 make clear that Jesus' unjust death took place according to God's predetermined plan, though without excusing those human agents involved:

> This man [Jesus], who was delivered up according to God's determined will and foreknowledge, you killed, crucifying him at the hands of lawless ones." (2:23)
>
> For truly in this city Herod and Pontius Pilate gathered together with the Gentiles and peoples of Israel against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do whatever your hand and your plan predetermined to happen. (4:27–28)

Elsewhere Luke speaks of the divine βουλή being rejected (Luke 7:30), served (Acts 13:36), and declared (20:27). In contrast to human schemes, a plan ἐκ θεοῦ is impossible to stop (5:38–39). In 2:23, Peter's appeal to God's βουλή serves an important apologetic purpose: God determined (ὡρισμένῃ) and foreknew (προγνώσει) Jesus' death and then raised and exalted him (2:24, 33). Luke often uses προορίζω or ὁρίζω, not as a general appeal to Fate or determinism, but to highlight God's special determination or appointment of Jesus' Passion (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:28) and the final judgment (10:42; 17:26, 31).[70]

Barrett writes, "What appeared to be a free concerted action by Jews and Gentiles was in fact done because God foreknew it, decided it, and planned it."[71] However, Peter makes clear that the Jerusalem Jews are held responsible for their part in Jesus' unjust death (διὰ χειρὸς ἀνόμων προσπήξαντες ἀνείλατε, 2:23; cf. Luke 23:13–25; Acts 13:27–28).[72] Yet "you killed him" is not the last word, as those so condemned called to repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins (2:38).

In 4:27–28, the church interprets Jesus' death through the lens of Psalm 2:1–2.[73] Herod, Pilate, Israel and the Gentiles assembled together against God's anointed servant Jesus, yet verse 28 clarifies the divine purpose mysteriously guiding this sinister conspiracy (ποιῆσαι ὅσα ἡ χείρ σου καὶ ἡ βουλή σου προώρισεν γενέσθαι).[74]

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[70] Cf. Squires, *Plan*, 57–58, 170, 194; Barrett, *Acts*, 1:248; Conzelmann, *Theology*, 154.
[71] Barrett, *Acts*, 1:142.
[72] Peterson, *Acts*, 146. Cf. Squires, *Plan*, 180–82. In Acts the Jews in Jerusalem are held responsible for Jesus' crucifixion, according to Jon A. Weatherly, "The Jews in Luke-Acts," *TynB* 40 (1989): 107–117, esp. 116.
[73] For discussion of this *pesher* use of Psalm 2, see Longenecker, "Acts," 779.
[74] The infinitive ποιῆσαι "expresses the purpose God accomplished with the conspiracy" in 4:27. Schnabel, *Acts*, 257. NIV11 and CEB obscure this connection by beginning a new sentence at 4:28.

God's χείρ signifies his power and control as well as his instrumentality, as suggested by the church's prayer for God to "stretch out your hand to heal" (4:30; cf. Luke 1:71; 3:17; 23:46 [Ps 30:6 LXX]; Acts 7:50; 11:21; 13:11).[75]

2.4. Summary

Thus Luke presents Jesus, the suffering and exalted Lord and Messiah, as sharing in the identity and activity of Israel's God. God decisively fulfills his scriptural promises and achieves his sovereign plan precisely through the predicted suffering and vindication of his Son.

3. How Does Suffering Relate to our Nature, Task, and Purpose?

In Acts, the persecution of believers ironically demonstrates that they are part of God's true people. Luke offers certainty (ἀσφάλεια) to his readers (Luke 1:4) by demonstrating that the church fulfills Israel's hopes through faith in the crucified, risen Lord Jesus and continued witness to Jesus amidst opposition. Believers are persecuted because of their association with Jesus (cf. Luke 6:22; 9:23; 21:12; Acts 5:41; 9:16), and the risen Lord Jesus identifies with his persecuted followers (9:4–5). Acts gives considerable attention to the persecution of the apostles, Stephen, and Paul, who suffer like Jesus and for Jesus' name as authentic witnesses and leaders of God's people. Additionally, Luke 9:23 and Acts 14:22 make clear that suffering will characterize the wider church as well. When facing suffering and opposition, believers should follow Jesus' example in showing love to their enemies, maintaining confidence in God's sovereign purposes, and praying for and expecting divine enablement for witness (Luke 6:27–28; 21:13–15; Acts 4:27–31). Luke acknowledges that the suffering of Jesus and his followers prompts questions and misunderstandings and he illustrates the community's process of discerning God's will through suffering (Acts 21:10–14).

3.1. Suffering and the Cost of Discipleship

Luke teaches that followers of the suffering and vindicated Messiah should expect and embrace various present sufferings while anticipating future vindication themselves. In particular, Luke 9:23 and Acts 14:22 establish that suffering is normative for believers until the kingdom's consummation.

[75] Cf. translations of χείρ as "strength" (NJB) or "power" (NIV11, NET, CEB; cf. NGÜ [Macht]).

3.1.1. Luke 9:23

Jesus' two "cross-bearing" statements succinctly summarize the nature and cost of following Jesus:[76]

> If anyone wishes to come after me, let that person deny self, take up his own cross daily, and follow me (9:23).
>
> Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me is unable to be my disciple (14:27).[77]

The first summons to cross-bearing (9:23) follows immediately after Jesus' first prediction of his impending suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection (9:22).[78] In 9:23, the phrase πρὸς πάντας shifts from private teaching to the disciples (9:18–22) to a broad audience (cf. ὄχλοι πολλοί, 14:25). Bøe concludes, "Since the passion prediction was spoken to the disciples exclusively, the 'all' of v. 23 appears to be uninformed about Jesus' coming death."[79] However, "all" surely includes the disciples as well as the crowds (cf. Mark 8:34), and Luke (unlike Matthew and Mark) places the cross-bearing saying immediately after the passion prediction. The juxtaposition of Jesus' passion prediction (9:22) and his summons to costly discipleship (9:23) suggests that would-be disciples should expect to suffer like their suffering Lord.[80]

In the ancient world, cross-bearing was not an independent punishment but always closely attended crucifixion.[81] Cross-bearing served as a "public spectacle" and a powerful deterrent to onlookers.[82] Crucifixion was not only excruciatingly painful but also very shameful. Thus Bøe writes, "The call to take up one's cross can be seen as a voluntary *self-stigmatization*."[83]

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[76] On these texts, see Sverre Bøe's thorough study *Cross-Bearing in Luke* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010). For my summary and interaction, see Brian J. Tabb, "Review of S. Bøe, *Cross-bearing in Luke*," *BBR* 22 (2011): 409–11.

[77] NRSV and NIV11 renderings (deny *themselves* and take up *their* cross daily) may obscure Jesus' appeal to individuals, as observed by Matthew L. Skinner, "Denying Self, Bearing a Cross, and Following Jesus: Unpacking the Imperatives of Mark 8:34," *WW* 23 (2003): 321–331, at 322 n. 1.

[78] See §2.3.2.

[79] Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*, 90.

[80] Barrett, "Imitatio," 251. Cf. Schütz, *Christus*, 112.

[81] See Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*, ch. 3.

[82] Ibid., 68. Cf. Plutarch, *Mor.* 554 A/B; Chariton, *Chaer.* 4.2.7.

[83] Ibid., 152, emphasis original. For a review of various interpretations of cross-bearing, see J. Schneider, "σταυρός," *TDNT* 7:572–80, esp. 577–79.

In Luke 9:23, discipleship entails self-denial (ἀρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν) and *daily* (καθ᾽ ἡμέραν) taking up one's cross. Luke's "strange addition"[84] of καθ᾽ ἡμέραν, without Synoptic parallel, has prompted some scholars to claim that Luke seriously dilutes Jesus' sharp call for disciples to ready themselves for martyrdom.[85] Adams claims Luke's cross-bearing saying "lacks the sharp edge it has in Mark. It lays upon the reader routine demands of everyday life—perhaps even persecution—but stops short before the stark challenge of martyrdom."[86] Luke does *not* shy away from "the stark challenge of martyrdom," as he records how Jesus' prediction "some of you they will put to death" (21:16) is fulfilled in the deaths of Stephen (Acts 7:54–8:1) and James (12:2). Disciples are sent "as lambs among wolves" (Luke 10:3), and should expect opposition and hatred on account of Jesus (21:12, 17). But as Marshall suggests, "Where Mark has in mind the initial act of self-renunciation, Luke stresses the need for a daily renewal of such an attitude."[87] The parallel text in Luke 14:26–27 emphasizes "the absolute priority of allegiance to Jesus" in discipleship, which entails not only self-denial but also family-denial.[88]

In Luke 9:24–26, Jesus offers three reasons (note the three-fold γάρ) why one must demonstrate such absolute allegiance to Jesus and daily willingness to accept the ignominy and potential suffering associated with discipleship.[89] First, Jesus clarifies that it is only by losing one's life (ψυχή) on account of Jesus, as in the call to daily cross-bearing, that one will save it (9:24). The future tense σώσει, as well as the context (esp. 9:26), suggest that Jesus is speaking about eschatological salvation, not temporal preservation.[90] Second, Jesus' rhetorical question in 9:25 supports the call to self-denial by noting that it does no good to "gain the whole world" at the cost of losing one's self. Luke's Gospel pointedly illustrates this point in the parable of the rich fool (12:15–21), and by positive (5:11, 27–28; 18:28) and negative examples of discipleship (9:57–62; 18:22–25). Third, those who are ashamed of Jesus and his words, particularly concerning his suffering and the cost of discipleship (9:22–23),

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[84] J. Gwyn Griffiths, "The Disciple's Cross," *NTS* 16 (1970): 358–364, citing 359. Some witnesses omit καθ᾽ ἡμέραν (א[1] C D M), though it has weighty external support (P[75] א*.[2] A B K L W Θ Ξ Ψ) and is the more difficult reading.
[85] Cf. Ernst Haenchen, *Die Bibel und wir: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1968), 128–29.
[86] Adams, "Suffering," 127.
[87] I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 374. Cf. Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, 347.
[88] Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*, 169.
[89] The causal use of γάρ is noted by David E. Garland, *Luke* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011); but a causal connection is "not certain" according to Bovon, *Luke 1*, 364.
[90] Rightly Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*, 135.

will not receive commendation but rejection when the Son of Man comes in glory (9:26; cf. 12:8–9).

3.1.2. Acts 14:22

Barrett asserts, "The story told in Acts may be regarded as the working out of the saying of 9,23 in its Lucan form."[91] Acts 14:22 offers a succinct, programmatic statement concerning the "many afflictions" that followers of Jesus must endure en route to final salvation.[92] Paul is stoned and left for dead in Lystra (14:19) but is miraculously preserved.[93] He then returns with Barnabas to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, "strengthening the souls of the disciples, urging them to continue in the faith, and saying that 'through many afflictions we must enter God's kingdom'" (διὰ πολλῶν θλίψεων δεῖ ἡμᾶς εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ).

First, the plural ἡμᾶς may refer exclusively to Paul and Barnabas, but more likely, the term is inclusive of the missionaries and the believers they address.[94] The hortatory context and Luke's recent narration of Paul's (but not Barnabas') near-death persecution at Lystra (14:19) suggest this reading. The missionaries' teaching serves to strengthen (ἐπιστηρίζοντες) and encourage (παρακαλοῦντες) the believers by providing a theological rationale for *Paul's* recent persecution, which is consistent with his calling to suffer (9:16),[95] and by motivating their hearers to endure (ἐμμένειν) various hardships *themselves*. As Adams observes, "The persistence he demands of others … he embodies himself."[96]

Second, 14:22 highlights the *necessity* (δεῖ) of entering the kingdom through hardships. Here δεῖ does *not* indicate "an inner necessity growing out of a given situation."[97] Elsewhere, Luke employs δεῖ to express God's plan and purpose, and often highlights the reliability of a surprising, debated, or implausible narrative

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[91] Charles K. Barrett, "Theologia Crucis–in Acts?," in *Theologia Crucis-Signum Crucis: FS E. Dinkler* (ed. Carl Andresen and G. Klein; Tubingen: Mohr, 1979), 73–84, citing 88. Failure to consider Acts is a notable weakness of Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*.

[92] Note the title of Cunningham's monograph, *"Through Many Tribulations": The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts.*

[93] Cf. Schnabel, *Acts*, 612. Paul's comment, "Once I was stoned" (2 Cor 11:25) likely recalls this event in Acts 14:19. Pervo writes, "Paul here appears as the typical superhero." *Profit*, 26. This conclusion is overly skeptical and minimizes Luke's emphasis on divine protection and preservation (cf. 18:9–10; 26:17, 22).

[94] Kelhoffer, *Persecution*, 312.

[95] Cf. ch. 5 §3.3.2.

[96] Adams, "Suffering," 136.

[97] As suggested by BDAG 214 §1c; cf. Schuyler Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance in the Theology of Luke* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 123. Pervo, *Acts*, 362 n. 125.

episode,[98] notably the predicted suffering of Jesus (Luke 9:22; 17:25; 21:9; 22:37; 24:7, 26, 46; Acts 17:3) and Saul (Acts 9:16). The preceding narrative recounts Paul and Barnabas' persecution in three cities, but 14:22 introduces the new or "controversial" aspect in teaching that *believers*, not simply the missionaries, "must" endure many hardships en route to final salvation.[99] Thus, δεῖ here implies that believers' suffering and persecution is consistent with God's plan, though is not a rigid "entrance requirement" for the kingdom.[100]

Third, ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ elsewhere in Acts summarizes Christian proclamation (1:3; 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31), but here the phrase denotes the blessedness of God's presence that those who rightly receive that proclamation enter into.[101] The same pattern of necessary suffering followed by entrance into glory in 14:22 is found in Luke 24:26 ("Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory?").

Fourth, what is the meaning of the phrase διὰ πολλῶν θλίψεων? In Acts 11:19, ἡ θλῖψις recalls the διωγμὸς μέγας recorded in 8:1.[102] Elsewhere θλῖψις serves as a more general term for various afflictions, including but not limited to those arising from persecution.[103] In 14:22, "many afflictions" certainly includes persecution, such as Paul endured in 14:19, but the expression is general (as in 7:10) and may include other forms of suffering.[104] Here Luke may be drawing upon the OT righteous sufferer motif, particularly as expressed in Psalm 33:20 LXX [34:19 ET], "Many are the afflictions of the righteous (πολλαὶ αἱ θλίψεις τῶν δικαίων), and from them all he will deliver them."[105]

Some scholars have suggested that Acts 14:22 may draw upon "the Jewish apocalyptic theme of the Messianic affliction, the travail pains of the Messiah, which must precede the good time to come."[106] Conzelmann's claim that θλῖψις "has no

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[98] Rothschild, *Rhetoric*, 194.
[99] Kelhoffer, *Persecution*, 312–13.
[100] Gaventa, *Acts*, 209.
[101] Barrett, *Acts*, 1:686. On entering into the kingdom, cf. Luke 18:17, 18:25; 23:42.
[102] In 8:1, Codex D adds καὶ θλῖψις.
[103] Cf. ch. 5 §2.3.1.
[104] Contra Dehandschutter, "Persécution," 545.
[105] Cf. Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 247. As noted in ch. 4 §3.1, 4 Macc 18:15 also cites Psalm 33:20 LXX.
[106] Barrett, *Acts*, 1:686. Cf. H. Schlier, "θλίβω, θλῖψις." *TDNT* 3:139–48, esp. 144–46; Mattill, *Luke*, 52; Witherington, *Acts*, 428; Mark Dubis, *Messianic Woes in First Peter: Suffering and Eschatology in 1 Peter 4:12-19* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 67–68; Pate and Kennard, *Deliverance*, 459–60. For a summary of relevant OT and Jewish texts, see Schnabel, *Acts*, 613 n. 34. On variegated Jewish eschatological expectations, see Dale C. Allison, *The End of the Ages has Come: An Early*

eschatological meaning for Luke" does not do justice to 14:22.[107] Conversely, Dubis goes too far the other way in calling θλῖψις a "semitechnical term" for eschatological tribulation in Acts, which does not account for 7:10–11; 11:19; and 20:23.[108] Rather, for Luke the prophesied "last days" begin at Pentecost (2:17), and God's kingdom has been inaugurated through Jesus' heavenly exaltation but still awaits full realization (2:33–36; 3:20–21; cf. Luke 11:2).[109] Within this eschatological framework, which substantially modifies the standard Jewish distinction between the present and future ages, believers must suffer "many hardships" (14:22).

Thus, Acts 14:22 and Luke 9:23 make clear that suffering is a normative facet of Christian discipleship before the consummation of God's kingdom. Believers should not be surprised by suffering but must remember that they follow Jesus, their suffering and risen Lord, and that their present sufferings are somehow "necessary" within the divine plan and will give way to the glory of kingdom fullness.

3.2. Suffering of Jesus' Witnesses

In Luke 21:12–13 Jesus explains, "But before all these things they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you over to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will lead to testimony (εἰς μαρτύριον) for you." Amidst persecution and betrayal from fellow Jews, family and friends (21:16), Jesus summons his followers to bear witness and endure (21:13, 19), enabled by divine wisdom (21:15) and protection (21:18). The narrative of Acts highlights the fulfillment of Jesus' predictions in Luke 12:11–12 and 21:12–19 persecution and proclamation of Jesus' followers, particularly the apostles, Stephen, and Paul (see Table 5).[110]

Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 5–25. See especially Dan 7:7–27; 12:1–2; *T. Mos.* 8–10; *4 Ezra* 7:14.

[107] Conzelmann, *Theology*, 99. Similarly Dehandschutter, "Persécution," 545.

[108] Dubis, *Woes*, 68.

[109] See §6.1.

[110] Cf. ch. 5 §2.2.2; 2.5.3; ch. 6 §3.4.1–2; Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 194–95, 204; cf. Tannehill, *Unity*, 2:70, 83; Frein, "Predictions," 32–33; Twelftree, *People*, 103–4.

Table 5: Predictions of Persecution and Proclamation

Prediction in Luke	*Fulfillment in Acts*
They will lay hands on you (21:12)	Peter and John (4:3); Apostles (5:18); church (12:1); Paul (21:27)
They will persecute you (21:12)	Church (8:1); believers' persecution by Paul (9:4–5; cf. 22:4, 7–8; 26:11, 14–15)
They will hand you over to synagogues (21:12; cf. 12:11)	Stephen (6:9); believers by Paul (9:2; cf. 22:19; 26:11)
They will put you in prison (21:12)	Apostles (5:18–19; cf. 4:3); Peter (12:3); Paul and Silas (16:23)
You will be brought before kings and governors (21:12; cf. 12:11)	Paul (24:10; 26:2, 30)
For my name's sake (21:12, 27)	Apostles (5:28, 40–41); Paul (9:15–16)
This will lead to testimony (21:13)	Apostles (5:32); Stephen (22:20); Paul (22:15)
Wisdom, which your adversaries cannot withstand (21:15)	Peter and John (4:12–14); Stephen (6:10)
The Holy Spirit will teach you (12:12)	Peter/apostles (4:8; 5:32); Church (4:31); Stephen (6:10; 7:55); Paul (20:22)
They will kill some of you (21:16)	Stephen (7:54–60); James (12:2)
No hair of your head will perish (21:18)	Paul and fellow passengers (27:34)[111]

In Luke 24:48, Jesus says to the apostles, "You *are* witnesses of these things," and in Acts 1:8 he employs the future tense, "You *will be* my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." The identification as μάρτυρες and the scope of witness ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς recall the calling of Israel and the servant in Isaiah 43:10–12 and 49:6.[112] Acts typically reserves the term μάρτυς for the Twelve, who are (eye)witnesses to Jesus' resurrection (1:22).[113] Paul is also a μάρτυς (22:15; 26:16; cf. 23:11), who is called to bear Jesus' name (9:15) and

[111] For discussion of the tension between 21:16 and 18, see ch. 5 §1.4.
[112] See Pao, *Acts*, 91–97, 170.
[113] 1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39, 41; 13:31. See Trites, *Witness*, 136–39.

uniquely advance the program of 1:8 "unto the end of the earth" (13:47).[114] In 22:20, Paul refers to "the blood of Stephen your witness (μάρτυς) being poured out," whose testimony to the exalted Son of Man results in death.[115] The μάρτυρες experience persecution resulting from their testimony about the risen Lord Jesus, which suggests that the way of witness "is a way of rejection, suffering and possibly also of death."[116] Trites observes, "These persecutions have both a juridical and a Messianic character," and are evidence that "the Messianic Age continues" (cf. Acts 4:25–30).[117]

3.3. A Distinctive Response to Suffering

Jesus summons disciples to a radical response to suffering and opposition: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27–28). Luke's Passion Narrative presents Jesus as fully embodying this message and modeling for his followers a distinctive response to suffering. Luke highlights Jesus' prayerful submission to his Father's will (22:41–44; 23:46). When arrested, Jesus mercifully heals one of his adversaries (22:51). When crucified, Jesus prays for his enemies' forgiveness (23:34)[118] and assures the criminal on the cross that he will be with him in Paradise (23:43). Jesus expresses a clear understanding of his identity and resolutely embraces God's plan (22:22, 37), which entails relational suffering caused by close friends (22:21, 34, 47–48, 57–61), the physical suffering of crucifixion (23:33), and endurance of mocking and shaming (22:63–65; 23:11, 35–36, 39).

Jesus and his followers after Pentecost consistently respond to suffering and difficulty by praying.[119] Acts 4:24–30 offers a model prayer in response to hostility.[120] The believers affirm God's sovereign power and rehearse the outworking of God's βουλή in Jewish and Gentile opposition to Jesus, interpreted in light of Psalm 2:1–2 (Acts 4:24–28). Then they ask the Lord to "look upon their threats" (cf. 4:21) and grant them continued ability "to speak your word with all boldness" (4:29), as God continues to perform healings, signs and wonders through Jesus' name (4:30). The prayer is immediately and powerfully answered in 4:31: "they all were filled with the

[114] For careful discussion, see Peter G. Bolt, "Mission and Witness," in *Witness to the Gospel* (ed. I. Howard Marshall and David G. Peterson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 191–214.
[115] Cf. NIV11, "your martyr Stephen."
[116] L. Coenen and A. A. Trites, "Witness, Testimony," *NIDNTT* 3:1039–51, citing 1044.
[117] Trites, *Witness*, 130–31.
[118] If original; for defense of this saying's authenticity, see Appendix 1.
[119] Luke 6:28; 22:40–46; 23:46; Acts 4:24–30; 7:59–60; 12:5; 16:25; Twelftree, *People*, 106–7.
[120] Cf. Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 189; Haenchen, *Acts*, 229.

Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness (παρρησία)."[121] Thus, the church prays not for deliverance from adversity or judgment on their opponents but boldness to proclaim Christ *amidst* adversity.[122]

In fulfillment of Luke 21:12–15, the apostles, Stephen, and Paul all boldly testify to the risen Lord amidst opposition.[123] Additionally, the apostles' joy amidst suffering likely recalls Jesus' teaching that disciples "rejoice" when hated, excluded, reviled, and spurned on his account (Acts 5:41; Luke 6:22–23). Stephen's dying prayers recall Jesus' requests for his persecutors' forgiveness and for God to receive his Spirit (Acts 7:59–60; cf. Luke 23:34, 46), only Stephen prays to Jesus, the vindicated Son of Man (Acts 7:56).[124]

3.4. Suffering and the Legitimation of Jesus' Followers

In chapter 5 (§1.3), we argued that Luke-Acts was written, at least partially, to validate the suffering community of Jesus' disciples as God's eschatological people. As Marshall summarizes, "Acts is concerned with the identity and legitimation of the Christian movement."[125] In particular, Luke highlights the legitimacy of the apostles, Stephen, and Paul as divinely authorized leaders who suffer like Jesus in obedience to God's will (5:29), in fulfillment of Jesus' predictions (Luke 12:11–12; 21:12–19; Acts 9:16), and who receive divine aid amidst opposition (4:13; 26:22).

3.4.1. The Apostles

The first recorded opposition to Jesus' followers arises from the priests, Temple guard, and Sadducees in Jerusalem, who arrest Peter and John (4:1–3). After questioning Peter and John, the Jewish leaders charge them to teach no more in Jesus' name (4:18), issue further threats (προσαπειλησάμενοι), and release them (4:21). Peter and John do not experience severe hardship, though Luke notes that the Jewish leaders desire to further punish them but are unable to do so because of their reception among the people (4:21).[126]

In Acts 5:17–18, hostility intensifies as the high priest and Sadducees, jealous (ἐπλήσθησαν ζήλου) of their popularity and success, "lay hands on the apostles and

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[121] See §3.4.1.
[122] Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970), 211; Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 39.
[123] See §3.2, 4; ch. 5 §2.4.3; 3.3.1.
[124] See ch. 5 §2.4.1–2.
[125] I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 39. Cf. Braumann, "Mittel," 145.
[126] Kelhoffer, *Persecution*, 294.

put them in public prison" (cf. Luke 21:12).[127] Following the apostles' pointed response (5:29–32), the authorities want to kill them (5:33), though after Gamaliel's intervention they have the apostles beaten (δείραντες) and released (5:40). δέρω here suggests a severe, public flogging (cf. 16:37; 22:19), perhaps the forty lashes (minus one) prescribed for infractions of the Jewish Law.[128] Josephus calls this punishment "most shameful (αἰσχίστην) for a free person" (*Ant.* 4:238). Undeterred, the apostles rejoice in suffering dishonor for Jesus' name and return to daily teaching and preaching (5:41–42).[129]

In Acts 4–5, the apostles' legitimacy as God's appointed leaders is confirmed in at least four ways. First, the Jewish leaders are astonished at the apostles' παρρησίαν (4:13). Luke regularly employs the terms παρρησία and παρρησιάζομαι to denote the Spirit-enabled[130] freedom to proclaim the truth even in the face of opposition or persecution.[131]

Second, persecution highlights the apostles' obedience to God and their persecutors' disobedience. After disregarding the high priest's orders to stop teaching in Jesus' name, they declare, "We must obey God rather than human beings!" (5:29 NIV11; cf. 4:19). In contrast, their persecutors are portrayed as opponents of God and his Messiah (4:25–29; 5:32), in danger of being "completely cut off from their people" (3:23 NIV11). Luke presents the persecuted apostles, not the Sanhedrin, as the authentic leaders who speak for and follow God.[132]

Third, the suffering of the apostles and their community identifies them with Jesus, who suffered and was vindicated according to God's plan. Their opponents, the very group responsible for Jesus' death,[133] "recognize that they had been with Jesus" (4:13). The apostles are beaten (δέρω), as was Jesus (5:40; cf. Luke 22:63).[134] The threats against Peter and John and by extension the wider community (4:17, 21, 29) are interpreted as an extension or continuation of the opposition faced by Jesus (4:27–

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[127] See §3.2 and Table 5.
[128] On the punishment of forty lashes (minus one), see Deut 25:1–3; 2 Cor 11:24; *m. Mak* 3:10–14.
[129] In 5:41, μὲν οὖν indicates that the apostles' response follows naturally from their position in 5:29–32. Levinsohn, *Connections*, 142.
[130] Cf. 4:8, 31.
[131] 2:29; 4:13, 29, 31; 9:27–28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26; 28:31. See Thompson, *Acts*, 96–99. Fourth Maccabees 10:5 also uses παρρησία in the context of persecution, though without the same connection with the Spirit.
[132] Cf. Ibid., 162. The apostles' response "highlights the value of their suffering for asserting their legitimacy," according to Kelhoffer, *Persecution*, 296.
[133] Cf. Luke 22:66; 23:13; 24:20; Acts 4:5–6; 5:28–29.
[134] For this and other parallels, see Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 195–96.

28).[135] Jesus' name is central to the apostles' healing and teaching ministry (4:7, 10, 12, 17–18, 30; 5:28), and they rejoice at suffering dishonor ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος (5:41; cf. Luke 6:22–23). While flogging would typically be viewed as shameful and dishonorable, "from the disciples' viewpoint, which involved a transvaluation of normal ancient values, it was considered an honor."[136] Their seemingly paradoxical joy in suffering is explicable because of their association with Jesus and further confirms the link between Jesus and his followers.[137]

Fourth, the apostles experience God's presence and power amidst human opposition. They perform a "notable sign" of healing (4:16) and ask God for further healings to be done (4:30). Further, their miraculous deliverance from prison and ongoing teaching in the Temple thwart and confuse the high priest's plans (5:19–25). These four features thus confirm the suffering apostles' legitimacy as Jesus' followers and God's authorized leaders over Israel.[138]

3.4.2. Stephen

In Acts 6–7, Stephen's suffering confirms his legitimacy as a true witness while discrediting his persecutors.[139] Jesus' earlier predictions (Luke 12:11–12; 21:12–15) are realized in Stephen's demonstration of Spirit-filled wisdom in the face of synagogue opposition (6:9–10). Stephen's persecution by his own people continues a long-standing pattern of Israel's persecution of God's appointed leaders (7:9, 35, 52, 57–58). Further, Stephen's violent death verifies his prophetic rebuke of his opponents as stiff-necked, uncircumcised in heart, and resistant to the Spirit like their forebears (7:51–52).

3.4.3. Saul/Paul

Saul's calling to suffer for Jesus' name (9:16) and his initial experiences of persecution (9:23, 29) confirm the genuineness of his conversion in the eyes of

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[135] Cf. Ibid., 198.
[136] Witherington, *Acts*, 240.
[137] Cf. Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 198. Modica goes beyond the evidence in claiming that the apostles rejoice because they conceive of their sufferings "as 'participating' in the sufferings of Jesus." "Function," 163.
[138] Cf. Johnson, *Acts*, 103; Andrew C. Clark, "The Role of the Apostles," in *Witness to the Gospel* (ed. I. Howard Marshall and David G. Peterson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 169–90, esp. 173–77; Bock, *Acts*, 253. Michael Fuller argues forcefully that the Twelve are "the core and the leadership of the eschatological Israel." *The Restoration of Israel: Israel's Re-gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 272. However, Fuller fails to consider the significance of their suffering and opposition (4:3, 21; 5:17–18; 41).
[139] See ch. 5 §2.4.3.

Ananias and other believers who have fear and questions about this former persecutor (9:13–14, 21, 26).[140] Saul's suffering links him to Jesus (Luke 9:22) and the apostles (Acts 5:41) and serves a powerful apologetic function for Ananias (and his community) to embrace Saul's new identity as Jesus' emissary because of *how* Saul will carry out his new vocation. Paul's words to the Ephesian elders demonstrate that he fully embraces his calling to a ministry of suffering:[141]

> And now behold, having been bound in the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me in there, except that the Holy Spirit in each city keeps solemnly testifying to me, saying that bonds and afflictions await me (δεσμὰ καὶ θλίψεις με μένουσιν). But I do not consider my life of any account as precious to myself, so that I may complete my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God's grace. (20:22–24)

In 15:26, the apostles and elders' commend Paul and Barnabas as "men who have given over their lives (παραδεδωκόσι τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν) for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."[142] Although Jackson and Lake called the rendering "men who have risked their lives" "indefensible" eighty years ago, it still persists in modern English versions and lexicons.[143] The perfect participle παραδεδωκόσι likely denotes a decisive act of consecration or devotion, not repeated exposure to hazards.[144] Their lives are surrendered ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, a phrase which recalls Paul's original calling to suffer (9:16) and also anticipates his declaration that he is even ready to die in Jerusalem for Jesus' name (21:13).

3.5. Suffering and Discernment of God's Will

In Acts 21, believers struggle to come to grips with the role of suffering in God's plan. According to v. 4, the disciples at Tyre "kept telling Paul by the Spirit (τῷ Παύλῳ ἔλεγον διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος) not to set foot in Jerusalem."[145] Barrett suggests that these disciples were acting from human concern, not from the Spirit's guidance,[146] which

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[140] See ch. 5 §3.3.3; 3.4.
[141] Cf. House, "Suffering," 325.
[142] This analysis of 15:26 is informed by personal correspondence with Alex Kirk.
[143] F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, *Beginnings of Christianity* (5 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1920–33), 4:180. Cf. NRSV, ESV, NASB, NIV11, HCSB, NKJV; BDAG 761; L&N §21.7; *NIDNTT* 2:368. Schlachter is preferable: "Männern, die ihr Leben *hingegeben haben* für den Namen unseres Herrn Jesus Christus."
[144] Some Western manuscripts (D, E, 614) add εἰς πάντα πειρασμόν at the end of 15:26, probably owing to the unusual application of παραδοῦναι τὴν ψυχήν to persons still alive. Ibid., 4: 180.
[145] The imperfect ἔλεγον is likely iterative (cf. NASB), contra NIV11 ("urged") and NRSV ("told"). Cf. John B. F. Miller, *Convinced that God had Called Us: Dreams, Visions and the Perception of God's Will in Luke-Acts* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 227.
[146] Barrett, *Acts*, 2:990.

surely minimizes the force of διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος in the text. Conversely, Tannehill interprets 21:4 as a Spirit-directed urging not to go, which conflicts with the previous revelation to Paul (19:21; cf. 9:16; 20:22–23).[147] More likely, the disciples receive revelation through the Spirit about the dangers facing Paul, and they wrongly *interpret* this to mean that Paul should not go. Rapske writes,

> [I]t is hardly to be imagined that the Spirit is sending mixed signals, and that Luke ignorantly reflects the conflict, leaving it unresolved…. The Tyrians' reception of a divine portent is clear; their counsel, while sincere, is nevertheless misguided, ill-informed and at loggerheads with the divine intention.[148]

Nonetheless, Paul and his companions ("we") maintain their course, and as at Miletus, they are escorted to the ship and pray together with the believers they are leaving behind (21:5–6; cf. 20:36–37).

The reality of Paul's imminent suffering in Jerusalem becomes even clearer through Agabus' prophecy in 21:11, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man whose belt this is and will deliver him over to the hands of the Gentiles." According to 21:12, "When we heard these things, we as well as the local residents began urging him not to go up to Jerusalem." ἡμεῖς apparently includes Philip and his four prophetess daughters, as well as Paul's travel companions. It is striking that "Luke includes himself among those who did not at this stage share Paul's commitment to the pathway of suffering and captivity."[149]

Yet Paul is not deterred by tearful pleas and asserts his readiness to be not only bound but also to die in Jerusalem ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, in accordance with his original commission to suffer for Jesus' name (9:16; cf. 15:26). Finally, after Paul has insisted upon his readiness to meet suffering in Jerusalem, the others acquiesce and say, "Let the Lord's will be done" (τοῦ κυρίου τὸ θέλημα γινέσθω, 21:14). For Miller, this statement does not offer resolution but "maintains the tension between these two opposing viewpoints while also capturing the spiritual element behind the conflict."[150] But such resolution *is* suggested by the corporate call for the Lord's will to be done, which recalls Jesus' Gethsemane prayer (Luke 22:42:

[147] Tannehill, *Unity*, 2:262–67.
[148] Rapske, *Paul*, 407–8.
[149] Peterson, *Acts*, 581.
[150] Miller, *Convinced*, 228–29.

πλὴν μὴ τὸ θέλημά μου ἀλλὰ τὸ σὸν γινέσθω),[151] and by "we" moving from opposing Paul's Jerusalem journey (21:12) to joining him on it (21:15–17).

Here again we see the Christian community's complex process of discerning God's will in the face of suffering. Acts records many examples of witnesses being protected from danger (9:23–25; 29–30; 25:13–31; cf. Luke 4:28–30) or delivered in the midst of persecution or peril (Acts 12:6–11; 16:25–27; 27:21–44). But as Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem to meet his fate (Luke 9:22, 44, 51), so too Paul announces his willingness to face imprisonment and even death in Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets (Acts 21:13; cf. Luke 13:34).[152] In these texts a common pattern emerges: Jesus and Paul receive divine revelation that they "must suffer" (δεῖ … παθεῖν; Luke 9:22; 17:25; Acts 9:16), their companions do not fully understand this calling (Luke 9:45; 18:34; Acts 21:4, 12), and finally their resolve to suffer according to the Lord's will is confirmed (Luke 22:42; Acts 21:13–14).

In Acts 27–28, Paul's legitimacy is powerfully demonstrated through his miraculous *preservation* from a storm and snake. After the storm-battered travelers abandon hope of being saved (σῴζεσθαι, 27:20), Paul promises the σωτηρία of all persons on board (27:34), and Luke confirms that they all were "brought safely" (διασωθῆναι) to land (27:44; cf. 28:1, 4). Miles and Trompf read this narrative against the backdrop of Hellenistic conceptions of divine retribution in shipwrecks and conclude that the salvation of all 276 voyagers (27:37) "is decisive confirmation of Paul's innocence."[153] On Malta (28:3–6), when a poisonous snake (ἔχιδνα) fastens onto Paul's hand, the islanders assume that Paul must be a murderer, whom divine justice (ἡ δίκη) is repaying for his crimes.[154] Miles and Trompf assert, "[T]hey were quite mistaken in supposing Paul to be a murderer."[155] However, the Lukan Paul has already *admitted* to persecuting Christians unto death (22:20; 26:10). In Acts, the question surrounds not Paul's murderous past but his *present* as a suffering witness to the Lord Jesus, who stands trial for Israel's hope (28:20; cf. 24:14–16). When Paul suffers no harm (ἔπαθεν οὐδὲν κακόν) from the viper, the natives change their minds and assume (wrongly) that Paul is a god (28:6; cf. 14:11, 15). Paul then heals Publius'

[151] Talbert calls Acts 21:14 "the Pauline Gethsemane." *Learning*, 89.
[152] Cf. Kilgallen, "Persecution," 158.
[153] Gary B. Miles and Garry W. Trompf, "Luke and Antiphon: The Theology of Acts 27–28 in the Light of Pagan Beliefs about Divine Retribution, Pollution, and Shipwreck," *HTR* 69 (1976): 259–267, 264. See further David J. Ladouceur, "Hellenistic Preconceptions of Shipwreck and Pollution as a Context for Acts 27-28," *HTR* 73 (1980): 435–449.
[154] Cf. P. W. van der Horst, "Dike," *DDD*, 250–52.
[155] Miles and Trompf, "Luke," 266.

father and other sick persons on the island (28:7–9), which demonstrates that Paul is no longer an agent of death (cf. 26:10) but of life, who has "help from God" (26:22) and is again divinely delivered from danger in order to fulfill God's purposes (cf. 26:16–18).[156]

3.6. Summary

Thus, in Luke's worldview, those who follow the suffering Lord should expect to suffer like and for Jesus until God's kingdom is consummated. God's people, particularly leaders, should respond to suffering and opposition through bold, prayerful, Spirit-enabled witness to Jesus' saving death and present heavenly rule.

4. How Does Suffering Clarify the World's Basic Problem?

Luke believes that humanity's basic problem is not suffering but sin, ignorance, unbelief, and rejection of God's purposes. Rowe explains,

> This problem gets formulated in different ways of course—ignorance, violence, bribery, idolatry, magic, superstition, avarice, and so forth—but these failings are simply different expressions of the fundamental quandary: human beings are lost, sinners, in the dark; they need new direction, forgiveness, light.[157]

In Luke's perspective suffering is a reality for believers and unbelievers alike until God's kingdom comes in its fullness.[158]

Natural suffering—including sickness, famine, barrenness, and calamity—continues to occur in the present. Luke affirms God's *present* sovereignty over all such human suffering and his power to heal and overcome suffering, which authenticates the Christian message and anticipates the future restoration.[159] *Political oppression* results in suffering for unbelievers, believers, and even Jesus (Luke 13:1–2; 23:24–25; Acts 24:26–27), though Luke's emphasis falls not on imminent deliverance from Roman tyranny but on Jesus' present heavenly reign (Acts 2:33, 36) and believers' witness "unto the end of the earth" (1:8; 13:47).

Persecution arises from unbelieving Jews and Gentiles in response to the church's proclamation about Jesus. Jewish opposition to Jesus and his followers continues an OT pattern of Israel resisting God's purposes and rejecting God's chosen

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[156] Cf. Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 616.
[157] C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 124.
[158] Cf. Rom 8:18–25; Rev 21:4.
[159] See §6.3.

leaders (7:51–52; 28:25–27; Isa 6:9–10). Conversely, Gentiles persecute the church out of ignorance and because the church's message of Jesus' lordship threatens their worldly priorities.

4.1. Political Oppression

Zechariah's prophecy in Luke's opening chapter announces that God "has visited (ἐπεσκέψατο) us" and will bring about "salvation from our enemies (σωτηρίαν ἐξ ἐχθρῶν ἡμῶν) and from the hand of all who hate us" (1:68, 71; cf. 1:74; Ps 17:18 LXX [18:17 ET]). Other references to Israel's "redemption" (λύτρωσις; Luke 1:68; 2:38) and "consolation" (παράκλησις; 2:25) anticipate full eschatological liberation (cf. Isa 40:1–2; 49:13; 51:3; 57:18; 63:4). Later Stephen recounts Israel's past oppression in Egypt, which was predicted by God and resulted in Israel's salvation and her enemies' demise (Acts 7:7, 17–19, 25, 34).[160] Yet as Jesus approaches Jerusalem he tearfully declares,

> For the days will come upon you, when your enemies (οἱ ἐχθροί σου) will build an embankment against you and surround you and shut you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation (ἐπισκοπῆς). (Luke 19:43–44)

Has Luke 1–2 raised hopes of eschatological deliverance for Israel that are ultimately unrealized? Tannehill argues that Luke's readers "would sense the tragic disappointment of this hope" of salvation from enemies, in light of Israel's rejection of the church's proclamation of Jesus (cf. Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:25–28) and the outcome of the Jewish-Roman war.[161] But as Green asserts, "one must allow Luke to introduce, then alter visions of divine rescue."[162] According to Acts 2:33–35, Jesus has been exalted as κύριος and sits at God's right hand until his enemies (τοὺς ἐχθρούς) are subjugated, in the language of Psalm 109:1 LXX [110:1 ET]. Thus, this hope of deliverance from enemies is transformed, not disappointed.[163] Jesus' ἐχθροί are not the oppressive Romans but any who align with Satan in opposition to righteousness and the divine plan (13:10; cf. 5:39; 26:18).[164] God will soon judge the

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[160] Cf. ch. 5 §2.3.1.
[161] Robert C. Tannehill, "Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story," *JBL* 104 (1985): 69–85, citing 72.
[162] Joel B. Green, "God as Saviour in the Acts of the Apostles," in *Witness to the Gospel* (ed. I. Howard Marshall and David G. Peterson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 83–106, citing 93.
[163] Cf. Fuller, *Restoration*, 205; Mallen, *Reading*, 98–99.
[164] Cf. I. Howard Marshall, "The Religious Enemy: The Response of the Church to Religious Pressure in Acts," *Anvil* 21 (2004): 179–87, citing 185; Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 133, 191–92. According to 1 Cor 15:26, "The last enemy to be destroyed is death."

world righteously by the risen Jesus, and therefore all people are commanded to repent (17:30–31; cf. Luke 13:3). Until then, disciples must love their "enemies" (Luke 6:27, 35) and proclaim the gospel to them, as exemplified by Philip's ministry in Samaria (Acts 8:5; cf. Luke 9:52–55) and Ananias' service toward a notorious persecutor (Acts 9:17; cf. 9:13).

Luke highlights God's unfolding purposes and presence with his people amidst political injustice and oppression. Pilate, the Judean governor, is portrayed as brutal (Luke 13:1) and unprincipled, declaring Jesus innocent yet capitulating to popular demand for his death (23:4, 14–16, 22, 24–25). However, Pilate's opposition to Jesus ironically carries out God's preordained plan (Acts 4:27–28).[165] At Philippi, the magistrates order Paul and Silas to be beaten with rods and imprisoned without due process (16:19–24), which leads to the jailor's conversion (16:27–34), the witnesses' public exoneration, and the church's encouragement (16:35–40).

Felix the governor delays justice while seeking money from Paul and leaves him in custody at Caesarea after two years to appease the Jews (24:24–27). Felix's successor Festus seeks to move Paul's trial to Jerusalem as a favor to Jews (25:3, 9), which prompts Paul to appeal to Caesar (25:10–11). Clearly Luke does not approve of these shady political dealings.[166] Yet ironically, Paul *as a prisoner* fulfills his commission to bear Jesus' name "before kings" (9:15; cf. 26:1–29) and to testify in Rome (19:21; 23:11; cf. 25:11–12; 27:24; 28:19, 30–31). Skinner observes, "Within these contexts of censure … the settings permit access to new audiences."[167] Paul position toward the Roman state is not one of "outright hostility or simple acquiescence."[168] He respects those in power (24:10; 26:2), yet continues to proclaim the Christian message boldly and persuasively (24:24–25; 26:22, 25–29). In fact, "Paul is portrayed here as 'turning the tables' on Felix, his judge, by speaking to Felix of the values which (ironically) should be guiding his judgment," namely righteousness, self-control, and concern for divine judgment (24:25).[169]

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[165] See §2.3.3.
[166] Cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 715–17; Steve Walton, "What Does 'Mission' in Acts Mean in Relation to the 'Powers that Be'?," *JETS* 55 (2012): 537–56, esp. 555.
[167] Matthew L. Skinner, *Locating Paul: Places of Custody as Narrative Settings in Acts 21-28* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 176.
[168] Ibid., 196.
[169] Walton, "Mission," 555.

4.2. Jewish Unbelief and Opposition to God's Plan

In Luke 2:32, 34, Simeon announces Israel's division over and hostility toward Jesus, the very embodiment of God's promised salvation.[170] In Acts, many Jews respond favorably to the gospel (cf. 2:41, 47; 4:4, 21; 6:7; 21:20).[171] However, proclamation among Jewish audiences consistently yields a divided response, especially in the synagogues. At Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas initially receive a positive reception (13:42–44). Then οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, filled with jealousy, speak against (ἀντέλεγον) and slander (βλασφημοῦντες) the missionaries.[172] Paul and Barnabas boldly respond (παρρησιασάμενοί), "To you [Jews] it was necessary for the Word of God to be spoken first. Because you reject (ἀπωθεῖσθε) it and do not judge yourselves worth of eternal life, look we are turning to the Gentiles" (13:45-46; cf. 18:6; 22:21; 28:28). The Gentiles respond with joy and faith, while the Jewish leaders incite further persecution against Paul and Barnabas, who symbolically shake the dust off and move on (13:48, 50–51; cf. Luke 9:5).

This "turning to the Gentiles" does *not* mean that Jewish outreach ceases; rather, Paul continues to reason with Jews in the synagogues in Iconium, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus (14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8). Even after announcing that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles who will listen, Paul "was welcoming all (πάντας) who came to him," which likely includes both Jews and Gentiles (28:28–30).[173]

Nevertheless, at several key junctures in Acts, Jesus' witnesses move to new peoples and places because of Jewish persecution. Following Stephen's stoning, the "great persecution" scatters Jerusalemite believers "throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" (8:1–2). By linking this scattering with the evangelization of Samaria and Antioch (8:4–8; 11:19–26), Luke narrates how Jesus' persecuted and scattered followers advance the Word in accordance with the program of 1:8.[174]

Paul is the Lord's "chosen vessel to carry [Jesus'] name to Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel" (9:15), and his calling to bear witness to Gentiles and kings is realized only through Jewish persecution and opposition. Paul appears before King

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[170] See §2.3.1.
[171] Rightly emphasized by Jervell, *Theology*, 36.
[172] Because God's Word is being rejected, the strong term βλασφημοῦντες may convey blasphemy against God. Cf. Johnson, *Acts*, 240.
[173] Some later manuscripts (614, 2147) make this explicit by adding Ἰουδαίους τε καὶ Ἕλληνας at the end of 28:30, influenced by 18:4; 19:10.
[174] See ch. 5 §2.5.2.

Agrippa (and presumably Caesar) because of the Jews' accusations and hostility (26:2–7; 28:17–19). Further, Paul and Barnabas announce that they "are turning to the Gentiles" because (ἐπειδή) the Jews have rejected the Word (13:46). But this turning is also grounded in the Lord's command: "For (γάρ) so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth'" (13:47). This quotation from Isa 49:6 LXX recalls previous allusions in Luke 2:32 and Acts 1:8 and signals a key advance in Isaiah's New Exodus program in which Gentiles are included within God's people.[175]

Jervell insists that the Jews' *reception*—not rejection—of salvation leads to the Gentile mission in Acts.[176] This is partly correct, since the twelve Jewish apostles represent a restored Israel (Acts 1:21–26; cf. Luke 22:30)[177] and since Luke records mass Jewish conversions in Jerusalem, first at 2:41. But the Lukan Paul emphasizes the link between Jewish *rejection* of the Word and the prophesied Gentile mission in 13:46–47, and later in 18:6 and 28:25–28:

> And when they opposed and reviled him (ἀντιτασσομένων δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ βλασφημούντων), he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood on your own heads—I am innocent! From now on I will go to the Gentiles."
>
> So lacking harmony among themselves, they began to depart after Paul spoke one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke well through the prophet Isaiah to your fathers to through Isaiah the prophet: 'Go to this people, and say, "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." … Therefore (οὖν) let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.

This final text contains a double reference to Isaiah. Paul's citation of Isaiah 6:9-10 LXX links him with Isaiah, another preacher sent by God to a recalcitrant people without ears to hear or eyes to perceive the prophetic word.[178] At the same time, τοῦτο τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ alludes to Isaiah 40:5 LXX, quoted in Luke 3:6: "And all flesh will see the salvation of God" (τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ). Pao asserts, "The Isaianic scheme of 'judgment-salvation' as represented by Isaiah 6 and 40 has been reversed."[179] In fact, Luke has *reinterpreted* Isaiah's program, with Israel's continuing obduracy and rejection of God's prophet (Isa 6:9–10) serving as the ironic

[175] Cf. Pao, *Acts*, 91–101.
[176] Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), 55.
[177] Johnson, *Acts*, 38–39.
[178] Marguerat, *Historian*, 225; cf. Tannehill, "Israel," 83.
[179] Pao, *Acts*, 108.

vehicle by which "all flesh"—i.e. the Gentiles—comes to see and respond to God's eschatological salvation. Jerry Ray writes:

> In the clash of two opposing wills—the will of God as indicated in scripture, and the human will as manifested in Jewish rejection and unbelief—an unmistakable irony of reversal emerges: humanity's very opposition to the divine will is part of God's plan, because it enables its realization. The Jewish rejection of Jesus and resistance to the gospel accomplish the desired purpose of God, as revealed in scripture, of a crucified and resurrected Messiah, and a redeemed people from every nation. The passion events of Jesus and the missionary endeavors of the church are therefore squarely within the divine will according to the narrator.[180]

4.3. Gentiles' Spiritual Darkness and Ignorance

In his speeches in primarily Gentile contexts, Paul highlights his audience's former ignorance and calls them to repent and turn from vain things to the true, living God (14:15–16; 17:23, 30). The Gentiles are blind, living in darkness, and under Satan's power, and Paul has been sent "to open their eyes" and bring saving "light," that they may turn to God and receive forgiveness and a place among God's believing, sanctified people (26:18; cf. 13:47; Isa 49:6). Paul's own experience of blindness and restored sight (Acts 9:8–9, 17–18) potently illustrates the message he subsequently heralds.[181] While many Gentiles respond favorably to Paul's message (cf. 13:48; 16:14, 30–34; 19:17–20; 28:28), he and his associates also encounter strong opposition and persecution in Lystra (14:19), Philippi (16:19–24), and Ephesus (19:23–20:1).

In Lystra, the Gentile crowds turn against Paul and Barnabas because of the Jews' influence. But in Philippi and Ephesus, Gentile opposition is specifically tied to economic and religious concerns. Paul exorcises a "spirit of divination" or "python spirit" (πνεῦμα πύθωνα) from a slave girl who enriched her masters through soothsaying (16:16–18).[182] The spirit leaves, as does her owners' hope of profit (ἐργασίας), which precipitates a violent response against the missionaries (16:18–19). Paul and Silas are seized, dragged to the marketplace, and charged with disturbing the city and advocating anti-Roman customs. They are subsequently attacked, stripped, beaten, and imprisoned (16:20–24). The trumped up charges in 16:21 conceal the

[180] Jerry L. Ray, *Narrative Irony in Luke-Acts: The Paradoxical Interaction of Prophetic Fulfillment and Jewish Rejection* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1996), 160.
[181] Moessner, "Script," 245.
[182] See BDAG 896–97; Bock, *Acts*, 535–36.

owners' true grievance, a loss of business due to the slave girl's freedom from demonic oppression (16:18–19).[183]

Some in Ephesus interpret Paul's reported teaching "that gods made with hands are not gods" to be an economic and religious threat. Demetrius the silversmith, who makes Artemis shrines, claims that Paul's teaching endangers the worship of Ephesus' patron deity (19:26–27) and consequently their "prosperity from this business" (ἐκ ταύτης τῆς ἐργασίας ἡ εὐπορία, 19:25). The tradesmen respond vocally and violently, dragging two of Paul's companions to the theater and stirring up confusion (19:28–30).

Thus, in Acts 16 and 19, antagonism toward Paul and other Christians arises as their message threatens popular religious beliefs and practices and especially economic gain derived thereby. As Wright observes, "What evokes persecution is precisely that which challenges a worldview, which up-ends a symbolic universe."[184]

4.4. Natural Adversity

Earlier we defined *natural adversities* as hardships resulting from calamity, personal or corporate loss or disappointment and not from human antagonism.[185] As with political oppression and persecution, natural adversities have underlying spiritual realities in Luke's worldview. Elsewhere we discuss physical illness and disability (Luke 8:43; 13:11–12; Acts 3:2), barrenness (Luke 1:7; Acts 7:5), and shipwreck (Acts 27:14–44);[186] so here we focus on Jesus' teaching concerning the fallen tower in Luke 13:4–5 and the great famine recounted in Acts 11:28.

In Luke 13:4, Jesus recounts the tragic collapse of a tower and teaches that the eighteen people who died were not greater debtors than all others. He challenges his hearers that "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (13:5; cf. 13:3). Jesus does not deny that sin leads to judgment; rather, he "rejects the theory that those who encounter calamity have necessarily been marked by God as more deserving of judgment than those who do not."[187] Disasters should prompt personal examination and repentance from sin in view of God's universal judgment.[188]

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[183] Barrett, *Acts*, 2:788.
[184] Wright, *NTPG*, 451. His comment refers to Jewish hostility toward Christians but is equally fitting regarding Gentile persecution.
[185] Cf. ch. 5 §1.4.
[186] Cf. ch. 5 §1.4; 2.3.1; ch. 6 §3.4.3; 5.3.
[187] Green, *Luke*, 514.
[188] Cf. D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil* (2nd ed; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 60–61.

Acts 11:27–30 recounts the church's response to a great famine (λιμὸν μεγάλην) during Claudius' reign. First, Luke notes that Agabus, the prophet from Jerusalem, accurately predicts this famine by the Spirit (11:27–28). This suggests God's foreknowledge of and sovereignty over natural calamities such as famine. Second, the reference to a "great famine" (11:28) recalls examples of severe famines in Israel's history mentioned by Jesus (Luke 4:25; cf. 1 Kings 18:2) and Stephen (Acts 7:11; cf. Gen 41:53–42:5),[189] as well as Jesus' prediction of wars, earthquakes, famines, and pestilences in his eschatological discourse (Luke 21:10–11). Third, this severe famine affects people in "in all the world" (ἐφ' ὅλην τὴν οἰκουμένην, Acts 11:28; NIV11: "the entire Roman world"),[190] which includes believers. Fourth, 11:29 recounts that the disciples in Antioch "each according to his ability determined to send aid to the brothers and sisters living in Judea." Significantly, assistance comes not from a few wealthy benefactors, as customary in Roman society, but the whole church.[191] For the nascent church, the famine "created an opportunity to demonstrate both its sense of responsibility beyond the city of Antioch and its radical redefining of who were now benefactors in the community."[192] Thus calamities should move unbelievers to repent in view of God's judgment (Luke 13:3–5), while believers should respond with compassion and generosity toward sufferers, particularly fellow Christians (Acts 11:29–30).

4.5. Summary

In sum, Luke views sin, unbelief, and spiritual darkness as humanity's fundamental problems. Even though God's kingdom has been inaugurated through Jesus' heavenly exaltation and outpouring of the Spirit, present suffering in its various forms (natural calamity, political oppression, or persecution) is an expression of the world's brokenness and rebellion and signals that God's kingdom awaits consummation. At the same time, the redemptive suffering of Jesus and the suffering of his Spirit-led witnesses are integral to God's sovereign plan to overcome sin, Satan, and suffering and set his world right again.

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[189] Cf. ch. 5 §2.3.1.

[190] For discussion of the extent of this severe food shortage, see Bruce W. Winter, "Acts and Food Shortages," in *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting* (ed. David W. Gill and Conrad H. Gempf; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 59–78, esp. 65–69.

[191] Ibid., 75–76.

[192] Ibid., 78.

5. How Does Suffering Relate to the Solution for the World's Problem?

The solution to humanity's universal and basic problem—namely sin, unbelief, and lostness—is "salvation" (σωτηρία) in Jesus' name, proclaimed by his suffering witnesses. Salvation is God's eschatological work on behalf of Israel and the nations, which is inaugurated in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus and which will be consummated in the future restoration.[193] Salvation's central feature is forgiveness of sins (Luke 1:77; Acts 5:31), made possible by Jesus' vicarious suffering and subsequent vindication and proclaimed in Israel and the world by his suffering, Spirit-led witnesses (Luke 22:19–20; 24:46–48; Acts 1:8; 3:18–19). This salvation is multifaceted, as suggested by Luke's use of σῴζω (and cognates) to denote *restoration* to wholeness for those suffering (Luke 8:36, 48, 50; Acts 4:9), *deliverance* from oppression or danger (Luke 1:71; Acts 7:25; 27:31, 34; 27:44; 28:1, 4), and *salvation* from eternal death and calamity (Luke 9:24; Acts 2:21, 40, 47; 4:12; 11:14; 16:31). Additionally, because unbelievers live in darkness, under Satan's sway (Luke 8:12; 13:16; Acts 10:38; 13:10; 26:18), God's saving work through Jesus includes revelation or illumination (Luke 1:79; 2:32; Acts 13:47; 26:18, 23), bold empowerment for mission (Acts 1:8; 2:17–21; 4:8, 13, 29–31), and the creation of a new community under Jesus' Lordship (2:41–47; 4:32–37).

5.1. Eschatological Salvation in Jesus' Name

Ben Witherington explains, "The 'salvation' most ancients looked for was from disease, disaster, or death in this life, and the 'redemption' many pagans cried out for was redemption from the social bondage of slavery, not from the personal bondage of sin."[194] But in Luke-Acts, salvation is God's eschatological action on behalf of his people, in fulfillment of OT prophecy.[195] Salvation features prominently in prophecies by Zechariah (Luke 1:69, 71, 77) and Simeon (2:30), but is most clearly tied to prophetic expectation in Luke 3:4–6, citing Isaiah 40:3–5 LXX:[196]

> As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.

[193] Cf. Acts 3:21; Bovon, *Theologian*, 300–1. See further §6.3.
[194] Ben Witherington, "Salvation and Health in Christian Antiquity: The Soteriology of Luke-Acts in its First Century Setting," in *Witness to the Gospel* (ed. I. Howard Marshall and David G. Peterson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 145–166, citing 146.
[195] For varying Jewish perspectives on salvation, see Daniel M. Gurtner, ed., *This World and the World to Come: Soteriology in Early Judaism* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).
[196] Note also Isa 61:1–2 in Luke 4:18–19.

> Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low, and the crooked places shall become straight, and the rough places smooth ways. And all flesh will see the salvation of God (τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ).'"

Similarly, Peter explains the unprecedented events of Pentecost as the fulfillment of prophecy "in the last days" (Acts 2:17–21; cf. Isa 2:2 LXX). Peter proclaims that *Jesus*—whom they crucified but God exalted—is the κύριος, by whom they may be saved (2:21, 36; cf. Joel 3:5a LXX). In 4:12, Peter makes the connection emphatically: "There is salvation in no other, for there is no other name under heaven given among humanity by which we must be saved" (ἐν ᾧ δεῖ σωθῆναι ἡμᾶς).

"The Lordship of the Christ initiates a community of salvation."[197] This "christocentric community of God's people" includes men and women from any ethnicity or social status who respond to the gospel in faith, repentance, and baptism.[198] The eschatological gift of the Spirit[199] is poured out equally on Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles (2:2–4, 17, 38–39; 8:17; 10:44–46; 11:17; 15:8–9), whose oneness attests to the Lordship of Jesus over all and the Spirit's transforming power (10:34–36).[200]

5.2. Forgiveness of Sins

The principal, though not only, feature of this eschatological salvation is forgiveness of sins. Zechariah prophesies that John will go before the Lord "to give knowledge of *salvation* (σωτηρίας) to his people *in the forgiveness of their sins* (ἐν ἀφέσει ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν), because of our God's heart of mercy" (Luke 1:77–78). Though not a scriptural quotation, this announcement recalls the OT hope of Israel's redemption and freedom from transgressions after exile.[201]

In Luke 5:23, Jesus declares his earthly authority to forgive sins (cf. 5:20; 7:47), which his opponents consider blasphemous (5:21). The risen Jesus later explains Scripture's teaching concerning the Messiah's suffering and resurrection and the universal proclamation "in his name of repentance for forgiveness of sins" (εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, 24:45–47). Forgiveness of sins for those who repent and turn to

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[197] Rowe, *World*, 124.
[198] Green, "Saviour," 91.
[199] With Michael A. Salmeier, *Restoring the Kingdom: The Role of God as the "Ordainer of Times and Seasons" in the Acts of the Apostles* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2011), 91. Contra Conzelmann, who asserts, "The Spirit Himself is no longer the eschatological gift, but the substitute in the meantime." *Theology*, 95.
[200] Thompson, *Acts*, 137–41.
[201] Cf. Ps 130:7–8 [129:6–8 LXX]; Isa 40:2; 55:7; Jer 31:34 [38:34 LXX]; Mic 7:18.

God is a prominent feature of the sermons of Acts (Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18).

Many scholars have concluded that while Jesus' death is necessary to fulfill Scripture, Luke ascribes no soteriological or atoning significance to the cross.[202] Joel Green argues that Luke does not emphasize Jesus' crucifixion but his *exaltation* as the means of salvation (cf. 2:33; 5:30–31).[203] He acknowledges that Luke 22:19b–20 and Acts 20:28 link human salvation with Jesus' blood, but claims that Luke in these texts "appears to be merely parrotting ancient phraseology" and has not "owned" this theology of the cross.[204] However, Luke's decision to incorporate theological material in quotations from reliable characters (Jesus and Paul) addressed to disciples implies that he approves and believes this theology.[205] Here we will briefly examine Luke 22:19b–20 and Acts 20:28, which suggest that Jesus' death *is* vicarious and atoning.[206]

5.2.1. Luke 22:19–20

In Luke 22:19–20, Jesus reinterprets elements of the Passover meal in light of his imminent vicarious death: "This is my body, which is given for you … This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you."[207] This saying offers a multifaceted description of the significance of Jesus' death, which is explicitly said to benefit others (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν). First, the phrase ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη recalls the "new

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[202] Hans Sellner writes, "Den Gedanken an die Präsenz von Sühnetodvorstellungen im lk Werk können wir damit endgültig begraben." *Das Heil Gottes: Studien zur Soteriologie des lukanischen Doppelwerks* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 476. Cf. Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 280; Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), 201; Conzelmann, *Theology*, 201; Charles H. Talbert, "Martyrdom in Luke-Acts and the Lukan Social Ethic," in *Political Issues in Luke-Acts* (ed. Richard J. Cassidy and Philip J. Scharper; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983), 99–110, esp. 99; Joseph B. Tyson, *The Death of Jesus in Luke-Acts* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), 170; Peter Doble, *The Paradox of Salvation: Luke's Theology of the Cross* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 234, 37; Bart D. Ehrman, "The Cup, the Bread, and the Salvific Effect of Jesus' Death in Luke-Acts," in *Studies in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 156–77, 164–67.

[203] "The Death of Jesus, God's Servant," in *Reimaging the Death of the Lukan Jesus* (ed. Dennis D. Sylva; Frankfurt: Hain, 1990), 1–28, esp. 1, 7–10.

[204] Ibid., 7. Similarly Richard Zehnle, "Salvific Character of Jesus' Death in Lucan Soteriology," *TS* 30 (1969): 420–444, esp. 439–40.

[205] Cf. Walton, *Leadership*, 109.

[206] For various arguments to this effect, see David G. Peterson, "Atonement Theology in Luke-Acts: Some Methodological Reflections," in *The New Testament in its First Century Setting: FS B. Winter* (ed. Peter J. Williams, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 56–71; John R. Kimbell, "The Atonement in Lukan Theology" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009); I. Howard Marshall, "The Place of Acts 20.28 in Luke's Theology of the Cross," in *Reading Acts Today: FS L. Alexander* (ed. Steve Walton, et al.; London: T&T Clark, 2011), 154–70. Cf. Moessner, *Lord*, 322–24; idem, "Suffering," 202–27; idem, "Script," 218–50.

[207] The originality of Luke 22:19b–20 is defended in Appendix 1.

covenant" promise of Jeremiah 38:31 LXX [31:31 ET], which concludes with the declaration that Yahweh will be gracious and no longer remember Israel's sins (v. 34). Second, the Passover context of Jesus' last meal (Luke 22:7–13) and his symbolic references to bread and blood (22:19–20) evoke the first Passover (Exod 12:8–20), when Israel was delivered from Yahweh's judgment because of the blood of innocent lambs (12:12–13) and then rescued from Pharaoh's tyranny (12:17). Third, the reference to Jesus' poured out blood recalls Luke 11:49–50, where Jesus references "*the blood* of all the prophets*, poured out* (τὸ αἷμα … τὸ ἐκκεχυμένον) from the foundation of the world" (cf. Acts 22:20). Thus, Jesus' death by persecution is likened to the vicarious Passover sacrifice and initiates the promised New Covenant, which is founded on the forgiveness of sins.

5.2.2. Acts 20:28

In his Miletus speech, Paul exhorts the elders to shepherd God's church, ἣν περιεποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου (Acts 20:28).[208] Walton notes at least six interpretations of the relative clause, of which two are most plausible: (1) "to shepherd the church of God, which he [Jesus] obtained by his own blood"; or (2) "which he [God] obtained with the blood of his own one [Jesus]."[209] The *crux interpretum* in 20:28 is τοῦ ἰδίου, which may function attributively ("*his own* blood," ESV, NIV11) or substantivally as a possessive genitive ("the blood *of his own*," NRSV, NET). On the whole, the translation "the blood of his own" is preferred,[210] though in either case the reference is to Jesus' shed blood. Schmeichel's novel view that ἴδιος refers to "Paul and his martyr blood" is unconvincing,[211] particularly since περιεποιήσατο is aorist, not future.[212] Rather, "blood" (αἷμα) alludes to Luke 22:20, where Jesus interprets his impending death as a vicarious new covenant sacrifice. Further, the term περιποιέομαι, which here means "to acquire possession of something,"[213] recalls OT references to God acquiring possession of his covenant

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[208] Manuscripts are split between τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ (א B 614 1175 1505 *al* vg sy) and τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ κυρίου (P^{74} A C* D E Ψ 33 1739 *al* co). The former is most likely original as the harder reading. Walton, *Leadership*, 94–95; Metzger, *Commentary*, 425–26.
[209] Walton, *Leadership*, 96–98.
[210] Ibid., 98.
[211] Waldemar Schmeichel, "Does Luke Make a Soteriological Statement in Acts 20:28," *SBLSP* 21 (1982): 501–514, citing 507.
[212] Conrad H. Gempf, "Historical and Literary Appropriateness in the Mission Speeches of Paul in Acts" (Ph.D. thesis, Aberdeen University, 1988), 300 n. 86; Walton, *Leadership*, 97.
[213] L&N §57.61; cf. BDAG 804 §2.

people Israel.[214] For example, Isaiah 43:21 LXX refers to "my people whom I have acquired" (λαόν μου, ὃν περιεποιησάμην).[215] It is noteworthy that in the nearby context, the Lord emphatically states, "I am, I am the one who blots out your acts of lawlessness, and I will not remember them at all" (43:25 NETS), a close parallel to Jeremiah 38:34 LXX [31:34 ET]. Thus, in Acts 20:28, Jesus' blood—a metonymy for his sacrificial death—is the means by which God has acquired his new covenant people, the church.[216]

The evangelistic speeches in Acts may *imply* the redemptive significance of Jesus' death,[217] though they typically stress the *fact* of salvation through Jesus' divinely willed death and resurrection, and do not dwell on the *way* that salvation is achieved.[218] However, in speeches to insiders, Jesus and Paul state more clearly that Jesus' death is vicarious, sacrificial, and redemptive.[219]

5.3. Healing and Restoration for Sufferers

"Salvation" in Luke-Acts is multifaceted. Its central feature is forgiveness of sins and deliverance from eternal death and calamity (Luke 9:24; Acts 2:38–40; 4:12), but salvation also entails freedom from demonic oppression and physical, spiritual, and social restoration. This restoration anticipates creation's renewal and the full realization of God's kingdom (Luke 11:2; 22:18; Acts 3:20–21). Peter explains to Cornelius' household, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went around doing good and healing (εὐεργετῶν καὶ ἰώμενος) all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). Jesus' healings and exorcisms signal at least three things. First, Jesus is the anointed Messiah, "the coming one" (Luke 7:20–23; cf. 4:18–21). Second, Jesus has divine authority to forgive sins (Luke 5:20–25). Third, God's presence, power, and compassion are operative in Jesus' ministry, bringing liberation for those tyrannized by Satan (Luke 11:20–23; 13:16; Acts 10:38; cf. Luke 7:13; Acts 2:22).[220] These signs authenticate

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[214] Johnson, *Acts*, 363; Peterson, "Atonement," 63.
[215] Cf. Exod 19:5 (ἔσεσθέ μοι λαὸς *περιούσιος*); Mal 3:17 (ἣν ἐγὼ ποιῶ εἰς *περιποίησιν*); 1 Pet 2:9 (λαὸς εἰς *περιποίησιν*).
[216] Cf. Schnabel, *Acts*, 846–47.
[217] For example 3:13–19; 5:30–31, discussed by Peterson, "Atonement," 64–70.
[218] Bock, *Theology*, 253; Joel B. Green, "'Was it not Necessary for the Messiah to Suffer These Things and Enter into his Glory?' The Significance of Jesus' Death for Luke's Soteriology," in *Spirit and Christ: FS Max Turner* (ed. I. Howard Marshall, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 71–85, esp. 78.
[219] Cf. Walton, *Leadership*, 109–10.
[220] Garrett explains Jesus' death "as an exodus from bondage to Satan." "The Meaning of Jesus' Death in Luke," *WW* 12 (1992): 11–16, citing 12. For critique, see Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 238 n. 168.

the gospel and reveal "its character as good news of 'salvation' motivated by God's compassion."[221]

The suffering and pain of the present world do not continue indefinitely but will terminate at χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων, spoken of by God's prophets (Acts 3:21).[222] Significantly, this mention of the future restoration comes in Peter's sermon explaining the miraculous healing of the crippled beggar (3:5–8, 16).[223] Luke's account of the lame man leaping recalls Isaiah 35:6 LXX (ἁλεῖται … ὁ χωλός), where healings of the blind, deaf, and lame attend God's coming to save his people (35:4).[224] According to Peter, this man is given "full health" (ὁλοκληρία; 3:16) and is now "saved" (σέσωται; 4:9) and "sound" (ὑγιής) by the name of Jesus, whom God raised (4:10). The use of σῴζω to denote physical healing in 4:9 (cf. Luke 8:36, 48, 50) is closely followed by Peter's definitive announcement that there is no other name ἐν ᾧ δεῖ σωθῆναι ἡμᾶς (4:12). Thus, this healing is "a sign of the present, heavenly authority of the exalted Christ to save in the ultimate sense," which anticipates "the universal restoration that Jesus will accomplish on his return (3:20–21)," a restoration and renewal that has begun already in Jesus' resurrection.[225]

5.4. Suffering and the Advance of the Word

In Acts, Christians' sufferings and trials are frequently linked to the Word's advancement and the church's strengthening.[226] Peterson observes, "Luke does not gloss over the conflicts and difficulties of the earliest churches, but, in reporting problems, he regularly focuses on the way they were resolved."[227] Acts records various *external* conflicts and difficulties, as well as *internal* challenges faced by the churches (see Table 6).[228] As a result of enduring and overcoming these challenges, the church grows and the gospel message continues to spread (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 19:20). Thus, Luke intends to "reassure" readers such as Theophilus (Luke 1:1–4) that God is accomplishing his purposes through his suffering witnesses, who proclaim

[221] Keener, *Acts*, 546.
[222] See §6.3.
[223] Cf. Green, "Necessary," 76–77.
[224] Cf. Dennis Hamm, "Acts 3:12–26: Peter's Speech and the Healing of the Man Born Lame," *PRS* 11 (1984): 199–217, citing 201.
[225] Peterson, *Acts*, 167, 191.
[226] House quips, "Certainly the gospel moves, but never without pain." "Suffering," 326.
[227] Peterson, *Acts*, 230.
[228] House incorrectly sees nearly all the church's problems as coming from external forces until 9:31. "Suffering," 323.

Jesus as suffering and exalted Lord and Messiah and await the consummation of the kingdom upon his return (Acts 3:20–21; 14:22).[229]

Table 6: Challenges Faced by the Church in Acts 1–12

External Challenges	*Internal Challenges*
Jews arrest, imprison, threaten, and beat apostles (4:1–3, 21; 5:18, 40–41)	Ananias and Sapphira' greed, Satanic deceit, and judgment (5:1–10)
Synagogue Jews oppose, accuse, and stone Stephen (6:8–14; 7:54–60)	Neglect of a needy minority group in the church (6:1-7)
Great persecution against the Jerusalem church, leading to scattering (8:1-3)	Simon's false motives for associating with Christianity (8:18-24)
Saul's persecution of the church (9:1-2)	The church's acceptance of Saul, the former persecutor (9:13-14, 21, 26)
Saul's persecution by Jews (9:23-25, 29)	Gentiles' full inclusion in community (10:14, 23, 28; 11:3)
Severe famine in Judea affects the church (11:27–30)	Jewish believers are hesitant to speak the Word to non-Jews (11:19)
Herod persecutes the church, kills James, and arrests Peter (12:1–4)	

It is well established that Jesus' programmatic last words to his disciples in 1:8 provide the "groundplan" for the narrative of Acts.[230] However, the central role of suffering and persecution in this plot is not always appreciated.[231] As Bock observes, "The Spirit enables obedience, especially under the pressure of persecution (Luke 12:12; Acts 5:32; 6:10). The provision of the Spirit is God's way of empowering the church to complete her task."[232] Here we note several key instances where Jewish persecution of Jesus' followers serves as the catalyst for moving Spirit-empowered witnesses to new peoples and places.

[229] Thompson, *Acts*, 61. Cf. Kilgallen, "Persecution," 160.
[230] Cf. Pao, *Acts*, 91; Johnson, *Acts*, 12.
[231] Though see House, "Suffering," 321; Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 325–27; Kilgallen, "Persecution," 183–85.
[232] Bock, *Theology*, 145.

According to 8:1, a great persecution (διωγμὸς μέγας) against the Jerusalem church scatters believers "throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria."[233] This scattering does not hinder the church's mission but serves as its ironic catalyst.[234] According to 8:4 and 11:19, believers preach the Word in new places where they are scattered. These scattered witnesses are credited with the initial proclamation in Samaria (8:5–8), Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (11:19–21). Following Saul's transformation from persecutor of the church to persecuted preacher of Christ, Luke highlights the peace and growth of "the church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria" (9:31). Thus, persecuted, scattered, and unlikely witnesses play a crucial role in fulfilling Jesus' promise in 1:8. "Through trouble the gospel spreads from Jerusalem to Samaria (8:4-24) and finally to Rome (20:17-28:31)."[235]

In 9:15–16, Saul's is called *to bear* (βαστάσαι) Jesus' name among Gentiles, kings, and his fellow Jews, and *to suffer* (παθεῖν) for that name.[236] He is the unlikely vehicle to bring the message of salvation ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς, and he and Barnabas turn to the Gentiles in response to Jewish persecution (13:45–47; cf. 1:8; 28:28; Isa 49:6 LXX). This is truly a striking reversal for the man who presided over Stephen's stoning and vehemently persecuted Jesus' disciples (8:1, 3; 9:1–2; 22:4–5; 26:9–11), which amounted to persecuting Jesus himself (9:4–5; 22:8; 26:15). Jesus' declaration that Saul must suffer grounds the imperative for Ananias (and his community) to overcome his (their) fear and embrace the former persecutor as a fellow disciple (note γάρ in 9:16). Additionally, 9:15–16 serves as a programmatic prophecy of Saul's ministry, characterized by powerful preaching, persistent persecution from his fellow Jews, and providential preservation.[237]

Paul declares to Agrippa, "I stand to this day, having experienced help from God" (26:22). This statement aptly summarizes the theme of divine presence, protection, and deliverance in the midst of suffering which is demonstrable throughout Luke's account of Paul's ministry.[238] On three occasions, Luke records that the Lord is present with Paul and reassures him in the midst of adversity (18:9–

[233] See ch. 5 §2.5.2.
[234] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 293. Cf. Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 135; Twelftree, *People*, 105–6.
[235] House, "Suffering," 321.
[236] See ch. 5 §3.3.1–3.
[237] See ch. 5 §3.5.
[238] For this emphasis, see Rapske, "Opposition," 251–54.

11; 23:11; 27:23–24).[239] Paul is protected from physical harm from a fierce storm, perilous shipwreck, and poisonous snakebite (27:9–44; 28:3–6).[240] The Lord's promise to rescue Paul (ἐξαιρούμενός σε) from his own people and the Gentiles (26:17) evokes the similar assurance given to the prophet to the nations: "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you (τοῦ ἐξαιρεῖσθαί σε), declares the Lord" (Jer 1:8 LXX). Thus, Paul embraces his calling to suffer for and proclaim the Lord Jesus, and he receives consistent divine provision and protection until he fulfills his destiny to testify in Rome (Acts 19:21; 23:11; 28:14–31).

5.5. Summary

As discussed above, Luke presents salvation as the promised eschatological work of God that has been accomplished through Jesus, the suffering, risen, reigning Messiah and Lord. This salvation is multifaceted and includes restoration for sufferers and deliverance from oppression, though salvation's central feature is forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name, which Jesus' suffering, Spirit-empowered witnesses proclaim among Israel and the nations.

6. How Does Present Suffering Relate to our Expectations for the Future?

In Luke's perspective, the prophesied "last days" have been initiated through Jesus' death, resurrection, and exaltation and subsequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit to empower worldwide witness (Acts 1:8; 2:17, 33–36). God's kingdom has been inaugurated but still awaits future consummation. Within this eschatological frame, the church proclaims Jesus as risen Lord and Messiah, performs signs and wonders, and encounters persecution (2:36; 4:1–3; 14:22). Healings and exorcisms signify the dawn of the Messianic age and the availability of comprehensive salvation in Jesus' name (4:9–12). Such signs also point forward to the end of suffering and injustice at the restoration of all things (3:20–21; cf. 3:8; Isa 35:4–6).

Jesus' resurrection serves as the initial fulfillment of Israel's resurrection hope and points forward to the future general resurrection (24:15; 26:6–8, 23). The risen Lord will execute *future* divine judgment (17:30–31), which is anticipated by occasions of *present* retributive punishment against imposters such as Judas, Ananias,

[239] Cf. 2 Tim 4:17. Likely, Jesus' presence and encouragement to Paul comes through "the Spirit of Jesus" (16:7). Rightly Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 305–6.
[240] See §3.5.

and Sapphira (1:16–20; 5:1–10) and opponents, such as Herod Agrippa and Elymas (12:23; 13:11).

6.1. Suffering and God's Inaugurated Kingdom

God's kingdom (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) features prominently in the teaching of Jesus and his followers.[241] This poignant expression encapsulates the OT declaration that Yahweh is the rightful king of Israel and of the world he created, and that Yahweh will one day reassert his sovereignty, judge his enemies, deliver his people, and restore justice and *shalom*.[242] Wright asserts, "[W]hen this god became king, the whole world, the world of space and time, would at last be put to rights."[243]

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus declares that God's kingdom "has drawn near" (ἤγγικεν, 10:9, 11), "arrived" (ἔφθασεν, 11:20), and is "in your midst" (ἐντὸς ὑμῶν, 17:20–21), while also announcing a future "coming" of the kingdom (11:2; 22:18).[244] This βασιλεία is both God's and Jesus' (1:33; 22:29; 23:42), and is given to his followers (12:32; 22:29), and to Israel (Acts 1:6).

Kingdom references at the beginning and end of Acts (1:3, 6; 28:23, 31) serve to "frame" the narrative around this *leitmotif*.[245] With Jesus' ascension into heaven (Luke 9:51; 24:51; Acts 1:9–11), God's kingdom is not absent or deferred but rather moves into a new phase of inaugurated fulfillment.[246] As Peter declares,

> Therefore, having been exalted to God's right hand and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, he has poured out that which you see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, but he says, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus, whom you crucified. (2:33–36)

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[241] Luke 4:43; 6:20; 7:28; 8:1, 10; 9:2, 11, 27, 60, 62; 10:9, 11; 11:20; 13:18, 20, 28–29; 14:15; 16:16; 17:20–21; 18:16–17, 24–25, 29; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16, 18; 23:51; Acts 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:23, 31; cf. Luke 11:2; 12:31; Acts 20:25.

[242] Deut 33:5; Pss 10:16; 22:28; 24:8; 29:10; 84:3; 89:18; 98:6; Isa 6:5; Dan 2:44; 4:3; Zech 14:9, 16–17. Cf. Tob 13:1–15; *1 Enoch* 25:3–7, 27:3; 84:2; *Ps. Sol.* 17:1–4.

[243] Wright, *JVG*, 203.

[244] Cf. John Nolland, "Salvation-History and Eschatology," in *Witness to the Gospel* (ed. I. Howard Marshall and David G. Peterson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 63–81, esp. 68–70.

[245] Michael Wolter, "'Reich Gottes' bei Lukas," *NTS* 41 (1995): 541–563, esp. 541; Thompson, *Acts*, 44–48.

[246] Cf. E. Earle Ellis, *Christ and the Future in New Testament History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 119, 128; Thompson, *Acts*, 48–51. 2:33–35 does *not* refer to Jesus' heavenly ascension but to his entrance into eternal glory at the resurrection, according to Arie W. Zwiep, *The Ascension of the Messiah in Lukan Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 153–57. For persuasive critique, see Matthew Sleeman, *Geography and the Ascension Narrative in Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 15–17.

We note four observations on this seminal text. First, at his exaltation-enthronement Jesus has begun to reign as Davidic Χριστός (2:36), fulfilling the promise of Luke 1:32–33.[247] Jesus' followers are thus opposed for subversively claiming allegiance to "another king, Jesus" (Acts 17:7).[248] Second, the location of his reign is in heaven at God's right hand (cf. Acts 7:55–56; Ps 109:1 LXX [110:1 ET]). According to Sleeman, "Jesus' *bodily* but now *non-earthly* location is being proclaimed in relation to a whole new Christofocal worldview, a reorderered spatiality."[249] Third, as exalted κύριος, Jesus has poured out the Spirit as he promised (Luke 24:49; Acts 2:33). Jesus thereby fulfills OT promises and performs *himself* the action ascribed to God by Joel and Peter (Joel 3:1 LXX [2:28 ET]; Act 2:17; cf. Acts 1:4–5).[250] Fourth, Psalm 109:1 LXX [110:1 ET], cited in Acts 2:34–35, explains the *duration* of his reign at God's right hand, until Jesus' enemies are made his footstool. This implies that opposition to Jesus' rule continues during the period between his ascension and return (cf. 1:11; 3:20).[251] In Acts, this opposition is expressed in the persecution of Jesus' followers—indeed, of Jesus himself (9:4–5)—who proclaim God's kingdom and Jesus as κύριος (28:31) and who must enter God's kingdom through διὰ πολλῶν θλίψεων (14:22).[252]

6.2. Divine Judgment

The Law, Prophets, and Writings repeatedly affirm Yahweh's role as judge of his created world and his covenant people.[253] Though often it appears that the wicked prosper while the righteous languish (Ps 73:3–15 [72:3–15 LXX]), God will one day enact a great reversal and will mete out righteous justice (Ps 9:1–20). The biblical conception of salvation entails both *rescue* of God's people and *judgment* of his enemies,[254] expressed succinctly in Luke 1:52, "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and exalted the humble." The theme of post-mortem reversal is powerfully illustrated in 16:25, where the rich man who received τὰ ἀγαθά in life suffers in anguish in Hades, while the poor beggar Lazarus who received τὰ κακά is

[247] Mark L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 144–45. As Kavin Rowe argues, "Acts 2.36 encapsulates the story of the κύριος χριστός told in the Gospel and continued in Acts." "Acts 2.36 and the Continuity of Lukan Christology," *NTS* 53 (2007): 37–56, citing 56.
[248] Cf. Wright, *NTPG*, 374–75.
[249] Sleeman, *Geography*, 101, emphasis original.
[250] Turner, *Power*, 277–78, 303; Walton, "Heavens," 65–67.
[251] Thompson, *Acts*, 51 n. 83. Cf. Wright, *NTPG*, 382.
[252] Thompson, *Acts*, 55. See §3.1.2.
[253] See Gen 18:25; 1 Sam 2:10; Pss 50:3–6; 96:10, 13; 98:9; Eccl 3:17; Isa 33:22; Joel 3:12.
[254] O. Wesley Allen, *The Death of Herod: The Narrative and Theological Function of Retribution in Luke-Acts* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1997), 146.

comforted upon death.[255] Luke embraces the OT perspective on divine judgment but offers two additional emphases. First, God will judge the world *by Jesus*, the risen Lord (Acts 17:31). Second, while future judgment is "coming" (24:25), Luke records examples of divine retribution *already* against enemies and imposters (12:23; 13:11).

6.2.1. Jesus as Executor of Divine Judgment

Paul declares in his Areopagus speech,

> God overlooked the times of ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, for he has set a day on which he is about to judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given proof to all by raising him from the dead. (17:30–31)

Jesus' resurrection serves as proof (πίστις)[256] that he will serve as agent of the coming worldwide judgment. Similarly, Peter testifies that Jesus is the one God appointed to be "judge of the living and the dead" (κριτὴς ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν, 10:42).[257] Jesus spoke of the Son of Man "coming" in glory to accomplish judgment and redemption.[258] His participation in divine judgment is a consequence of his resurrection and exaltation (cf. Acts 2:33; 7:56), and his designation as πάντων κύριος (10:36). In view of the impending judgment (24:25), people must respond with repentance and faith and receive forgiveness of sins (10:43; 17:30).

This has implications for Luke's view of suffering. Believers are not only persecuted *like* Jesus, but they are radically identified *with* the risen, reigning Lord (9:4–5),[259] who shows mercy to his enemies (Luke 6:35–36; Acts 9:15) and will one day justly judge the unrepentant. This reality gives confidence to Jesus' followers, such as Stephen, that while they suffer now, they will receive divine vindication and blessing, while their opponents will face divine judgment (cf. 7:56; Luke 12:8–9).

6.2.2. Present Judgment and Deliverance

In addition to his clear affirmations of future divine judgment, Luke also furnishes examples of *present* retributive punishment against Christian pretenders (Acts 1:16–20; 5:1–10) and opponents (12:23; 13:11), which function as essential complements to scenes of divine rescue of believers (5:19; 12:6–11; 16:25–26; 27:21–26; 28:5). These divine irruptions in judgment instill fear in the community (5:5, 11) and lead to

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[255] For discussion, see Brookins, "Dispute," 34–50.
[256] BDAG 818, §1c.
[257] Cf. John 5:22, 27; 2 Cor. 5:10.
[258] Luke 9:26; 12:40; 17:24–30; 18:8; 21:25–28; 22:69. Cf. Dan 7:13–14.
[259] Rightly Rapske, "Opposition," 238–39. See ch. 5 §3.2.

the advance of the Word of God (12:24; 13:12), while anticipating the cosmic future judgment. Here we will focus on the punitive suffering inflicted on the persecutor Herod Agrippa following Peter's dramatic deliverance from prison.[260]

Acts 12:1 introduces "Herod the king" (Agrippa I) as a violent persecutor of the church, who killed the apostle James with the sword and then arrested Peter to please the Jews (12:2–4).[261] Luke then narrates the church's earnest prayer for Peter (12:5), which serves as a catalyst for his divine rescue from prison (12:6–11).[262] Peter then arrives at the prayer meeting to everyone's amazement (12:12–17). The scene concludes with Herod's judgment against the soldiers (12:18–19), God's judgment against Herod (12:20–23), and a note about the Word's progress (12:24).

A number of parallels suggest that Peter's deliverance is patterned after Israel's exodus from Egypt, with Herod and the Jews playing the part of Pharaoh and the Egyptians.[263] This is clear from the ironic allusion to Exod 18:4 (ἐξείλατό με ἐκ χειρὸς *Φαραω*) in Acts 12:11 (ἐξείλατό με ἐκ χειρὸς *Ἡρῴδου καὶ πάσης τῆς προσδοκίας τοῦ λαοῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων*).[264] As in the Exodus narrative, the conflict in Acts 12 is between God and the king who proudly persecutes God's people and fails to respond to God's warnings.[265]

Peter's divine rescue from bonds is followed by divine retribution on Israel's Pharaonic king (12:20–23). Herod decks himself in royal robes, sits upon the throne, and delivers an oration. He receives lavish praise ("The voice of a god, and not of a man!"), and is swiftly judged: "Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down (ἐπάταξεν), because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms (σκωληκόβρωτος) and breathed his last" (12:23).[266] Luke's scene is reminiscent of the divine retribution against the tyrant Antiochus in 2 Maccabees, whom the "the all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel struck (ἐπάταξεν) with an incurable and invisible blow" (9:5). Worms (σκώληκας) come out of Antiochus' eyes,[267] and his flesh rots away

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[260] For other examples of divine retribution in Acts, see Allen, *Death*, 116–30. Allen's survey overlooks the blinding of Elymas for opposing Paul and Barnabas, which leads to the proconsul's faith and astonishment (Acts 13:8–12).
[261] For Agrippa's popularity among the Jews, see Josephus, *Ant.* 19.328–31.
[262] Bock, *Acts*, 426.
[263] For a similar ironic recasting of Herod the Great as Pharaoh, see Matt 2:6–18.
[264] For further parallels see Tannehill, *Unity*, 2:153–55; Allen, *Death*, 98–107. Cunningham disputes that Acts 12 is patterned after the Exodus motif. *Tribulations*, 239.
[265] Allen, *Death*, 105–7.
[266] Cf. Josephus, *Ant*. 19:346.
[267] Following Göttingen (ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ... σκώληκας ἀναζεῖν), cf. NETS. Ralhfs reads ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, followed by NRSV.

(9:9). Both Herod and Antiochus are judged immediately and severely for their blasphemous arrogance and persecution of God's people (Acts 12:1, 23; 2 Macc 9:4, 7, 12, 28).[268]

Thus, Herod's ignoble death illustrates that those who oppose Jesus' witnesses are in fact opposing God (θεομάχοι; Acts 5:39) and persecuting Jesus (9:4–5), and they stand "in danger of experiencing God's dramatic punishment."[269] Herod's death (12:23) is immediately followed by a narrative summary highlighting the advance of God's word (12:24). This indicates that no human persecution can thwart God's purposes,[270] and that divine judgment of enemies and deliverance of his people are two means by which the Word goes forth.

6.3. Hope of Resurrection and Restoration

Luke clearly affirms "a resurrection of both the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15; cf. Luke 14:14; Dan 12:2) and presents Jesus' resurrection as the decisive initial fulfillment of Israel's resurrection hopes (Acts 26:6–8, 23; 28:20).[271] The Twelve are (eye)witnesses to Jesus' resurrection (1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 10:39–41), and Peter and John provoke the Sadducees—who deny the resurrection (23:8) —by proclaiming ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ τὴν ἀνάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν (4:2). Later, Paul declares that the Messiah was πρῶτος ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν (26:23). These texts imply that "Jesus' own resurrection *from* the dead is the beginning of 'the resurrection *of* the dead.'"[272] His resurrection guarantees others' *future* resurrection and ushers in the *present* experience of the new age's blessings for believers who receive the eschatological Spirit (2:17; 2:33) and corporately identify with the risen Lord (9:4–5).[273]

Acts 3:19–21 offers one of the clearest, though most debated, statements of Lukan eschatological expectation. After stressing that the crucified and risen Jesus has made the lame man strong (3:12–18), Peter declares:

> Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be wiped out, that periods of refreshing (καιροὶ ἀναψύξεως) may come from the Lord's presence, and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must

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[268] For discussion of this and other "death of tyrant type-scenes," see Allen, *Death*, 35–65. Susan Garrett argues provocatively but unpersuasively that Peter's deliverance and Herod's demise recapitulate Jesus' cross, resurrection and ascension and Satan's fall. "Exodus from Bondage: Luke 9:31 and Acts 12:1–24," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 656–680. For critique, see Green, *Luke*, 419.
[269] Allen, *Death*, 119.
[270] Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 242.
[271] See Kevin L. Anderson, *'But God Raised Him from the Dead': The Theology of Jesus' Resurrection in Luke-Acts* (Bletchley: Paternoster, 2006), 266–91.
[272] Wright, *Resurrection*, 453–54, emphasis original.
[273] Cf. Ellis, *Christ*, 119.

> receive until the times of the restoration of all things (ἄχρι χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων), of which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. (3:19–21)

Commentators have long puzzled over the meaning and chronology of καιροὶ ἀναψύξεως and χρόνοι ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων, found only here in Scripture. There are three primary interpretations.[274] Some understand καιροί and χρόνοι as *coordinate* expressions denoting eschatological redemption.[275] Others interpret these periods and times *sequentially*, with καιροὶ ἀναψύξεως characteristic of the present experience of the eschatological spirit and distinct from the consummate restoration of all things.[276] A third group reads the expressions as *coordinate* but *antecedent* to the *Parousia.*[277]

What are the καιροὶ ἀναψύξεως? In Exodus 8:11 LXX, ἀνάψυξις denotes Egypt's "respite" from the frog plague, and elsewhere the cognate verb ἀναψύχω is used for providing or experiencing "relief from obligation or trouble."[278] In Acts 3:20, καιροὶ ἀναψύξεως likely refers to the period when the eschatological Spirit is operative among God's people. First, the plural nouns καιροί and χρόνοι denote periods of time, not singular events (cf. 1:7).[279] Second, it is noteworthy that Symmachus' translation of Isaiah 32:15 reads ἀνάψυξις ἐξ ὕψους in place of πνεῦμα ἀφ᾽ ὑψηλοῦ (MT, רוּחַ מְמָרוֹם).[280] In Isaiah 32:15, which stands behind Jesus' promise in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8, the Spirit's outpouring concerns Israel's restoration and transformation.[281] Third, in 2:38 and 3:19–20, repentance (μετανοήσατε) is said to result (εἰς) in the forgiveness/wiping away "of your sins" and divine blessing: "you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" and "that times of refreshing may come from

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[274] For useful summaries of scholarship, see Anderson, *Theology*, 226–31; Göran Lennartsson, *Refreshing & Restoration: Two Eschatological Motifs in Acts 3:19-21* (Lund: Lund University, 2007), 65–70.
[275] E. Schweitzer, "ἀνάψυξις," *TDNT* 9:664–65; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 167; Anderson, *Theology*, 227–28.
[276] Cf. Charles K. Barrett, "Faith and Eschatology in Acts 3," in *Glaube und Eschatologie: FS G. Kümmel* (ed. Erich Grässer and Otto Merk; Tübingen: Mohr, 1985), 1–17, esp. 9–17.
[277] Cf. William S. Kurz, "Acts 3:19–26 as a Test of the Role of Eschatology in Lukan Christology," *SBLSP* 11 (1977): 309–323, esp. 310; Hamm, "Acts 3:12–26," 207–12. However, Hamm argues that the sending of the Messiah does not denote the *parousia* but the restoration effected through Jesus' church (212).
[278] BDAG 75–76; cf. *NewDocs* 4:261–62; 2 Tim 1:16; Exod 23:12; 1 Kgdms 16:23; 2 Kgdms 16:14; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.54.
[279] Kurz, "Acts 3:19–26," 309–10; Hans Bayer, "Christ-Centered Eschatology in Acts 3:17–26," in *Jesus of Nazareth* (ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 236–50, esp. 245.
[280] Pao, *Acts*, 132–33; who follows William L. Lane, "Times of Refreshment: a Study of Eschatological Periodization in Judaism and Christianity" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1962). Cf. ἀνάψυξις in Aquila Isa 28:12, noted by HRCS 86.
[281] Turner, *Power*, 300; Pao, *Acts*, 92; Mallen, *Reading*, 82.

the Lord." This parallel suggests that the καιροὶ ἀναψύξεως are "in all likelihood synonymous with the 'refreshing' power of the Holy Spirit."[282]

For Luke's readers, Acts 3:20–21 and especially χρόνοι ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων recall the disciples' opening question, "Lord, will you *at this time restore* (ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ ἀποκαθιστάνεις) the kingdom to Israel" as well as Jesus' response, "It is not for you to know times or seasons" (χρόνους ἢ καιρούς, 1:6–7). On this basis, Witherington reads ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων as "a reference to the restoration of all Israel, not some sort of generic universal restoration of 'everything' or all persons."[283] Indeed LXX Jeremiah uses ἀποκαθίστημι for Israel's restoration to her land.[284] However, wider NT and LXX usage does not support claims that ἀποκαθίστημι is a technical term for Israel's restitution.[285] In Luke 6:10, ἀποκαθίστημι denotes complete healing of a man's hand (cf. Mark 3:5). In Mark 9:12, Jesus affirms that when Elijah comes, he *restores all things* (ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα, cf. Matt 17:11), which recalls but generalizes Mal 4:5–6 [3:22–23 LXX]. Thus, ἀποκατάστασις πάντων should not be *restricted* to the restoration of Israel, though this is a fundamental *part* of the general restoration.

Peterson writes, "[T]he argument in vv. 19–21 is cumulative, implying that these seasons of refreshment occur in an intervening period, before Christ's return and the consummation of God's plan in a renewed creation."[286] Jesus' resurrection signals that God has already begun to restore all things (cf. 4:2; 26:22–23).[287] Further, as argued above (§5.3), Peter's speech in 3:12–26 is occasioned by the lame man's healing, which signals the present in-breaking of the Messianic salvation and anticipates the time when "Jesus as the coming Messiah will restore God's perverted world."[288] The lame man's faith and restored wholeness provides a key illustration of the "times of refreshment" that have begun at Pentecost, which Peter invites his hearers to experience themselves. The present καιροὶ ἀναψύξεως brought by the Spirit do not entail the cessation of all suffering. But those who suffer may already experience relief from the burdens of sin (3:19; cf. 2:38; 5:31), joy (3:8–9; 5:41), divine presence and power through the Spirit (4:13, 31), and physical healing (3:6–7,

[282] Gaventa, *Acts*, 88; cf. Salmeier, *Restoring*, 71; Pao, *Acts*, 131–35; Bayer, "Eschatology," 246–47.
[283] Witherington, *Acts*, 187. Fuller's analysis of 3:21 is unclear in *Restoration*, 243–44, 269.
[284] Jer 15:19; 16:15; 23:8; 24:6; 27:19 LXX.
[285] Contra A. Oepke, "ἀποκαθίστημι, ἀποκατάστασις," *TDNT* 1:387–93, esp. 388; Hamm, "Acts 3:12–26," 210; Pao, *Acts*, 134.
[286] Peterson, *Acts*, 180.
[287] Rightly Kurz, "Acts 3:19–26," 311.
[288] Barrett, *Acts*, 1:206.

16; 14:8–10), though not all experience *present* healing and deliverance from suffering (cf. Luke 4:25–27; 13:1–5; 16:20–22; Acts 14:22). Nevertheless, Jesus' past resurrection anticipates the general resurrection and creation's restoration, which God will bring about in his time (3:21; cf. 1:7).

6.4. Summary

In sum, Luke views God's eschatological actions of establishing his kingdom, judging his enemies, raising the dead, and restoring all things as inaugurated but not yet consummated through Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and present heavenly reign. Believers should understand their suffering as necessary but temporary, but should confidently hope in the risen Lord's return as righteous judge and in God's full restoration of all things, which entails the eradication of suffering.

7. Conclusion

Chapters 5–6 have shown that suffering is an important theme in Luke-Acts. Luke's key characters (Jesus, the apostles, Stephen, and Paul) endure substantial suffering, particularly persecution from fellow Jews. Further, the suffering of Jesus' witnesses is instrumental for the unfolding of Luke's narrative account of their Spirit-empowered mission in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and unto the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). This chapter concludes with a summary, written as from Luke's perspective, of how suffering functions in his worldview.

First, *how is God involved in our suffering?* We Christians believe that the Creator God has mysteriously and gloriously fulfilled his covenant promises to Israel by sending his son Jesus, the long-awaited messianic king (Luke 1:31–33, 68–70; Acts 13:22–23). As Jesus predicted (Luke 9:22; 18:31–33), he was rejected by his own people and put to death on a cursed tree according to God's plan, then raised up by God and enthroned in heaven (Acts 2:23–36; 5:30–31). Thus, we believe that Jesus shares in the identity and work of Israel's God. Jesus the suffering Messiah is Lord of all (10:36).[289]

Second, *how does suffering relate to our nature, task, and purpose?* We who seek to follow Jesus should expect to suffer *like* our master and *for* his name's sake. The risen Lord Jesus continues to identify with and stand by his suffering followers (7:55; 9:4–5, 16; 18:9–10; 23:11; 27:23). Jewish persecution does not discredit Jesus' disciples but demonstrates our *legitimacy* as true members of God's people and

[289] Cf. §2.

authentic Spirit-led witnesses, in the line of Jesus and the prophets who were chosen by God but opposed by their own people (4:13; 5:29, 32; 7:52). Following Jesus entails daily self-renunciation, and believers "must" (δεῖ) endure many afflictions before we experience the full realization of God's glorious kingdom (Luke 9:23; Acts 14:22).[290]

Third, *how does suffering clarify the world's basic problem?* We believe that while God's kingdom has been inaugurated and Jesus is enthroned as king in heaven, nevertheless natural suffering, political oppression, and persecution continue in the present (2:33–35; 14:22). Human suffering is not "indifferent," as some philosophers teach, but an expression of this world's brokenness because of human sin and unbelief and Satan's work (17:30; 26:18).[291] Jews and Gentiles alike need salvation in Jesus' name and must respond to the gospel through faith, repentance, and baptism (2:38; 4:12; 16:31). Our proclamation of Jesus as suffering and exalted κύριος prompts persecution especially from unbelieving Jews (4:1–2; 7:56; 13:45), but also from Gentiles whose beliefs and practices are threatened or undermined by Jesus' lordship (16:19; 19:23–27).[292]

Fourth, *how does suffering relate to the solution for the world's problem?* The solution to humanity's plight is God's eschatological work of salvation, accomplished through Jesus' suffering and vindication and boldly proclaimed by his suffering witnesses (4:12–13). Indeed, persecution and opposition consistently accompany and ironically advance the church's mission to bear witness to Jesus to all peoples and places (1:8; 8:1, 4; 9:15–16; 11:19; 13:45–47). Forgiveness of sins is a principal feature of eschatological salvation, which is closely tied to Jesus' vicarious suffering and subsequent vindication (Luke 22:19–20; 24:46–47; Acts 3:18–19). This salvation is holistic and includes *restoration* of sufferers (4:9), *deliverance* from tyranny and peril (Luke 1:71; Acts 26:18; 27:44), and *salvation* from divine judgment and eternal destruction (Luke 9:24; Acts 4:12). Unbelievers live in darkness under Satan's power; thus, God's saving activity through Jesus involves illumination (26:18), empowerment by the Spirit even amidst suffering (4:29–31), and the creation of a new community gathered in Jesus' name (2:41–47).[293]

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[290] Cf. §3.
[291] Contrast with Seneca, *Prov.* 3.1; 5.1; cf. ch. 1 §2.2; 3.3; ch. 2 §4.1.
[292] Cf. §4.
[293] Cf. §5.

Fifth, *how does present suffering relate to our expectations for the future?* We believe that God's kingdom has been inaugurated through king Jesus' death, resurrection, and heavenly enthronement, but it still awaits future consummation at Jesus' return (2:33–36; 3:19–21). At present, disciples empowered by the Holy Spirit testify to Jesus as risen Lord, announce forgiveness of sins in his name, and meet both reception and rejection. However, suffering and injustice do not have the last word. Healings and signs in Jesus' name signify the presence of the Messianic age and holistic salvation through Jesus, and they anticipate Jesus' return, the general resurrection, and the eradication of suffering and injustice when God restores all things.[294]

[294] Cf. §6.

Chapter 7: An Ancient Conversation about Suffering

1. Introduction

At the outset of this study, we proposed an ancient conversation about suffering between three prominent first-century authors: the eminent Stoic philosopher Seneca, the Hellenistic Jew who wrote 4 Maccabees (Auctor), and the Christian historian Luke. We have examined selections of these authors' writings in detail (chs. 1, 3, 5) and have attempted to synthesize and summarize how suffering functions in each one's worldview (chs. 2, 4, 6). The present task is to study Luke, Seneca, and Auctor together, to draw out the similarities and differences of their views concerning suffering. Of course, though historically conceivable, no record exists of any meeting between these authors; therefore what follows is an imagined conversation based on their extant writings. Nevertheless, our sources suggest that Christians, Hellenistic Jews, and Stoics were in dialogue in the first-century world. Auctor shows awareness of the philosophical milieu of his day, including Stoicism,[1] and Luke portrays Paul in regular discussion with both Hellenistic Jews and Stoic and Epicurean philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:17–18). Although Luke and Auctor wrote in Greek and Seneca in Latin, Seneca was certainly proficient in Greek and the others may well have known some Latin.[2] Thus this imagined exchange is presented as happening in Greek, with interspersed Latin references.

Our ancient conversation about suffering will be written and organized in a way similar to Marcus Tullius Cicero's great work, "On the Nature of the Gods" (*De Natura Deorum*). Written in 45 BCE, Cicero's book offers a well-known literary antecedent of a theological dialogue between three men representing different schools: an Epicurean (Velleius), a Stoic (Balbus), and an Academician (Cotta). *De Natura Deorum* is set in 77–76 BCE at Cotta's Roman home, where Cicero claims to have been an invited guest (*Nat. d.* 1.15). Whatever one makes of Cicero's purported

[1] Cf. Renehan, "Background," 68; Klauck, *Makkabäerbuch*, 666; deSilva, *Guides*, 13.
[2] Inwood observes that there was a "relatively easy bilingualism of his [Seneca's] immediate social environment," in which "Roman intellectuals comfortable in Greek" and "Greek intellectuals at Rome could be comfortable in and interested in Latin." "Milieu," 68.

attendance for such a discussion, the composition itself, as well as his letters to Atticus (*Att.* 13.8, 39), make clear that Cicero employed written philosophical sources and exerted considerable authorial license. Cicero's own sympathies lie with the Academicians (*Nat. d.* 1.17), but he aims to present each view fairly and critically, acknowledging the utmost importance of the topic under consideration:

> However, to free myself entirely from ill-disposed criticism, I will now lay before my readers the doctrines of the various schools on the nature of the gods. This is a topic on which it seems proper to summon all the world to sit in judgement and pronounce which of these doctrines is the true one. (1.13 LCL)

In what follows, we will present each of our three authors' positions in the first person. Luke, who is familiar with both Hellenistic Judaism and Stoic philosophy, has invited Seneca and *Auctor* to join him at a private residence in Rome on the Ides of June, 63 CE, for a discussion "on the nature of suffering" (*de natura patientiae*).[3]

2. An Ancient Conversation about Suffering

2.1. Introduction

Luke: *Salve*, most excellent Seneca. I consider myself fortunate to have such an eminent philosopher, writer, and teacher in my home, and I look forward to hearing what you have to say regarding today's important topic, *de natura patientiae*.[4] Did you bring a copy of your recent essay *De Providentia ad Lucilium*?

Seneca: *Salve*, Luke, the pleasure is all mine. I have heard about your sect from my brother Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia,[5] but I am eager to hear first-hand what your views are. As I like to say, *quae optima sunt, esse communia,* the best ideas are common property.[6] Yes, I did commission a copy of *De Providentia* for you and have it here.

Luke: Excellent, I should very much like to read it. Thank you, Seneca. Χαῖρε, Auctor. It is indeed a privilege to be joined by a learned, pious man such as yourself. Know that our food today has been prepared according to your customs, so that you

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[3] This date sets the imagined conversation after the last recorded event in Acts (Paul's Roman imprisonment, 60–62 CE) and before Nero's persecution of Christians in Rome (64 CE) and Seneca's forced suicide (65 CE). While dating of Luke-Acts and 4 Maccabees in the 60s CE is possible, it is not required for this creative exercise. On dating of these works, see ch. 3 §1.2; ch. 5 §1.1.

[4] As discussed in ch. 1 (§3.2.2), *patientia* may refer positively to *endurance* or *resistance* or negatively to *suffering*, following Dionigi, "La patientia," 414–15. Seneca, Auctor, and Luke's discussion of *de natura patientia* will address both meanings.

[5] Acts 18:12–17.

[6] *Ep.* 12.11.

may freely partake. I have heard from friends in Antioch that you are a prominent leader in the Jewish community and a noted rhetorician there. Is it true that you have recently written a treatise on the supremacy of reason?

Auctor: Χαῖρε, Luke, I am honored by your invitation and kind introduction. *Salve*, Seneca, it is a privilege to meet you. I have read your essay, *De Clementia*, and I do pray that it has been well received by Nero Caesar. Yes, I have recently written a modest work highlighting the devout reason and mastery of the passions demonstrated by seven Jews who suffered under the Seleucid King Antiochus. I commissioned a copy for each of you if you like.

Luke: Thank you, Auctor, how thoughtful of you. Well then, let's begin our conversation about the nature of suffering, a topic of universal importance, which is often misunderstood. Of course, I myself have particular views on the matter that I will share with you, but I want this to be a civil and respectful exchange of ideas by three friends. Seneca, as the eldest member of our gathering, you may speak first. Would you explain how suffering relates to your view of divine Providence, the purpose of humanity, our problems and their remedy, and your expectations for the future? Auctor will go next, I will follow, and then we may further discuss and debate *de natura patientiae*.

2.2. Seneca on Suffering

Seneca: It would be an honor to share with you my opinions on this important topic, and your proposal for the discussion is most agreeable. The timing for this conversation is quite convenient, as I have recently written to my friend Lucilius, who asked me why many evils befall good people if, as I believe, the world is directed by Providence.[7] As a Stoic, I hold that the supreme god, whom I know as Jupiter or *providentia*, created and rules over the universe. The common person dreads the random onslaughts of Fortune—what Lucilius called *multa mala*—but what is required is a proper perspective on *providentia* and clear thinking on what is truly *malum* and *bonum.*

One glance at the night sky on a clear night suggests that our universe is not random but orderly, subject to some eternal law or reason, an inscrutable series of causes that I will call Fate.[8] Do the planets and stars resist and complain? Of course not! Let them be our tutors, and let us likewise offer ourselves freely to Fate's fixed

[7] *Prov.* 1.1. Ch. 1 §2.1 discusses the dating of *On Providence*.
[8] *Prov.* 1.2; 5.7.

course.[9] Now I am not ignorant of the difficulties we face in this life: illness, calamity, loss, and violence are all real enough. Indeed, Fortune has assailed me with gout, shortness of breath and ulcers.[10] I have lost children and known the loneliness of exile.[11] We Stoics typically speak about such misfortunes which provoke cries and groaning as unimportant—true enough, I suppose, though I myself do not employ such great sounding words.[12] We must prepare for such adversities—surely they will come—but we need not indulge our fears or nurse our sorrows.[13] The study of philosophy fortifies our minds so that we may not only endure such sufferings, but endure *bravely*, thereby demonstrating virtue, which I and other Stoics hold to be the only good (*bonum*).[14]

Sound philosophy teaches that those things commonly called *mala* or *incommoda* are not inherently evil but are indifferent things—ἀδιαφορία, you might say. Whether I am rich or poor, healthy or sick, reclining at a king's banquet or subject to a slave's torture, it matters nothing to my true happiness.[15] The sage's happiness is not found in good fortune but in freely obeying god, living in harmony with our nature, as the gods do, and laying hold of virtue.[16]

Auctor: Excuse me, Seneca. Could you clarify what you mean about living in harmony with our nature *as the gods do*? My own view, which I'll present in due course, is that true happiness, virtue, and piety come through governing our lives not by "nature" but by the Law revealed to us by the Creator God.[17]

Seneca: A perceptive question, my new friend, and I look forward to hearing more about your views. Here is what I mean. There is a friendship and common bond between the good person (*bonus vir*) and the gods.[18] The gods always willingly and perfectly live according to Nature, exhibiting perfect reason and true virtue. The human *animus*—one's better part—is holy, divine, and rational, though it is constrained by a burdensome body, susceptible to temptation and suffering.[19] The good person recognizes the *animus* as his true and eternal self and lives in agreement

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[9] 5.8.
[10] *Ep.* 54.1–3; 68.9; 96.1; cf. Griffin, *Seneca*, 42–43.
[11] *Helv.* 2.5; 6.5.
[12] *Ep.* 13.4.
[13] *Ep.* 13.10–12.
[14] 16.3–6; 67.10; 74.26.
[15] 71.21.
[16] *Vit. Beat.* 3.3; 15.7; 16.1.
[17] 4 Macc 5:16; 11:5.
[18] *Prov.* 1.5.
[19] *Ep.* 24.17; 41.2, 8–9; 65.17–18; *Nat.* 1, Pref. 14.

with this nature—that is, according to reason. The sage thereby imitates the gods, who already possess virtue, happiness, and reason. Hardships or adversities, though commonly despised, are really intended by the gods for our benefit.[20] Like a surgeon's skilled knife, sufferings inflict necessary and temporary pain in order to heal us from diseases of the mind.[21]

Now, Auctor, to return to your question: there are some differences between the sage and the gods. God is a wholly good and rational being and has always been so. He cannot commit evil or be tempted by it, and god does not suffer—he is *extra patientiam*.[22] If there is anything I'm sure we all agree about, it is that human beings do commit evil and frequently suffer! But humanity is not disadvantaged, as it may seem, but may achieve *superiority* over the gods. How so? As a moral being, the good person must *choose* the good, exerting his rational mind's superiority over the irrational body, and must *endure* all manner of sufferings.[23]

Therefore we must not call suffering "evil" (*malum*). Disaster may seem unfortunate (*incommodum*), but it is really an opportunity to demonstrate great virtue.[24] A warrior is shown brave and great through the wounds of battle, and a captain is shown to be skillful when he reaches land after a raging tempest, with his sails tattered and deck drenched.[25] We must strive for a proper picture of virtue, which comes not by passive piety but by sweaty struggle.[26] Athletes pummel their bodies through rigorous and painful training, in hopes of achieving victory and fame. The same principle applies for those who seek a greater prize: virtue, firmness of mind, and unending peace.[27] Think of Marcus Cato—the most noble of the exemplars. Cato proved his philosophy by his actions: he despised pleasure, overcame fear, and demonstrated constancy.[28] Let us therefore prepare ourselves for Fortune's onslaughts by placing before our eyes the so-called "evils" which may come—exile, torture, hunger, disease, even death—and let us fortify ourselves by reason.[29] So many people allow themselves to be tortured by their imagination of future woes.[30] If we examine

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[20] *Prov*. 3.1.
[21] *Prov.* 3.2; *Ep.* 78.5.
[22] *Prov.* 6.6; cf. *Ep.* 95.49.
[23] Cf. Setaioli, "Divine," 366.
[24] *Prov.* 4.6.
[25] *Ep.* 30.3; *Prov.* 4.4–5.
[26] *Ep.* 67.12–13.
[27] 78.16.
[28] *Con*. 2.1; *Tranq.* 16.1
[29] *Ep.* 14.4–6; 91.8; cf. Edwards, "Suffering," 257–58.
[30] *Ep.* 74.33–34.

these things that humanity so dreads, we will realize that none of them can affect the good person's true happiness, which is secure within.[31]

I must now address Luke's question about the world's true problem and its remedy. As I told my friend Lucilius, no evil (*malum*) can befall good people, so long as we do not settle for the common notion of *malum*. It is vice and ignorance, not inconvenience and injury, which are truly perilous. As rational beings, is there not in each of us some basic intuition of what is right and good?[32] And yet we allow false thoughts to turn us off course, and we do not master our bodies but obediently serve their lusts and nurture our fears. What can be done? We must devote ourselves wholly to philosophy, which offers sound guidance and wholeness to our souls.[33] Indeed, the love of wisdom brings true freedom and leads us in the way of the gods. In my youth, I was so racked by hardship and illness that I despaired of life, but my philosophical studies were truly my salvation.[34]

I can hear my detractors' chorus now: "You talk one way, but live another."[35] Believe me, I am my own chief critic, and I seek each day to reduce my numerous vices.[36] But until my dying breath, I will not allow Fortune the upper hand; I will not allow common fears to paralyze me. Illness and injury may plague my troublesome body, but they cannot touch my happiness.[37] Until death, we must endure all manner of calamites in accordance with the laws governing this world.[38] Then death will bring freedom from suffering as we are released into a peaceful state, purified from our stains, and join the immortal gods.[39] In the meantime, these hardships are loving yet severe gifts from god designed to test our character, harden us against vice, and make us fit for divine service.[40] That, my friends, is *de natura patientiae.*

Luke: Seneca, you demonstrate your great learning and sober judgment on these matters. I will with pleasure present my own views later, but permit me now to make a few comments before Auctor addresses us. First, I think you are quite right to understand human suffering as consistent, in some way, with a belief in Providence. I also agree that ignorance and immorality, not suffering, is humanity's most

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[31] *Con.* 3.3–5; 5.4; *Prov.* 6.1.
[32] *Ep.* 97.12.
[33] 14.11; 16.3.
[34] 78.3–4.
[35] *Vit. Beat*. 18.1.
[36] 17.3–4.
[37] *Con*. 5:3–4; *Hev.* 20.1.
[38] *Ep.* 91.15, 18–19.
[39] *Marc.* 19.4–5; 23.1; 25.1. For discussion of Seneca's views of the afterlife, see ch. 2 §6.2.
[40] *Prov.* 1.6; 4.7–8

fundamental problem. Further, I concur that suffering is in some sense necessary and must be endured in this life.

As you might expect, I have some significant disagreements with portions of your presentation. First, to understand the nature of suffering we must first be clear on God's true nature. I believe, as my Jewish friend would as well, that one God created the world and presently rules over it. This God is all-knowing, taking account of the sparrows and the hairs on our heads.[41] He does good to all people, giving rain and fruitful seasons and setting their boundaries that they should seek and find him. He is not far off but near, and we are the divine offspring, all descended from one man.[42]

Seneca: Quite right, Luke, the Stoic Aratus has written similarly, "From Zeus let us begin; him do we mortals never leave unnamed; full of Zeus are all the streets and all the market-places of men; full is the sea and the havens thereof; always we all have need of Zeus. For we are also his offspring."[43]

Luke: Indeed. But this Creator God has revealed himself in a particular way to one people, Israel, the family of Abraham. There is much more to be said, but let us first hear Auctor's views on the nature of suffering.

2.3. Auctor on Suffering

Auctor: Thank you. Like Seneca and others in his school, I heartily affirm that divine Providence (πρόνοια) rules over the world. He is our divine Benefactor, and we are obliged to maintain faith and loyalty to him even amidst hardship.[44] As a Jew, I identify πρόνοια with the Creator God who has chosen Israel and given her the divine Law.[45] I hold that God created humanity with emotions, inclinations, and a mind.[46] He has graciously given us the Law to educate our minds in true philosophy, so that we may subjugate the passions (πάθη)—both pleasure and pain—by devout reason (ὁ εὐσεβὴς λογισμός).[47] Such reason is the guide to virtuous living and enables mastery of the passions.[48]

Seneca: I agree with you, Auctor, that the mind (*animus*) must overcome the body's fickle passions through devotion to philosophy, which instructs us in divine

[41] Luke 12:6.
[42] Acts 14:16; 17:24–28.
[43] *Phaen.* lines 1–5 LCL.
[44] 4 Macc 16:18–23. On God as the divine patron, see deSilva, *Guides*, 127–31.
[45] 4 Macc 5:25; 9:24; 13:19; 17:22. Cf. Philo, *Mos.* 1:162; Wis 14:3.
[46] 4 Macc 2:21–23.
[47] 1:1, 28; 6:35.
[48] 1:30.

wisdom and leads us to virtue. It is good to hear that our school's teaching has some influence among the Jews! By "divine Law," am I right to assume you mean the law of Nature?[49]

Auctor: No, Seneca, while we agree about many points, this is a key difference. I believe that the Creator God has revealed his Law directly to our ancestors, who wrote down his instructions to educate us in divine and human matters and to promote right conduct and rational living.[50] By living according to the Torah, we Jews fulfill God's design for humanity and enjoy a life of virtue, wisdom, and brotherly love.[51] This brings me to the matter of suffering.

Some time ago, my ancestors were prospering and living in peace because of their loyalty to the Law (εὐνομία), but then certain people revolted and led us into manifold misfortunes.[52] The situation became particularly grave when the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes succeeded Seleucus as king and for a bribe appointed Jason as high priest in place of his brother Onias, a noble and good man.[53] Jason completely disregarded the divine Law and polluted our ancestral home by changing our customs and constructing a prominent Gentile gymnasium and stopping sacrifices at the holy Temple of our ancestors.[54] These sins angered our God and brought about ancient covenant curses, as a godless foreign king was made to rule over Israel.[55] The tyrant imposed Gentile customs on us, and he viciously persecuted those who were loyal to Torah, who circumcised their sons and abstained from defiled food.[56] Our leaders thus dishonored their heavenly Benefactor by assimilating to the Greek way of life,[57] and this disloyalty to God and his Law brought about great suffering in Israel.

Then Eleazar, an aged priest well-versed in the Law, bravely defied Antiochus' decrees and endured brutal tortures for his piety.[58] Eight others, a godly mother and her seven sons, also endured the tyrants' blows and died nobly for their religion.[59] They are preeminent *exemplars* of virtue, the noblest philosophers, who show what it

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[49] *Ep,* 4.10; 74.24.
[50] 4 Macc 1:17; 13:22; 18:1.
[51] 1:15–17; 13:24.
[52] 3:20–21.
[53] 4:1, 15–18.
[54] 4 Macc 4:20; cf. 2 Macc 4:9–14.
[55] 4 Macc 4:21–23; cf. Deut 28:49–50. DeSilva writes, "The policies laid out in Deuteronomy 28–30 give the action of the narrative its framework." *Guides*, 134.
[56] 4 Macc 4:24–5:3.
[57] 4:19–20; 8:5–8.
[58] 5:4; 6:1–30.
[59] 1:8–9; 6:23.

means for devout reason to master the passions.[60] Further, on this occasion their voluntary deaths for the Law appeased the divine wrath against Israel, purified our defiled land, and moved God to again be merciful toward us, just as he promised in the Law.[61] When our Temple was inoperable, they sacrificed their own blood to atone for Israel's sin and thus saved us from divine judgment and from Antiochus' tyranny.[62]

Seneca: Your description of these Jewish philosophers reminds me of the great Stoic Marcus Cato, who overcame the fear of death and became, I think, the very embodiment of virtue.[63] Certainly if they can endure so much, we should learn from them to overcome our own hardships and face our fears with reason.[64] While noble death is certainly desirable and may bring an omen of success, [65] I find peculiar your interpretation of these deaths as atoning for sin. The gods are not, in my view, pleased by religious ceremonies or the blood of victims' but by worshippers' upright, holy desire and true knowledge.[66]

Auctor: You are quite right, Seneca, that we should prepare for suffering by learning from great exemplars of virtue. As the first of the seven sons was being tortured at the wheel, he said: "Imitate me, brothers … fight the sacred and noble battle for piety."[67] Where did they learn such bravery and resolve? Surely it was not at the gymnasium but from studying the sacred Scriptures with their father.[68] The divine Law taught them the meaning of righteousness, piety, and proper worship.[69] Their pious deaths brought an end to Israel's chastisement for sin and moved divine Providence to show mercy to our nation and take vengeance on the tyrant.[70]

Luke: Auctor, I am intrigued by your explanation of their deaths as both exemplary and atoning on behalf of Israel. In my presentation, I plan to say some similar things. But before I do, could you please explain how your view of suffering relates to your future hope?

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[60] 1:7–9; 5:22–24; 7:7, 16; 18:1–2.
[61] 1:11; 6:28–29; 17:21–22.
[62] Cf. ch. 3 §2.2.
[63] *Ep.* 67.13.
[64] 98.12.
[65] 67.9–10.
[66] *Ep.* 95.48; *Ben.* 1.6.3.
[67] 4 Macc 9:23–24.
[68] 18:10–19.
[69] 5:24.
[70] 9:24; 17:21–22.

Auctor: Certainly. Moses declared, "I have given before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, that you and your offspring may live."[71] I believe that these divine promises of blessing for those who obey the Law and curse for those who disobey have relevance even beyond death.[72] Thus, these Jews who endured torture out of allegiance to the divine Law received pure and immortal souls and stand with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in God's blessed presence even now.[73] One day, God may even raise their tortured bodies, as the Prophets teach.[74] But I also believe that God will bring down curses on Israel's enemies and persecutors as he promised.[75] The tyrant and Israel's other torturers did not show gratitude for God's patronage but murdered his servants, and they have received punishment in this life, and now justly suffer eternal fiery tortures.[76] God is righteous—he will certainly reward the righteous generously and punish the wicked most severely. As Moses taught, "I kill and I make alive: this is your life and the length of your days."[77]

2.4. Luke on Suffering

Luke: Thank you, Auctor, for your lucid presentation. We hold many things in common, it seems, and I hope that where we differ you will offer me a fair hearing. Suffering is an inescapable reality in our world—who among us is untouched by disaster, disease, injustice, oppression, or persecution? We should not ignore or despair of such sufferings, but rather consider them in light of God's sovereign power and purposes. However, I cannot accept your view, Seneca, that human suffering is "indifferent," neither good nor evil. Rather, I will argue that human suffering is a painful expression of the world's brokenness due to sin and also an integral facet of God's plan to redeem his created and fallen world.

As I mentioned earlier, I believe that the living God created the world and made the first man and woman in his likeness.[78] When they succumbed to temptation and sinned, then suffering, pain, evil, and death entered the world.[79] Humanity

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[71] Own translation of Deut 30:19 LXX.
[72] Cf. deSilva, *Guides*, 123, 136–37.
[73] 4 Macc 7:19; 17:12, 18–20; 18:23.
[74] 4 Macc 18:10, 17; Ezek 37:3 LXX. The consensus among scholars is that 4 Maccabees *replaces* the doctrine of future bodily resurrection (explicit in 2 Macc 7:11, 14, 22–23) with present immortality of the soul. However, as argued earlier (ch. 4 §6.1), Auctor's citation of Ezekiel 37:3 suggests room for a belief in future resurrection, though the emphasis lies on the martyrs' present heavenly vindication.
[75] Deut 30:7 LXX.
[76] 4 Macc 12:11–12; 18:5.
[77] 4 Macc 18:19; cf. Deut 30:20; 32:39, 47; deSilva, *Commentary*, 264–65.
[78] Luke 3:38; Acts 17:24–26; cf. Gen 5:1–2.
[79] Gen 3:16–19; cf. Rom 5:12, 14; Sir 25:24; 2 Esd 3:3–11; 7:118; Josephus, *Ant.* 1:49.

continued to rebel, so God destroyed them by flood, though he saved Noah's family.[80] After scattering the nations and confusing their languages, God chose one man, Abraham, and promised to make him a great nation and bless the world through him.[81] God rescued Abraham's descendants, Israel, from slavery and revealed to them his holy Law by Moses.[82] Yet Israel did not keep the Law, but rejected God's instruction and persecuted the prophets he sent to warn Israel of coming judgment.[83] Israel was severely disciplined for her sins and sent into exile, just as the prophets had said.[84] Meanwhile, the other nations without God's Law lived in darkness, ignorant of God's true nature and will.[85]

Seneca: Were Socrates and Cato ignorant of the divine will since they had not read Moses? I think not. Human beings are endowed with divine reason and may overcome ignorance by give themselves to philosophy and live according to their own nature.[86]

Luke: Indeed, many philosophers have reflected deeply on humanity's nature and purpose and have discerned truly that there is an all-powerful Creator who deserves true worship and devotion from his creatures.[87] But philosophy alone cannot bring humanity salvation, since I believe that our basic problem is not faulty thinking but sin and rebellion against God. I will say more about this in due course.

Auctor: Luke, I fully agree with your presentation thus far. It is evident that you also have studied the Law and the Prophets.

Luke: Yes, Auctor, and as you know God made many great promises to his people. To Abraham God said, "In your offspring all the families of the earth shall be blessed."[88] He promised to raise up a prophet like Moses, to whom Israel must listen.[89] By Isaiah, God also promised to comfort and save his people after exile, and to make his servant Israel "a light to the Gentiles."[90]

In recent days, God has fulfilled these ancient promises in a truly remarkable way by sending Israel a Savior and Messiah from David's family—Jesus of Nazareth,

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[80] Luke 17:27; cf. Gen 6:5–22.
[81] Acts 7:2–8; 13:17; cf. Gen 12:1–3; 22:17–18.
[82] Acts 7:35–38; cf. Exod 20:1–17.
[83] Luke 11:47–50; 13:33–34; cf. Neh 9:26.
[84] Acts 7:42–43, 53; cf. Amos 5:25–27.
[85] Acts 14:16; 26:18.
[86] *Ep.* 41.1–2, 8–9.
[87] Acts 17:23–28. Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 95.47–50.
[88] Acts 3:25; Gen 12:3; 22:18.
[89] Acts 3:22; Deut 18:15.
[90] Luke 2:25, 32; 3:4–6; Acts 13:47; Isa 40:1–5; 49:6.

the divine Son born of a virgin.[91] Unlike Israel, and Adam, who failed when tested, Jesus overcame the devil's temptations and demonstrated that he was God's Son.[92] He healed many who were oppressed by the devil and proclaimed God's kingdom.[93] Yet he also suffered and was rejected by Israel's leaders and condemned to die by the Roman governor Pilate, though he was innocent of all charges.[94] If Israel persecuted God's prophets, is it any surprise that God's son has met the same fate?[95] Israel did not recognize Jesus' coming as her time of divine visitation.[96] Yet God raised this man from the dead, and he now offers salvation and forgiveness of sins to his people Israel and to people from every nation.[97] God shows no partiality but welcomes Jews and Gentiles alike, who repent of their sins and are baptized in Jesus' name.

Auctor: We Jews have different thoughts regarding the Messiah.[98] Some await a son of David who will destroy the wicked and rule over Israel with righteousness and justice.[99] Others expect a priest who will make atonement for sin and teach Israel according to God's will, or a great prophet who will teach the way of righteousness.[100] But some doubt the very idea of a future Messiah, particularly in light of recent pretenders.[101]

Earlier I argued that Eleazar, the seven brothers and their mother suffered for the Law and died vicariously for the nation. Their sacrificial deaths appeased God's wrath against Israel, cleansed our ancestral land, and provided a powerful example of piety and devout reason for all to follow.[102] But I wouldn't call them messiahs—who

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[91] Luke 1:28–35; 2:11; Acts 13:23.
[92] Luke 3:38–4:13; cf. Gen 3:1–6. See Pao and Schnabel, "Luke," 283–87; G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 442.
[93] Luke 9:11; Acts 2:22; 10:38.
[94] Luke 23:13–25; Acts 2:23; 3:14–15; 4:11; 10:39.
[95] Luke 20:9–15; Acts 7:52. Cf. Moessner, "New Light," 225; Cunningham, *Tribulations*, 182.
[96] Luke 1:68; 19:34.
[97] Luke 24:44–47; Acts 2:22–24; 4:12.
[98] For discussion and sources, see Kenneth E. Pomykala, "Messianism," *EDEJ* 938–42; Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)* (Revised ed; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: Clark, 1979), 2:488–554.
[99] *Ps. Sol.* 17:23–51; cf. David A. DeSilva, *The Jewish Teachers of Jesus, James, and Jude: What Earliest Christianity Learned from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 141–57.
[100] For a priestly Messiah, see CD 7:18–20; 14:18–19; 4Q541 f9i:2–3. For a prophetic Messiah as new Moses or Elijah, see Mark 8:27; John 1:21; 6:14. Cf. Deut 18:18; CD 6:11; 1QS 9:11; 4Q175 1:5–8; 4Q521. Cf. John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 102–23.
[101] Acts 5:36–37; 21:38; Josephus, *Ant.* 20:97–98; *J.W.* 2:261–263.
[102] 4 Macc 1:7–11; 6:28–29; 9:23–24; 17:21–23

would imagine a *suffering* Messiah?[103] Surely Rome's sovereignty bears witness that Israel's Messiah has not yet come, if indeed he will come.

Luke: Certainly no one *expected* Israel's promised savior to suffer and die! Yet Jesus predicted that he would suffer many things and be rejected and killed by Israel's leaders according to the mysterious plan of God. Jesus also said that God would raise him up on the third day.[104] Even Jesus' closest followers, who heard him teaching these things, did not understand the necessity of Jesus' suffering and death.[105]

However, death could not hold Jesus, and God raised him from the dead, proving Jesus' words true.[106] The Scriptures testify to the rejection and vindication of God's servant and king. Consider what is written in the Psalms: "The earth's kings take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his anointed one."[107] Or again, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."[108] David himself prophesied, "You will not let your Holy One see corruption."[109] In Isaiah's book, we read about a righteous servant who was oppressed and afflicted and numbered with transgressors, yet who would be exalted.[110]

Auctor: Your interpretations of the Prophets and Psalms are intriguing. This pattern of suffering and exaltation informs my own views of Eleazar and the other faithful Jews whom Antiochus tortured and killed but whom God exalted to heavenly immortality.[111] Did not the tyrant and his council marvel at these Jews' endurance in suffering, as Isaiah says: "So many nations will marvel at him, and kings shall shut their mouth?"[112]

Luke: Jesus' suffering and exaltation is somewhat similar to these examples that you cite. However, do these Jewish heroes really fulfill Isaiah's description of the servant, who is "lifted up and glorified exceedingly," who though righteous suffered pains for others' sins, who did not open his mouth when ill-treated?[113] Further, while

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[103] Cf. Schürer, *History*, 2:547–49; Wright, *NTPG*, 320.
[104] Luke 9:22–23; 43–44; 18:31–33.
[105] Luke 9:45; 18:34; 24:19–21.
[106] Luke 24:6–9; Acts 2:24.
[107] Acts 4:26; cf. Ps 2:2.
[108] Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Ps 118:22 [117:22 LXX].
[109] Acts 2:27; 13:35; cf. Ps 16:10 [115:10 LXX].
[110] Luke 22:37; 23:47; Acts 2:33; 8:32; cf. Isa 52:13; 53:8, 11–12; Green, "Servant," 1–28.
[111] Cf. deSilva, *Commentary*, 148.
[112] 4 Macc 9:26; 17:16–17; cf. Isa 52:15 LXX (οὕτως θαυμάσονται ἔθνη πολλὰ ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ καὶ συνέξουσι βασιλεῖς τὸ στόμα αὐτῶν).
[113] Isa 52:13; 53:4, 7–8, 12 LXX; cf. Luke 22:37; Acts 8:32–35.

you stress that Eleazar and the others died as a ransom for *Israel's* sin and called down judgment on the nations, Isaiah depicts the servant as a "light of the nations."[114] After he rose from the grave, Jesus opened his disciples' minds to see how his suffering, death and resurrection did not contradict but uniquely fulfilled these ancient prophesies.[115] Jesus appeared to his disciples and showed himself to be alive after his suffering through many demonstrative proofs.[116] He taught about God's kingdom, called them to be his witnesses to all nations beginning in Jerusalem, and promised to send the Holy Spirit to empower them for this work.[117] Jesus has now been exalted to the right hand of God as Lord (κύριος) and Messiah (Χριστός), and everyone who calls on his name will be saved.[118]

Seneca: This is certainly a new teaching, quite unlike anything I have heard before![119] A suffering son of the gods, born by miraculous conception, who dies and rises—is this not the stuff of poets' myths (in which I myself indulge sometimes, of course)?[120]

Luke: This is neither a poet's tale, nor a recent invention; rather, as I have said, these events clearly fulfill prophecies written long ago in Israel's Scriptures.[121] Further, I have met and interviewed several men and women who very credibly claim to be eyewitnesses to these things.[122] Some of these leading witnesses—called apostles—have been threatened, beaten, imprisoned, and killed for these teachings, yet they joyfully endure such persecution and continue to announce these things as good news.[123] Further, following Jesus' teaching and example, the disciples show love for their enemies, not cursing their persecutors but seeking their forgiveness.[124]

I believe that Jesus' followers must also suffer hardships as we await the full realization of God's kingdom.[125] Jesus himself, after predicting his own suffering and death, summoned his disciples to deny themselves and take up their crosses daily.[126] Further, the Lord appeared to Paul, a prominent persecutor of the disciples, and called

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[114] 4 Macc 12:11–12; 17:21; Isa 42:6; 49:6 LXX; cf. Luke 2:32; Acts 1:8; 13:47.
[115] Luke 24:45.
[116] Acts 1:3. On the phrase ἐν πολλοῖς τεκμηρίοις, see Witherington, *Acts*, 108.
[117] Luke 24:47–49; Acts 1:4–5, 8.
[118] Acts 2:21, 36; 4:12.
[119] Acts 17:19–20.
[120] This comparison is suggested by Sørensen, *Seneca*, 206.
[121] Luke 24:25–27; Acts 24:14–15.
[122] Luke 1:2; Acts 1:21–22; 4:33.
[123] Acts 5:17–42; 12:1–4.
[124] Luke 6:27–28, 35; 22:51; 23:34; Acts 7:60; Marshall, "Enemy," esp. 183–87.
[125] Acts 14:22.
[126] Luke 9:23.

him to be his witness and to suffer for his name.[127] As you can expect, the Lord's disciples were afraid of Paul given his notorious and violent opposition to their number. But when they saw Paul proclaim Jesus as God's Son and endure persecution from his own people, the disciples welcomed him as a genuine follower and preacher of Jesus.[128] I traveled with Paul as he shared good news about Jesus with Jews and Gentiles alike, and I can testify that he has suffered greatly for his bold teaching.[129] In fact, at one point when a prophet came and predicted that Paul would suffer in Jerusalem, I urged him not to go on, as did others. When Paul insisted he was ready to be imprisoned and even to die for Jesus' name, we finally accepted this as the Lord's will.[130] Suffering witnesses boldly proclaim the message of Jesus, our suffering and exalted savior, by the power of God's Spirit.[131]

We Christians, like many devout Jews, believe in the final judgment and in the future resurrection of the just and the unjust.[132] As the Psalmist writes, "He will judge the world in righteousness."[133] And Daniel says, "Many of those who sleep in a mound of earth will arise, some to everlasting life and some to disgrace and everlasting shame."[134] But we also proclaim *in Jesus* the resurrection from the dead, and believe that God will judge the world by Jesus, whom he raised from the grave.[135] People from any nation and class who repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus may share in this glorious hope of resurrection life.

2.5. Discussion

Seneca: Both of you seem quite concerned with divine justice and vindication in the afterlife. Dwelling on future realities—which I consider to be uncertain speculations—only distracts one from living fully in the present.[136] Present sufferings are an opportunity to learn virtue and unlearn vice.[137] Does not the wrongdoer punish himself? Who suffers more than one sentenced to a life of regret?[138]

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[127] Acts 9:15–16; 26:16.
[128] 9:13–17, 20–30; cf. ch. 5 §3.3.3; 3.5.
[129] On Luke's periodic use of the first person plural, see ch. 5 §1.1.
[130] Acts 21:10–14; cf. ch. 6 §3.5.
[131] Acts 4:8–13, 29–31; 6:8–10; cf. Luke 12:11–12; Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 66.
[132] Acts 23:6, 8; 24:15; cf. 2 Macc 7:9, 14; 4Q521 f7; *m. Ber*. 5:2. For a fuller survey of resurrection in Judaism, see Wright, *Resurrection*, 146–206.
[133] Ps 96:13 [95:13 LXX].
[134] Own translation of Dan 12:2 Theodotion.
[135] Acts 4:2; 10:42; 17:31.
[136] *Ep.* 5.8–9; *Vit. beat.* 26.4; *Brev.* 10.2–6.
[137] *Ep.* 50.7; 59.9–11.
[138] *Ira* 2.30.2; 3.26.2.

Auctor: Seneca, I agree that virtue is most clearly shown amidst suffering, as reason exerts its mastery over the passions.[139] But this world is fraught with injustice and evil, and a belief in Divine Justice does not distract from enduring present suffering but provides powerful motivation for so doing. Those who dishonor God and mistreat Israel will be duly punished, and those who live devoutly according to the Law will be rewarded, just as he has promised in the Law and the Prophets.[140]

Luke, I affirm that devout reason can have mastery over enmity.[141] But it is astonishing that you suggest loving and praying for one's persecutors. The brothers tortured by Antiochus did not retaliate but rightly called for divine wrath against the tyrant.[142] Did not Moses write, "Be glad … for he will avenge the blood of his sons and take revenge and repay the enemies with a sentence, and he will repay those who hate, and the Lord shall cleanse the land of his people."[143]

Luke: God has fixed a day when he will judge the world in righteousness.[144] But consider how kind God is even to the evil and ungrateful![145] The Lord is "merciful and gracious," and he has remembered his mercy by sending his own Son Jesus.[146] His unjust suffering and death, foretold by the Law and the Prophets, has made possible forgiveness of sins and justification for all who repent and believe.[147] Auctor, you argued that the nine faithful Israelites who died under Antiochus cleansed the land, appeased divine wrath, and enabled God to be merciful again to Israel.[148] But Jesus' vicarious death goes further, since his blood has initiated the New Covenant, which Jeremiah foretold, and has purchased God's assembly (ἐκκλησία).[149] Jesus' resurrection and heavenly exaltation prove that he is Lord of all—over Israel, Samaria, and even Rome.[150]

Seneca: I still find your insistence on resurrection dubious. The very advantage of death is that one's immortal soul is finally liberated from the body's

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[139] 4 Macc 11:12; 17:12, 23.
[140] 18:10–24.
[141] 2:14.
[142] 9:9, 32; 10:10–11, 21; 12:18.
[143] Deut 32:43 NETS.
[144] Acts 17:31.
[145] Luke 6:36. Cf. John Piper, *"Love your Enemies": Jesus' Love Command in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Early Christian Paraenesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 168–70.
[146] 1:54; cf. Exod 34:6.
[147] Luke 24:46–47; Acts 3:18–19; 13:38–39.
[148] 4 Macc 6:28–29; 17:21–22.
[149] Jer 31:31–34 [38:31–34 LXX]; Luke 22:20; Acts 20:28.
[150] Acts 1:8; 10:36.

chain, never to suffer again.[151] As Plato says, "Death is the separation of the soul from the body."[152]

Luke: This is certainly a genuine difference in our respective outlooks, my friend, and we appeal to different authorities. I believe that the Scriptures are God's words communicated by the Holy Spirit through the prophets.[153] They bear witness to these recent events of which I speak, the suffering and resurrection of God's anointed servant Jesus, and the proclamation of forgiveness in his name to all the nations.[154] We Christians share Israel's hope in a future resurrection, which will bring suffering, sickness, evil, and death to an end.[155] God will one day restore everything in creation to its right state and will usher in the fullness his kingdom.[156] By sending his Son to suffer, die and rise again, God has begun to set things right again. This is the message that we Christians boldly proclaim—and suffer for, if necessary—by the promised Holy Spirit who has been given to those who obey God.[157]

Auctor: Does not Ezekiel prophesy, "I will give my spirit in you and will make you walk in my statutes, and you shall live upon the land I gave your fathers?"[158] Why do so many in Israel forsake the Law and compromise our heritage, if indeed God has poured out his Spirit? And if you are correct that the Messiah has come, why does Rome still oppress Israel? Why do God's enemies prosper while the righteous suffer?

Seneca: I doubt Caesar Nero would take kindly to being referred to as an enemy of the gods! Surely the state needs a head, which will promote Roman *pax* and the great prosperity of a mighty people.[159] You should not be ungrateful for such benefits, but rather should thank the gods and pray Caesar to rule with mercy and discretion.

You debate whether god has given people his spirit to do right and understand his ways. But god is near us—he is within us![160] I believe that a sacred spirit, a spark of divinity, dwells within every person to offer us a nearer understanding of divine

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[151] *Ep.* 65.16, 21–22; for discussion, see Inwood, *Letters*, 153–55.
[152] *Phaed.* 64c LCL; cf. Seneca, *Marc.* 23.2.
[153] Luke 1:70; Acts 1:16; 4:25.
[154] Luke 24:44–47; Acts 3:18; 4:26–28.
[155] Acts 23:6; 28:20; cf. 2:24–28.
[156] Acts 3:21; cf. Luke 11:2; Acts 1:6.
[157] Acts 4.13; 5:32; cf. Luke 12:11–12.
[158] Ezek 36:27–28 LXX.
[159] *Clem.* 1.4.2–3.
[160] *Ep.* 41.1.

things, and to help us rise above Fortune's uncertainties and the body's fickleness.[161] The gods have given us all the resources we need to live according to Nature.[162]

Luke: It is sometimes alleged that Christians act against Caesar's decrees, on the one hand, and the Law of Moses, on the other hand. But this is not the case.[163] We hold that Satan's power and sin's darkness are the real problem, not Roman rule.[164] The crucified and risen Jesus has been exalted as πάντων κύριος, and he brings light to those in darkness and good news of peace.[165] We do not arm for revolution but proclaim this message of σωτηρία to everyone. Gentiles and Jews, great and small, are invited to join the ἐκκλησία of Christ-followers, who turn to God, perform deeds worthy of repentance, and suffer various hardships while awaiting the fullness of God's kingdom.[166]

Seneca: This has been quite an intriguing conversation today, and I should now be going. Before we leave, permit me to summarize your views concerning *de natura patientiae*. Auctor, you have explained the suffering of your own people as divine chastisement for disobeying legislation given by Moses, but you also argued that this Law is most reasonable and those such as your exemplars who devoutly study and practice this Law may master both pain and pleasure. On another occasion, perhaps we could hear your perspective about sickness and calamities that come upon all humanity.

Auctor: Yes Seneca, you have fairly summarized my view, though I would add that Israel's salvation from Antiochus' tyranny and divine judgment came through the devout suffering of the nine Jewish exemplars.

Seneca: Luke, you affirm the divine origin of the Law as does Auctor, but you emphasize that the suffering and resurrection of Jesus—whom you claim is the son of God and Lord—brings salvation for all humanity from sin and ultimately suffering as well.

Luke: That is correct. Seneca, you emphasize that one suffering from illness, persecution, or calamity should view his or her circumstances as not inherently good or evil but as an opportunity to learn and display virtue. By demonstrating virtue in and through suffering, one may become an enduring example for others and in some

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[161] 41.2–5.
[162] *Ep.* 41.8–10; *Vit. beat.* 3.3.
[163] Acts 6:13–14; 17:7; 21:21; 25:8; 28:17.
[164] 26:18.
[165] Acts 10:36; 26:23; cf. Luke 1:79; 2:14; Rowe, *World*, 103–16.
[166] Acts 26:20–23; cf. 14:22.

way surpasses the virtue of the gods, who are good by nature and are exempt from suffering.

Seneca: Thank you Luke. May I suggest that we convene again to read and discuss some of our writings? You would be welcome to come to my home—I am not sure how my old, weak body will travel. Perhaps you should begin to call me *Senectus*![167]

Auctor: Thank you for the invitation, Seneca. Yes, I would welcome another meeting. You have both given me much to think about.

Luke: I agree. Thank you both for coming, and I look forward to seeing you again, if God wills.

All: See you again. Farewell. Ἔρρωσθε, *Valete.*

3. Postscript

Every worldview must account for suffering in this world. Is suffering evil or indifferent? Is it random—one of Fortune's blows—or does suffering serve some purpose, determined by God, Fate, or Nature? Why do human beings suffer and for how long? As we have seen, suffering was an important and unavoidable subject in the first century and generated various responses. We have focused on the writings of three significant authors from three different groups, and we have seen that the issue of suffering directly relates to each author's theology, anthropology, and eschatology, and of course to the practical expression of their worldviews. In this postscript, we will first summarize key symbols that express our authors' worldviews, then compare and contrast their views of suffering, and finally suggest some further lines of research that emerge from this study.

3.1. Symbols and Worldview

Let us briefly consider some of the defining *symbols* that characterize these authors' worldviews. First, it has been evident throughout this study that different *authorities* govern their respective worldviews. Seneca's foundational authority is the divine gift of human reason, aided by philosophy.[168] For Auctor, the God-given Torah reveals the natural Law, leads to true wisdom and virtue, and enables adherents to overcome the passions through devout reason.[169] Luke also appeals to "what is written," but focuses on Scripture's *fulfillment* in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and the

[167] i.e. "Old Age"; cf. *Ep.* 12.1; 67.2.
[168] 16.3; 41.7–9; 92.1–2; cf. ch. 2 §3.2.
[169] 4 Macc 2:21–23; 5:16–24; cf. deSilva, *Guides*, 134.

universal proclamation of forgiveness in Jesus' name by his Spirit-empowered witnesses.[170] In Luke's view, authoritative guidance for God's people comes no longer from the Mosaic Law but from the exalted Lord Jesus and his apostles' teaching.[171]

For our authors and the groups they represent (Roman Stoicism, Hellenistic Judaism, and nascent Christianity), different symbols mark one's *initiation* into their distinctive way of being in the world: philosophical study for Seneca,[172] circumcision for Auctor,[173] and baptism for Luke.[174] Seneca's philosophical "group" or "sect" is the most inclusive and fluid, open to any who would give themselves to philosophy,[175] though his social class as a wealthy, élite Roman senator and "friend" of the emperor is the most exclusive (and dangerous).[176] Conversely, Auctor represents an exclusive, minority group defined by Jewish ethnicity, traditional practice of Torah (including circumcision and kosher observance), and geographic locale (the land of Palestine).[177] Their group identity is *maintained* by strict devotion to Torah for Auctor, Eucharist and mission for Luke, and philosophical study for Seneca.

Each author looks to different exemplars, which provide *salvation* and *model* an exemplary way of being: Marcus Cato for Seneca, Eleazar and the other martyrs for Auctor, and the Lord Jesus for Luke. These exemplars in some sense supplement or even supersede symbolic rituals common for these authors' respective heritages. Both Auctor and Luke (for different reasons) view the Jerusalem Temple as inadequate in some way as the locus of salvation and worship. The martyrs' sacrificial death atones for Israel's sin and cleanses the land when the Temple is rendered inoperative.[178] Luke's attitude toward the Temple is most clearly seen in the speech of Stephen, who views his accusers as idolators and the Temple "made with hands" as superseded by the exalted Lord Jesus, who possesses universal authority and

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[170] Luke 24:44–49; Acts 13:29, 33.
[171] Thompson, *Acts*, 175–76. Cf. Acts 2:36, 42.
[172] *Ep.* 72.3–4; 78.3–4. Veyne writes, "Fiery with the ethical zeal Attalos had instilled in him, as a youth Seneca underwent a conversion to philosophy as a quasi-religion." *Seneca*, 4.
[173] 4 Macc 4:25; cf. Gen 17:10.
[174] Acts 2:38, 41.
[175] See especially *Ep.* 44. On "sect," see Veyne, *Seneca*, 5.
[176] Cf. ch. 1 §1. Tacitus records Seneca saying to Nero, "Even so you have surrounded me with enormous influence, and wealth beyond measure, so much so that I often inwardly wonder, 'Am I, born of an equestrian father in the provinces, actually numbered among the leaders of the state?'" (*Annals* 14.53 OWC).
[177] Cf. Wright, *NTPG*, 224.
[178] 4 Macc 4:20; 17:21–22; cf. ch. 3 §2.2; deSilva, *Commentary*, 121–22.

exclusively provides access to God's presence.[179] Seneca critiques popular Roman temple worship and conceptions of piety and clarifies that true worship entails proper knowledge of god and obedience to the Law of Nature.[180] Cato's virtue, demonstrated supremely in his noble suffering and death, serves as a "living image" of virtue,[181] a more powerful inducement to imitation than the waxen *imago* left by a prominent Roman consul to their heirs.[182]

3.2. Who Is God and How Is God Involved in our Suffering?

Seneca, Auctor, and Luke all view suffering as governed by divine Providence and thus not random but purposeful in some way. Seneca acknowledges one Supreme Being (Jupiter) and employs various epithets for deity to emphasize different facets of the divine-human relationship. As a Stoic, he equates god with the material world's efficient cause and thus views everything, including suffering, as determined by "Fate" and divine will. Seneca's god does not and cannot suffer.

Auctor and Luke fundamentally agree that the creator God, who chose Abraham's family and bound himself in covenant to Israel, is the living and true God, who has revealed himself in Scripture. He is sovereign over his world, which has gone horribly wrong through sin, and he has promised to make the world right again, judging his enemies and redeeming Israel. For Auctor, the martyrs' pious deaths ended God's judgment against Israel for her leaders' breach of covenant, though Israel remains under Roman rule and awaits further divine intervention. However, Luke believes that God has *already* begun to fulfill his scriptural promises to set things right and save his people in decisive fashion through Jesus of Nazareth. Remarkably, Jesus the divine Son suffered a shameful death according to the divine plan, then was raised up by God and established as Lord and Messiah.

3.3. How Does Suffering Relate to our Nature, Task, and Purpose?

All three authors believe that human beings seeking to fulfill their God-given vocation in the world can and must endure suffering. In Seneca's worldview, a person's mind or soul (*animus*) is rational and of divine origin, though the mortal body is weak and vulnerable to evil and suffering. For Seneca, "we" are humanity, whose task is to live rationally according to Nature, in imitation of the gods. Virtue—

[179] Acts 7:47–56; Thompson, *Acts*, 169, 172.
[180] *Ep.* 95.47–50.
[181] *Tranq.* 16.1; *Ep.* 67.12–13.
[182] See §3.5; Mayer, "Exempla," 314–15.

the only true good—is not given but *learned*, often through the curriculum of adversity. Suffering serves the divine purpose of testing, hardening, and preparing people for divine service, and the wise who evince virtue through enduring suffering paradoxically outstrip the gods, who do not suffer.

Against Seneca, Auctor and Luke agree that divine revelation is determinative for proper understanding of humanity's identity and vocation. "We" for Auctor denotes Israel, God's chosen, covenant people, who have been given the divine Law to distinguish them from the nations and guide them in proper living and worship. Auctor holds that obedience to the divine Law—Torah, not Nature, as Seneca believes—is possible and yields true wisdom and virtue. At present, the righteous may suffer, while compromising Jews and ignorant, oppressive Gentiles may appear to be blessed. Nevertheless, faithfulness to Torah will result in eternal life with God and vindication over one's enemies.

For Luke, "we" are followers of the crucified Messiah and risen Lord Jesus, the inclusive people of God made up of Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich and poor. Believers suffer *like* Jesus and *for* his name. The risen Lord identifies with and stands by his disciples who proclaim the gospel boldly by the Spirit's power and encounter persecution from Gentiles and particularly from Jews. Such persecution legitimates them as God's authentic, Spirit-led witnesses, in the line of Jesus and God's true prophets who were rejected by Israel. Following Jesus demands daily "cross-bearing," and believers must suffer now before entering future kingdom glory.

3.4. How Does Suffering Clarify the World's Basic Problem?

Our ancient authors agree that people's ignorance, sin, or vice—*not* suffering—is the fundamental problem, though they disagree about its relationship to suffering. In Seneca's worldview, sin is false thinking and slavery to vice, which is endemic to human society. Hardships are not evil but *indifferent* to one's happiness and well-being. Rather, suffering is inevitable in this world and should be viewed as an opportunity to demonstrate virtue, the only good.

For Luke, God's kingdom has been inaugurated and Jesus sits (and stands) enthroned as heavenly king, yet suffering and persecution persist until God fully restores his world. All people—Jews and Gentiles—need to repent of sin and be baptized in Jesus' name (2:38; 16:31). The proclamation of Jesus as suffering and exalted κύριος fundamentally challenges both Jewish and Gentile worldviews and

prompts persecution from unbelievers who seek to maintain their positions, practices, and allegiances.

Fourth Maccabees explains Israel's suffering under a Gentile tyrant as divine chastisement in response to grievous covenant violations by Israel's leaders. Israel's sin angered her divine Benefactor and rendered her ancestral homeland ritually unclean.

3.5. How Does Suffering Relate to the Solution for the World's Problem?

For Seneca, Auctor, and Luke, the solution to what is wrong—namely humanity's sin, which they define somewhat differently—is the example and achievement of an individual or individuals who have triumphed amidst suffering, as well as a new way of being in the world.

Seneca calls his readers to embrace philosophy, which brings salvation from false thinking and vice. Philosophy helps human beings confront their fears and endure sufferings with virtue. A Roman office holder would bequeath to his heirs an *imago*, a waxen representation of his features to be displayed prominently in the family home as a stimulus to imitation.[183] For Seneca, Marcus Cato serves as *virtutium viva imago* (*Tranq*. 16.1)[184] He and other exemplars offer encouragement and instruction to others seeking to embrace a life of philosophy and demonstrate virtue through suffering.

In 4 Maccabees, the nine martyrs suffer in obedience to the divine Law and thereby reverse Israel's plight brought about by her leaders' disobedience. The deaths of Eleazar, the seven brothers and their mother ransom Israel, move God from wrath to mercy, purify the land, and somehow expel the tyrant. Further, their endurance in Torah obedience through shocking torture provides a compelling model for Auctor's audience to follow as they face pressure to assimilate.

For Luke, divine salvation in Jesus' name is the comprehensive solution to humanity's rebellion and unbelief. In the Lord's Supper ritual, the church memorializes Jesus' vicarious death, which initiates the promised New Covenant that includes the eschatological forgiveness of sins. Believers boldly proclaim the gospel in the Spirit's power amidst opposition and constitute a new community of Jews and Gentiles committed to following Jesus, the suffering Messiah and exalted Lord.

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[183] Ibid; cf. Flower, *Masks*, 270–77.
[184] Cf. ch. 2 §1.1.

3.6. How Does Present Suffering Relate to our Expectations for the Future?

This final question concerning eschatological expectation is far from an afterthought, since one's *future* hopes are bound to a certain conception of God and of history and directly motivate *present* action. *In nuce*, Seneca advocates a non-eschatological *present* focus in suffering, Auctor emphasizes the *future* hope of divine justice as well as the martyrs' *present* vindication, and Luke stresses that God's kingdom and blessings have been *inaugurated* through Jesus' resurrection and exaltation and await a *future consummation* at his return.

According to Seneca, suffering marks all of life, though only this life. Death is humanity's foremost fear yet is also the gateway to freedom from suffering, either in peaceful non-existence or more likely in the soul's beatific afterlife. Seneca eschews notions of future divine judgment and recommends neither fear nor hope, but living fully in the present.

In 4 Maccabees, the martyrs' endurance in Torah observance even under torture is motivated by their hope of eternal heavenly reward and everlasting punishment for their persecutors. Auctor stresses the present vindication of the martyrs and punishment of the tyrant, in that the land is purified, the tyrant is overcome, and the martyrs enjoy immortal life in God's presence.

In Luke's worldview, the resurrection and exaltation of king Jesus and outpouring of the promised Spirit have ushered in the prophesied "last days." The focus is decidedly on the present Spirit-empowered mission to Israel and the world that Jesus has given his witnesses, who announce Jesus as Lord, Messiah, and exclusive Savior. Jesus will return to consummate his kingdom, restore all things, and mediate divine justice, but until then Jesus' witnesses continue to endure suffering and persecution as Jesus did. Jesus' resurrection is a pledge of his future return as judge and of believers' resurrection.

3.7. Contribution to Scholarship

This thesis aims to make an original contribution to knowledge in several ways. First, this is to date the only extended comparison of the writings of Seneca, Luke, and 4 Maccabees. We observed that Acts 17:17–18 invites such a comparison, as Luke's hero Paul reasons with Hellenistic Jews in the synagogue and with others in the marketplace, including Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. While Seneca and 4 Maccabees have regularly been examined alongside Paul, no substantial comparisons with Acts have been undertaken previously. The value and importance of studying

early Christianity alongside Roman Stoicism and Hellenistic Judaism is well known, but this thesis has demonstrated the value of a focused exegetical and synthesized comparison of a select few authors.[185] The "ancient conversation" about suffering in ch. 7 offers a fresh approach to comparative studies of ancient authors, one inspired by an ancient model (Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*).

Second, building on Wright's work,[186] this study employed worldview questions as a heuristic tool for comparing these authors' conceptions of God, humanity, the world's plight and solution, and future hope. We have not sought to demonstrate or refute Luke's dependence on Jewish or Greco-Roman authors and thought, but rather to compare three roughly contemporary authors at the worldview level. This thesis has illustrated that the use of worldview questions is *one* fruitful method for comparing the theology and practice of different authors and groups, which could be profitably utilized and adapted to examine other writers.

Third, this study contributes to the important and often neglected theme of suffering in Luke-Acts, 4 Maccabees, and Seneca's writings. This is the first *systematic* study of suffering in Seneca's thought[187] and in 4 Maccabees, though scholars have previously considered certain *aspects* of suffering in 4 Maccabees, such as martyrdom, atonement, and the martyrs' hope after death.[188] The theme of suffering in Acts has been given some attention, notably in the monographs by Cunningham and Mittelstadt.[189] Our study builds upon these contributions and advances the discussion in several ways. First, while most previous studies have *assumed* a definition of suffering and persecution, we have clearly defined suffering as *the individual or group experience of bearing physical, psychological, economic, and/or social pain, distress or loss*, and have tested and illustrated this definition with examples from the writings of Seneca, Auctor, and Luke. Recent Lukan studies have examined the literary motif of suffering or persecution[190] or considered a particular facet of suffering, such as Paul's imprisonment.[191] However, our work has focused uniquely on suffering's function in Luke's *worldview* and compared Luke with

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[185] In this regard, see recently Niko Huttunen, *Paul and Epictetus on Law: A Comparison* (London: T&T Clark, 2009).
[186] Esp. Wright, *NTPG*, chs. 3, 5, 8, 12.
[187] Previous studies include Edwards, "Suffering," 252–68; Motto and Clark, "Paradox," 65–86; Dionigi, "La patientia," 413–29. Cf. Introduction §2.1.
[188] See especially the various studies by van Henten and deSilva; cf. Introduction §2.2.
[189] Cunningham, *Tribulations*; Mittelstadt, *Spirit*. Cf. Introduction §2.3.
[190] Cf. Cunningham, *Tribulations*; Mittelstadt, *Spirit*.
[191] Cf. Rapske, *Paul*; Skinner, *Locating*.

prominent representatives of Stoicism and Hellenistic Judaism, two of the most significant groups with which early Christian mission was engaged.

3.8. Contemporary Relevance

This "ancient conversation" between first-century Roman, Jewish, and Christian authors has probed the nature and purpose of suffering and various intellectual and practical responses. But this study may shed fresh light on present discussions and debates about suffering in our modern pluralistic world.

First, it is striking that each of these authors *expects* and *accepts* suffering as a present reality governed by God's sovereign purposes, which they define variously. Their views challenge the popular worldviews of many in the developed world who are surprised by suffering and often respond by questioning God's goodness or power, regardless of their previous faith commitments.

Further, Jesus' suffering and crucifixion remain a preeminent theological objection from Jews and Muslims to the claims of Christianity.[192] The twentieth century witnessed the unfathomable atrocities of the Jewish Holocaust, as well as more Christian martyrdoms than in the previous nineteen centuries combined by some estimates.[193] From university lecture halls to coffee houses, academics and amateurs continue to pose, more or less, Lucilius' question to Seneca: why, if Providence rules the world, do many evils fall upon good people?[194] And those suffering from persecution, marginalization, and chronic illness continue to cry out, "Lord, look upon their threats!" or "How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever?"[195]

The ancient writings of Seneca, 4 Maccabees, and Luke remain strikingly relevant for the present generation's deep questions concerning human suffering. This author finds Luke's account of suffering most compelling. Jesus embraced his Father's dark will of suffering and died a painful, shameful death for the sake of others, then God raised him up and exalted him as Lord and Messiah.[196] This Jesus *rescues* his people, *responds* to prayer, and *empowers* and *identifies with* his suffering witnesses who proclaim to the nations that salvation and forgiveness of sins are

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[192] See for example Samuel M. Zwemer, *Islam and the Cross: Selections from "the Apostle to Islam"* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2002); Gregory A. Barker, ed., *Jesus in the World's Faiths* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2005).
[193] For statistics and analysis, see David B. Barrett et al., *World Christian Trends, AD 30–AD 2200: Interpreting the Annual Christian Megacensus* (Pasadena: William Carey, 2001), 228–37, esp. 229.
[194] *Prov.* 1.1.
[195] Acts 4:29; Ps 89:46.
[196] Luke 9:22; 22:19–20; 43; Acts 2:23–24, 36.

available in Jesus' name alone.[197] Here we see God not *extra patientiam* as Seneca argues,[198] but one who *through suffering* acts decisively to set the world of sin and suffering right again.

[197] Luke 24:46–47; Acts 4:10–12; 7:55–60; 9:4–5; 18:9–10; 26:17.
[198] *Prov.* 6.6.

Appendix 1: Text Critical Discussion of Luke 22:19–20, 22:43–44, and 23:34

Luke 22:19–20

The textual problem of Luke 22:19b–20 is "the most notorious" in the entire Gospel,[1] as well as the most theologically significant.[2] The "longer text" in verses 19b–20 (τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον ... ἐκχυννόμενον) is extant in nearly all Greek manuscripts and most ancient versions and writers and is preferred by NA26–28 and most modern translations.[3] The "shorter text" ending with τὸ σῶμά μου in verse 19a is read by Codex Bezae (D) and a few Latin and Syriac manuscripts and preferred by WH, UBS1–2 and the RSV. Ehrman makes two primary arguments in favor of this shorter reading. First he claims, "There is simply no plausible way to explain the Western text if it is not original."[4] Second, he suggests that the omitted reference to Jesus' vicarious death in this reading fits well with Luke's (alleged) aversion to an "atonement" theology.[5]

These arguments are not decisive enough to overrule the preponderance of manuscript support in favor of the "longer text."[6] First, only *part* of the Western tradition supports the shorter reading, with but one Greek manuscript.[7] Second, the contention that Luke lacks an atonement theology does not sufficiently account for Acts 20:28 or the Luke's larger narrative presentation of the achievement of Jesus' death.[8] In this case subjective judgments regarding intrinsic probabilities should not trump the impressive weight of external evidence.

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[1] Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1387.
[2] Ehrman, "Cup," 156. For a summary of all six textual variations, see Metzger, *Commentary*, 149.
[3] For further support for the longer reading, see the arguments in Green, *Death*, 35–42; Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1041; Walton, *Leadership*, 137–39.
[4] Ehrman, "Cup," 159. Cf. B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek* (New York: Harper, 1882), Appendix, 63–64.
[5] Ehrman, "Cup," 159–67; cf. John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 432–36.
[6] Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, 699.
[7] Walton, *Leadership*, 138.
[8] Cf. ch. 5 §5.2; Moessner, "Suffering," 202–227; Peterson, "Atonement," 56–71; Kimbell, "Atonement."

The existence of the abbreviated Lord's Supper text in some Western manuscripts has been explained in at least five ways. (1) This reading may be due to the idiosyncrasies of one scribe.[9] According to the NA28 apparatus, Bezae offers readings unattested by other early Greek manuscripts at Luke 22:16, 24, 26–27, 28, 30, 32, 34, 37, 38, 40, 46, 48, 49, 53), which raises serious doubts concerning its reliability as a witness to the original text of verses 17–20. (2) Alternatively, the shorter reading could have arisen due to "some scribal accident or misunderstanding" stemming from the unusual order of cup-bread-cup in the longer text.[10] (3) Further, Jeremias argues that the "shorter reading" represents "the abbreviation of a liturgical text" in order to avoid misunderstanding by outsiders.[11] (4) Billings modifies this view by suggesting that the "shorter reading" arose in the context of severe localized persecution against Christians "so as to safeguard the Christian communities for whom the texts were produced from further allegations of *flagitia*."[12] (5) Kimbell has recently suggested that a scribe may have omitted 19b–20 "to remove a problematic reference to Jesus' participation in the meal with his disciples."[13] Of these possibilities, (1) and (2) seem to be the most plausible and straightforward explanations for the intentional or unintentional scribal deletion of 22:19b–20, which are judged to be original to Luke's Gospel.

Luke 22:43–44

The substantial textual problem in Luke 22:43–44 is important for assessing Luke's presentation of Jesus' suffering. If original, these verses offer a striking portrayal of Jesus' suffering in Gethsemane: an angel strengthens (ἐνισχύων) Jesus, he prays ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ, and his sweat becomes like drops of blood. Both the longer and shorter readings have strong manuscript support. Verses 43–44 are *included* in important uncials (ℵ*,2 D L Θ Ψ 0171) and the writings of early church fathers (Justin, *Dial.* 103; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.22; 4.35).[14] The verses are *omitted* by important witnesses (𝔓^{75}

[9] I. Howard Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 38.
[10] Metzger, *Commentary*, 150. Henry Chadwick argues that the Evangelist, not the scribe, misunderstood Jesus' saying in 22:15 regarding eating the Passover and unnecessarily inserted the bread saying in 22:19a, which "initiated a long development of correction and expansion." "The Shorter Text of Luke 22:15-20," *HTR* 50 (1957): 249–258, citing 258.
[11] Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Revised ed; trans. Norman Perrin; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 158.
[12] Bradly S. Billings, "The Disputed Words in the Lukan Institution Narrative (Luke 22:19b-20): A Sociological Answer to a Textual Problem," *JBL* 125 (2006): 507–526, citing 525.
[13] Kimbell, "Atonement," 28.
[14] Most English translations and many commentators favor the inclusion. Cf. ESV, KJV, NASB, NET, NIV, NJB, NRSV. Cf. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994, 1996), 2:1763–64;

א[1] A B N T W),[15] early versions, (Syriac [sy[s]]), and Marcion.[16] Some later manuscripts (Δ^c Π^c 892[c] 1079) mark these verses with asterisks or obelisks, and they are interpolated after Matthew 26:39 by Family 13.[17]

The strongest arguments for viewing verses 43–44 as secondary are threefold. (1) The shorter reading enjoys diverse and early manuscript support, most notably $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$.[18] (2) The emotional portrayal of Jesus is considered uncharacteristic for Luke.[19] (3) These verses are formally intrusive and break a clear chiasmus in 22:39–42, 45–46.[20]

However, there are weighty arguments for the authenticity of 22:43–44. (1) Many important early and diverse witnesses include these verses (א*,[2] D L Θ Ψ 0171; Justin, *Dial*. 103; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.22; 4.35), which lack a Synoptic parallel. (2) Against Ehrman and Plunkett, the *inclusion* of verses 43–44 creates a clear chiastic structure:[21]

a admonition to pray (προσεύχεσθε μὴ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς πειρασμόν, 22:40b)
b withdraws from disciples to pray (22:41a)
c kneels to pray (22:41b)
d prays (προσηύχετο, 22:41c–42)
e an angel appears, strengthening him (22:43)
d′ prays more earnestly (ἐκτενέστερον προσηύχετο, 22:44)
c′ rises from prayer (22:45a)
b′ returns to the disciples (22:45b)
a′ admonition to pray (προσεύχεσθε, ἵνα μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς πειρασμόν, 22:46)

(3) This text is consistent with Lukan style, particularly ὤφθη ἄγγελος (Acts 1:11; 7:30), ἀπ᾽ οὐρανοῦ (Luke 17:29; 21:11), and ὡσεί (15 of 21 NT usages in Luke–

Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: from Gethsemane to the Grave: a Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1:180–86; Green, *Death*, 56–57; Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Passion according to Luke: A Redaction Study of Luke's Soteriology* (New York: Paulist, 1985), 55–57; Marshall, *Gospel*, 831–32 (with hesitation); Christopher M. Tuckett, "The 'Agony' in the Garden and Luke's Gospel," in *New Testament Textual Criticism and Exegesis: FS J. Delobel* (ed. Adelbert Denaux; Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 131–44.

[15] On the apparent omission of Luke 22:42–45a in $\mathfrak{P}^{69}$, see Claire Clivaz, "The Angel and the Sweat like "Drops of Blood" (Lk 22:43-44): P69 and *f*13," *HTR* 98 (2005): 419–440, 425–32.

[16] The verses are considered secondary by WH, NA[27], RSV. Cf. Bart D. Ehrman and Mark A. Plunkett, "The Angel and the Agony: The Textual Problem of Luke 22:43-44," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 401–416; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1443–44; Metzger, *Commentary*, 151; Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1080–81.

[17] Clivaz argues that *f*13 interpolates Luke 23:43–44 in Matthew's Gospel for liturgical usage, while clearly marking this passage as Lukan. "Angel," 432–38.

[18] Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1443–44.

[19] Ehrman and Plunkett, "Angel," 411, 416; Sterling, "*Mors*," 396.

[20] Ehrman and Plunkett, "Angel," 412–16.

[21] For a similar proposals, see Bock, *Luke*, 2:1755; François Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (4 vols.; Zürich: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989–2009), 4:295.

Acts).[22] (4) Finally, the portrait of Jesus receiving angelic help and being in agony over his approaching fate may have been doctrinally offensive to some early scribes.[23] While the balance of evidence does not permit certainty on this decision, it seems most likely that verses 43–44 were original to Luke's Gospel but intentionally omitted by copyists at an early date for doctrinal reasons.

Luke 23:34

The authenticity of Jesus' first prayer from the cross in 23:34 is significantly debated. Following WH, NA28 places the first part of the verse (ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἔλεγεν· πάτερ, ἄφες αὐτοῖς, οὐ γὰρ οἴδασιν τί ποιοῦσιν) in double brackets, as does the NRSV. While there is strong external evidence for the shorter reading (esp. 𝔓[75] א[1] B D* W Θ 070), there is early and diverse manuscript support for the inclusion of Jesus' prayer as well (esp. א*,[2] [A] C D[2] L Ψ).[24] The following arguments suggest that the longer reading is more likely original. (1) It is easier to explain the verse's omission than its later insertion, as Jesus' prayer for forgiveness may have appeared to some irreconcilable with the word of judgment in 22:29–31.[25] (2) Stephen's prayer in Acts 7:60 recalls Jesus' in Luke 23:43, one of many parallels between their deaths.[26] (3) The prayer is consistent with Luke's style and emphases.[27] (4) The structural pattern of Luke's crucifixion narrative points to the prayer's authenticity, since each of the main sections includes a dominical saying (23:28–31, 43, 46).[28] (5) There is no clear reason why a scribe would introduce the saying here, since the shorter reading more closely parallels Matthew and Mark. We thus concur with Green that "the force of the internal evidence is inescapable" in favor of the originality of Jesus' prayer for forgiveness.[29]

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[22] For example, ὤφθη ἄγγελος (Acts 1:11; 7:30), ἀπ᾽ οὐρανοῦ (Luke 17:29; 21:11), and ὡσεί (15 of 21 NT usages in Luke–Acts). Cf. Gerhard Schneider, "Engel und Blutschweiss (Lk 22,43-44): Redaktionsgeschichte im Dienste der Textkritik," *BZ* 20 (1976): 112–116, 57; Green, *Death*, 57.
[23] This explanation goes back at least to the fourth century (Epiphanius, *Ancoratus* 31.4–5), according to Ehrman and Plunkett, "Angel," 404–5.
[24] The textual evidence is "evenly divided," according to Green, *Death*, 91. The UBS committee's decision to give the omission an A rating is very questionable, particularly since the strong textual evidence in favor of the inclusion is not discussed in Metzger, *Commentary*, 150.
[25] Cf. Bock, *Luke*, 2:1867–68.
[26] Cf. J. Delobel, "Luke 23,34a: A Perpetual Text-Critical Crux?," in *Sayings of Jesus: Canonical and Non-canonical: FS T. Baarda* (ed. William L. Petersen, et al.; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 25–36, esp. 34–36.
[27] E.g. πάτερ (10:21; 11:2; 22:42; 23:46): ἄφες … γάρ (11:4); the ignorance motif (Acts 3:17; 13:27). Cf. Brown, *Death*, 2:976.
[28] Marshall, *Gospel*, 868; Talbert, "Martyrdom," 109 n. 4.
[29] Green, *Death*, 92.

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