

Is the Church Exclusive? Comparing the Modern and Post-modern Views of the Church and the Concept of Church in 1 Peter 2:9

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Abstract

The shift in the world culture has urged the church to revisit its understanding of its role in society. One of the important issues in the current debate in ecclesiology is about the exclusivity of the church. Some scholars hold the idea of a multicultural church based on the historical overview of the development of the idea of a church over the last couple of hundreds of years. Some scholars are trying to come with a good balance between the relevance and the identity of the church when its authority is being challenged. This leads to the idea that the church needs to be exclusive in some degree to preserve its identity to engage inclusively with the world. On the other hand, some are of their opinion that the idea of an exclusive church is not relevant anymore. Besides looking at the socio-anthropology perspective, this study seeks to understand the concept of the church from Peter's perspective, as it is highlighted in his literary feature. It will discuss the contemporary views about the church and compare them to Peter's ecclesiology from literary analysis.

Keywords: *exclusivity of the church, socio-anthropology, Peter's ecclesiology*

Introduction: The Modern Church and the Question of Exclusivism

The discussion about the nature and the role of the church has become significant as the world is facing the fast-growing of secularism and postmodernism. Some ecclesiologists think that the church is now in survival mode, searching for a better shape in the future to be more 'user-friendly.' Some others believe that theology should guide the necessary change that is needed. Some others believe that all we need is just a new form for the old theology. The last approach is often called ecclesial reconstruction. The reconstruction includes the change in church life and ministry. This approach tries to accommodate sociological pressure without concern so much with the clarity and confidence of the message of the church with its exclusiveness. This view sees the challenge of faith in the society as an option that has been becoming more and more not popular. It is criticizing the modern attitude of the church that only accepts those with clear commitment.¹

Generally, scholars often divide the church relationship, the relationship between denomination within the church and the relationship with other religions or non-religion entities into three categories: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. In short, exclusivists believe in the superiority of their own religion and deny the significance of other religions. Inclusivism is more tolerant. It still assumes the superiority of its own religion but somehow manages to find a way to accommodate the good things in other religions. Pluralism, on the other hand, considers all religions equal, therefore, reject any claim of superiority.

¹Mannion advocates new definition of the church in his book, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time* (United States: Liturgical Press: Made available through hoopla, 2017). 299.

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Gerard Mannion adds the term “neo-exclusivism” when he discusses the emerging view that is occurring among the Catholics. He believes exclusivist and neo-exclusivist are both underly a similar mentality.² Exclusivism was labeled as a tendency of being closed toward other Christians, other religions, and the world. Neo-exclusivist is then referring to the new type of exclusivism as a response to the new openness and affirmation of other Christians or the world. Mannion claims that whatever approach the church has, it is still considered exclusive if it operates in this has these mentalities: (1) top-down methodology, “from above,” (2) presumption of one’s own superiority, (3) negative judgment of the other, (4) one-sidedness, (5) lack of humility, (6) being out of touch with present-day realities, (7) defensiveness, (8) lack of appreciation of what is good in the modern world.³

Moreover, Dennis M. Doyle argues that both exclusivism and inclusivism are basically exclusive from the point of view of the pluralistic world. The Pluralists see both of them embracing the idea of superior toward others. Exclusivism in any form as a challenge to the unity and the mission of the church had become the reason for Dayton “Ecclesiology and Exclusion” conference in 2011. This conference also takes a look at the more practical exclusion that are occurring in the church, such as race, gender, immigration, ecumenism, and any marginalized group of people. Massingale, for example, highlights the global Catholicism belief system in which holiness “can be definitively mediated and unambiguously encountered only through white cultural products.”⁴

Williams concludes that the debate in ecclesiology finally will be between those who believe that the church will be more distinct to a small group of a remnant that really committed and make a clear separation with the world and with those who reject the idea of clear separation. For him, however, sociological evidence indicates that the church becomes more and more inclusive and blur in regard to the boundary between belief and unbelief and the concept of truth between those outsides and inside the church.⁵ John Austen Baker in “The Foolishness of God” argues that many Christian do not understand what they believe; that is why the preacher needs to always preach about it again and again.⁶ These facts support the idea that the church should be more open to all people and find some kind of shape that can accommodate more people in it. Williams says many even stay in the twilight zone, the border between the church and world, consistently without showing any preferable position.⁷

Dave Tomlinson, when discussing the phenomenon of the post-evangelical, mentions the reason for many people leaving the church. One of the most significant ones is that because they cannot ask a question about their faith in the church, for it is considered a doubt. At the same time, massive advancement in knowledge and technology has opened various alternatives to spirituality.⁸

Modernity tends to be exclusive in protecting the doctrine of the church when it comes to disagreement or ambiguity in society. Williams says:

“Faith operating at the level of existential commitment, personal experience, ritual and symbolic participation and moral praxis is intrinsically resistant to the imposition of an external dogmatic straitjacket.... Where a religious institution

²Dennis M. Doyle, Timothy J. Furry, and Pascal D. Bazzell, eds., *Ecclesiology and Exclusion: Boundaries of Being and Belonging in Postmodern Times* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2012), 8.

³Ibid., 9.

⁴Ibid., 133.

⁵John A. (John Anthony) Williams, “Ecclesial Reconstruction, Theological Conservation: The Strange Exclusion of Critical Theological Reflection from Popular Strategies for the Renewal of the Church in Britain,” *Ecclesiology* 11, no. 3 (2015): 300.

⁶John Austin Baker, *The Foolishness of God* (Atlanta: J. Knox, 1975), 43.

⁷Williams, *Ecclesial Reconstruction*, 300.

⁸Dave Tomlinson, *The Post Evangelical* (Rev. North American ed.; El Cajon, CA: Emergent YS/Zondervan, 2003), 45.

perceives a threat to its traditional patterns of authority and continuity, it appeals for theological unity as a bid to bolster its chances of survival in its present form.”⁹

Similarly, Ann Morisy argues that self-validating exclusivism in the church is the hindrance for people to considered church as a good option for pertaining reality. For many, the church’s life is like live in a puzzle. It is understandable only to some few people.¹⁰ She continues to argue that younger people have left the church because they cannot find themselves fit with the church description. At the same time, many alternative beliefs, spiritualities, therapies and theosophies have emerged to substitute the life that is full of pressures and puzzles brought by modernity.¹¹ Williams, therefore, argues that it would be better for the church to open itself to the sociological evidence that people diverse in belief and practice, that the church should accept this as an unavoidable reality.¹²

Furthermore, Williams proposes a model for the future church, namely, “traditions of praxis”, “traditions of mysticism”, and “traditions of deconstruction”. Traditions of praxis put emphasis on the same value shared by all faiths and nonreligious community to contribute something to the needy. Traditions of mysticism focus on spiritual formation as a result of continual discussion between orthodox faith and contemporary spirituality. Traditions of deconstruction are embracing the postmodern way of thinking that pushes decentered and anti-institutional in the practice of faith practice. He argues that these concepts can help Christians to still be distinctive but not exclusive at the same time.¹³

Williams continues that accessibility, simplicity and better presentation are not enough for the church to maintain a good life for all believer in this contemporary world. The church cannot just simply avoid questions as a solution. He believes the church leaders should be able to engage in the discussion and dealing with any spiritual alternative.¹⁴

Modernity with its traditional view of the church understands the church as the realization of the kingdom of God. This popular view finds its anchor from the Vatican II that the church is “initial budding forth of the Kingdom.” In this sense, the church has the authority as the source of truth add the same time relevant as “a *kenotic* community, a community of openness, self-giving, and solidarity in its various relationships with the world.”¹⁵ Osmer, concerns about the struggle of the church toward identity and relevance, argues:

“This is because missional formation is a matter of inviting a congregation to become open to the Spirit, to enter a dynamic and creative process in which the Spirit forms the congregation to be Christ-like and transforms its relationships in openness to the surrounding world. . .It is a matter of openness to the ‘new thing’ the Spirit is calling a congregation to do.”¹⁶

The rising concern regarding the church in its modernity is about the authority exercised in the church. The tendency in modern culture is that the leaders or scholars are dominance and tend to dictate things for all in church. This is such a big contrast with the current world culture that has been becoming more and more flexible and very much welcome individual creativity. The current culture urges a

⁹Williams, *Ecclesial Reconstruction*, 302.

¹⁰Ann Morisy, *Bothered and Bewildered: Enacting Hope in Troubled Times* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 48–49.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 57.

¹²Williams, “*Ecclesial Reconstruction*”, 303.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 304–5.

¹⁵Malan Nel, “Discipleship: Seeking the ‘Kingdom and His Righteousness,’” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 73, no. 4 (2017): 3, n.p. Online: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2332156322?accountid=42729>.

¹⁶Richard Robert Osmer, *The Teaching Ministry of Congregations* (1st ed.; Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 51.

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new type of church leadership that Stephan Joubert says, “complexity leadership” where the leaders are no longer a “leader.”¹⁷

Today’s culture seems to push the church to the early church leadership model where the leader is a servant that serves and welcomes anyone. Joubert argues that the church is objectively a divine reality that invites subjective people to be involved. On one hand he argues that the involvement needs repentance; therefore, metanoia cannot be avoided in the church mission.¹⁸ On the other hand, he believes the church is complex in its nature, it means there is no such only way of the transformational process but allowing personal divine experience.¹⁹

Joubert proposes a “reciprocal conception” that the church member as part of the society is shaping each other. He argues that it is even more relevant in the fluid world where people do not need some else to “fix” their lives. The problem for him is that modernity loves to be the producer, but the present world has created a consumer society where everybody has many options available to choose from.²⁰

This ecclesiological study is aimed to look at Peter’s concept of ecclesiology and its connection with contemporary socio-anthropology relevancy. This study will seek to answer questions about the nature and authority of the church in its mission and relationship with the society. It will discuss the contemporary views about it and will try to present some possible biblical approaches to the study of ecclesiology to bring some contribution to the discussion. This study is also intended to invite more discussion in study of ecclesiology.

Method

This study will be using a biblical theological approach. It will be descriptive in discussing the contemporary view of the nature of the church. This study also will examine the socio-anthropological perspective toward ecclesiology in addressing the contextualization issue. Moreover, this study will be using literary analysis to analyze Peter’s ecclesiology motif in 1 Peter 2:9. The literary analysis will be including discourse, grammar analysis and verbal aspect.

Discussion

Postmodernity and the Pluralistic Church

Postmodernity has brought new realization in the discussion about the church. Instead of becomes an enemy, many scholars see it as an opportunity for reformation. Mannion, one of the leading ecclesologists, advocates that postmodernity helps the church to be more engaged with the world. He believes that the dialogue with the multicultural world moves the church forward.²¹ For him, postmodernity urges the church as the manifestation of the love of God to be more real in daily life. He says, “The task for the institutional church is to bear witness in its daily operations and fulfillment of its mission to the God of love, the love God.”²²

Many contemporary scholars argue that Neo-exclusivist even inclusive church is not relevant in a postmodern era for some good reason. Friedrich Schweitzer is strongly pointing to the privatization of religion as a challenge for the young generation in postmodern

¹⁷S Joubert, “Not by Order, nor by Dialogue: The Metanoetic Presence of the Kingdom of God in a Fluid New World and Church,” *Acta Theologica* 33, no. 1 (2013): 117.

¹⁸Ibid., 122.

¹⁹Ibid., 125.

²⁰ Ibid., 127–29.

²¹Gerard Mannin, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time* (United States: Liturgical Press: Made available through hoopla, 2017), 24.

²²Ibid., 179.

culture.²³ Similarly, Joubert claims that pluralism is an unavoidable reality and that the identity of the “insider” and the “outsider” of the church has been becoming more and more blur. Therefore, open dialogues with no dogmatic presupposition are recommendable. He believes that we cannot use the term “insider” and “outsider” anymore in the discussion. Metanarrative way of communication that assumes the superiority of one faith does not respect diversity.²⁴

Lieven Boeve, when talking about multiplicity in the church, says that things “cannot be reduced to a single narrative nor subsumed within a particular totalizing perspective. Whatever we do to encompass otherness within a single narrative, it will always place itself beyond our grasp.”²⁵ In agreement with that, Kwiyani believes the gospel for the kingdom of nations and languages means all different nations, and languages may bring their flavor of culture to the kingdom of God. It means no room for the minority, that everyone can be listened.²⁶ He raises the question of the role of Israel and the other nations (gentiles), such as if every party should contribute to the kingdom of God. Kwiyani sees diversity as a gift. He argues that it is part of God’s plan for His people to be able to demonstrate the unselfish love. He is advocating the idea that there is no one superior model of Christianity arguing that in the past western countries tried to imposed conformity when evangelizing the world, but today the world evangelizes them back.²⁷

Kwiyani gives an example that the multicultural church has become a new normal in the UK., representing a similar phenomenon that is happening everywhere. He says the past western Christians might never think about this reality. Probably in their mind, the idea of church is like the idea of colonialism. He describes how global culture exposure has changed the idea of Christianity from Western Christianity to the multicultural church. In the past western missionary conform to their culture as a standard for Christianity whenever they go. Now we have all nation shape of Christianity. He believes every country has its own typical church, even typical sub-culture within the country with their own uniqueness.²⁸

Furthermore, he discusses how William Carey brought the idea of contextualization that was strange at that time when less than 10% of the Christian world live outside the West. However, today, it has become so much relevant and important for the church’s mission. One would never think that the Jewish who spread the gospel to the world has been becoming a minority in accepting Christianity. Similarly, the Western that spread the gospel in Asia and Africa now have become secular. Christianity once a Jewish sect and then become western religion and now the religion of the whole world. He concludes that this reality should be enough to urge the church today to evaluate their role in society to depart from being exclusive to be a church of the world.²⁹

Recently, church councils supported the active involvement of the lay members in any church business. For example, the Vatican council fathers propose the official priestly status for all baptized members. The hierarchy is that the whole believers placed on the top, emphasizing universal church over the differences.³⁰ Robert Mutiah says, “The general

²³Schweitzer Friedrich, *The 1998 Princeton Lectures on Youth, Church, and Culture Growing Up Postmodern: Imitating Christ in the Age of "Whatever"*, Institute for Youth Ministry (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1998), 73-5.

²⁴Joubert, “Not by Order, nor by Dialogue: The Metanoetic Presence of the Kingdom of God in a Fluid New World and Church,” 119–20.

²⁵L. Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context* (Louvain theological & pastoral monographs 30; Louvain; Dudley, MA: Peeters Press, 2003), 90–91.

²⁶Harvey C. Kwiyani, *Multicultural Kingdom: Ethnic Diversity, Mission and the Church* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2020), 1.

²⁷Ibid., 2–3.

²⁸Ibid., 10–12.

²⁹Ibid., 16–18.

³⁰Robert A Muthiah, *The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-First Century: Living Faithfully as the Whole People of God in a Postmodern Context* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 23–24.

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approach of Vatican I was to put first the infallibility of the teaching office and then to speak of the faith of the people as something that the people received passively from this office. But Vatican II set forth first the infallible nature of the faith of the whole people of God.”³¹

Mannion contributes so much to the ongoing discussion on the nature of the church that he indicates his intention to be involved in the “battle” of shaping the future ecclesiology.³² He indisputably assesses the debates on ecclesiology, especially the interpretation of the church among Catholics. Mannion provides support for postmodern involvement in future ecclesiology. He argues that the key for the church to not be radically exclusive and, on the other hand, not being trapped in extreme relativism is to develop the virtue ethics to become virtue ecclesiology. He believes the problem of modernity is in the moral philosophy that causes practical virtue loss. He argues that many of the claims of the church’s leaders are often less biblical and focusing too much on dictating theory that is far from reality.³³ The overemphasizing of the doctrinal theory often leads the church members to become suspicious with the simple acts of love.

Doyle summarizes that Mannion aims to construct an ecclesiology that is fitted with the postmodern culture that cut all the denominational boundary. It is not necessarily mean relativistic, neither does it foundationalist. Mannion is criticizing the Roman Catholic Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) as a neo-exclusivism approach. Nevertheless, he agrees with the CDF that “relativism” needs to be rejected as well as “dogmatism.” Mannion examines the ecclesiological virtue ethic of Stanley Hauerwas and concludes Hauerwas’s overall approach as another neo-exclusivism for describing the church as “Resident Aliens.” Mannion support Roger Haight to shape the trans-denominational approach of the church. Ultimately, Mannion invites the church to reject the claims of superiority to strive in reaching today’s community which is postmodern. For him, the calling for Christians appeared in these three things: “(1) remain faithful to their tradition, (2) become radically open to other traditions, and (3) practice a universal justice that includes all of humankind.”³⁴

Unsatisfactory Paradigm

The classic questions in this discussion are, why do we prefer to remain isolated and divided in our ecclesiology? Why do several churches/denominations use the same building for worship services but not worship together?³⁵ Following Roger Haight, Mannion emphasizes the unity that Christians share and minimizes the importance of differences. He needs Christians to feel at ease with their own traditions while affirming those of other Christians. However, the question is how one explains the conversion experience that changes life radically, and on the other hand, avoiding projecting one’s own experience on others? Mannion stresses the tension between the tradition and ultimate meaning or objectivity. The question to that is that does the unity is simply breaking the tradition barrier? Mannion’s point is a necessary and helpful corrective to naive perspectives on how specific beliefs and practices today unite and divide Christians. But to what extent should this issue be pursued?

Furthermore, the issue for most Christians about the possibility of salvation for others, which was most crucial in the past, no longer appears to be on the table in a serious way; that is, even among those who label as “exclusivist” lean in a somewhat universalist direction on this key matter. The problem with using “exclusivism” to describe some people or groups in the church, lies in the fact that in today’s world, the term “exclusivism” is associated with systematic forms of oppression. Thus, the labelling itself carries a socio-

³¹Ibid., 26.

³²Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 39.

³³Ibid., 190-3.

³⁴Doyle, Furry, and Bazzell, *Ecclesiology and Exclusion*, 7–8.

³⁵Ibid., 9–12.

cultural problem.

Amaladoss proposes a paradigm toward religious pluralism. He argues that all the current paradigm, including inclusivism, are unsatisfactory, considering all of the problems that are occurring in every paradigm. He believes that continual dialogue and negotiation are what we need for a positive result. He argues the Holy Spirit is one of the key elements for the better paradigm. He seems to propose that the teaching is not the core element that binds all the believers but the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit makes Christianity an experiential religion. He argues that as Jesus has promised that the Holy Spirit can lead people to all truth, then the Holy Spirit is the presupposition for contemporary society to experience and define the church experience.³⁶

Moreover, Amaladoss argues about the definition of the church was developed from the concept of the kingdom of priests in the OT that the church is described as a distinct group of people separated to serve the rest of the world. He believes that the church has a special calling to serve the world but does not necessarily mean that the members of the church are the only ones who will be saved. It seems for Amaladoss, the church has a special role but not in the sense of an exclusive agent of salvation. The priesthood for him similar to the concept of the minister or priest in the church today. They are consecrated to serve the whole congregation but not the only agent of salvation or the only group that will be saved.³⁷

A Proposed Definition of the Church in 1 Peter 2:9

The whole chapter (1 Peter 2) can be divided into five thematic discourses. The first is considered the thesis discourse (2:1-10). The second one is the first characteristic of the church (2:11-12). The third discourse is the second characteristic of the church (2:13-15). The fourth is the third characteristic of the church (2:16-18). And finally, the fifth one is the conclusion discourse (2:21-25).

Based on the literary feature the focus of the chapter is in the first ten verses (the thesis discourse). In this discourse, we found $\delta\epsilon$ a development marker³⁸ used five times, and we only find once (2:14) in the rest of the chapter. In this discourse, the author also uses perfect verbal form twice, and none it can be found in other verse in the chapter. The key text of this study is found in this section; therefore, it will be explored more than the other discourses. But before that, we will go first to the three discourses that are discussing the characteristics of the church.

The first characteristic of the church is in verses eleven to twelve. It is marked by $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$, a forward-pointing device that is pointing to the important idea that will come as a result.³⁹ Peter says, “I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that ($\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$), though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God” (2:11-12). Having a good practical moral ethic that bring glory to God is one of the characteristics of the church. Mannion suggests that a “virtuous ecclesiology” is what we need to keep us far from the dangers of “abstraction, institutionalization, and organizational self-preoccupation.”⁴⁰

The second characteristic of the church is found in verses thirteen to fifteen—this section marked by another pointing device $\acute{\omicron}\tau\iota$ that indicates a conclusion.⁴¹ Peter says,

³⁶Michael Amaladoss, “Pluralism of Religions and the Significance of Christ,” *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* (2001): 86, accessed 22 November 2022, <https://ejournals.bc.edu/index.php/ctsa/article/view/4457>.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 97–99.

³⁸Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Lexham Bible reference series; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, 2010), 21.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 189.

⁴⁰Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 227.

⁴¹Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 189.

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“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to the king as the supreme authority or to governors as those sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. For (*ὅτι*) it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorance of foolish men.” Peter argues that as long as the church commit no wrong, they do not have to worry with the human authority. Peter uses *δὲ* to mark his reason that authority “sent by him to punish those who do wrong and (*δὲ*) to praise those who do right. *δὲ* functions to contrast two different positions to let believers see the position they are supposed to be in as a church. The church follows the general rules and regulations in the society.

The third characteristic is found in verses sixteen to eighteen. This section mark by correction marker *ἀλλὰ*.⁴² *ἀλλὰ* here functions as a literary device to point out an important correction of the idea made by the author so the hearer can grasp the right concept. Peter says, “Live as free people, but (*ἀλλὰ*) do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves (servant)” (2:16). In other words, Peter says that Christians do not use their freedom to justified bad behavior. Instead, they voluntarily make themselves a servant of truth (2:16). William D Watkin argues that many people worry about postmodernity with the assumption that we cannot say right is right and wrong is wrong anymore. And that it will provide a good reason for people to justify their misbehavior.⁴³ It is worthy of being noted here that one of the natures of the church is self-denial, to be opened for correction on one hand, and stand for the truth on the other hand.

Michael Amaldos argues that the church in the bible is a community of servants that will always suffer for the truth until Jesus comes. He believes that we should not expect the whole world to be the church. For him, the church is not necessarily about salvation but about service. They are called to demonstrate the unselfish life of Jesus.⁴⁴ Peter repeats this principle again in verse eighteen with the same pattern, saying, “Slaves, in reverent fear of God, submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but (*ἀλλὰ*) also to those who are harsh.” This section highlights the one of the nature of the church that is wining people’s trust through humiliation not confrontation.

Now we go back to the thesis discourse, where the key text for this study occurs. The discourse starts with *οὖν* in verse one, *ἵνα* in verse two, and *ὅτι* in verse three to mark the prologue. *Οὖν* is a new development marker that refers to the previous discourse as its foundation.⁴⁵ When we look at the previous discourse, we see that it talks about the newborn in Jesus, the experience of becoming a Christian. Now together with *ὅτι* and *ἵνα*, *οὖν* present its intention in the prologue to develop the idea of Christianity. We read, “Rid yourselves, therefore (*οὖν*), of all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that (*ἵνα*) by it you may grow up in your salvation, for now, you have tasted that (*ὅτι*) the Lord is good” (2:1-3).

Verse four and ten, then mark the thesis statement for this discourse. In verse four, Peter uses a point-counterpoint device, *μὲν-δὲ*,⁴⁶ to make a thesis statement about Christianity. He argues that like Jesus, Christians are “(*μὲν*) rejected by men but (*δὲ*) chosen and precious in God’s sight. Rejected here is formed in perfect tense. It indicates that the hearer of this letter, the early church, has a pre-knowledge about the idea of being rejected. It also indicates that the idea of being rejected is a very important idea for Peter, as well as the early Christian.

Furthermore, in verse ten, Peter repeats the same pattern with new development. It

⁴²Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Lexham Bible reference series; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, 2010), 70.

⁴³William D. Watkins, *The New Absolutes* (Place of publication not identified: Bethany House Pub, 1997), 32–33.

⁴⁴Amaladoss, “Pluralism of Religions and the Proclamation of Jesus Christ,” 97–98.

⁴⁵Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 30.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 55.

says, “Once you were not a people, but now ($\delta\epsilon$) you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now ($\delta\epsilon$) you have received mercy.” Again, here Peter uses a perfect tense form for “not received.” This form indicates the importance of transformation that the unworthiness finds its worthiness in Jesus; the Christians find their value in accepting Jesus. We do not find the use of perfect form in other places in this chapter except in those two verses (v. 4, 10). And thus, for Peter, it is important to understand that the life outside God and in God are two different lives.

The principle in verses four and ten bind the idea of Christianity in verses five to nine. In verse five, we read the explanation of the analogy. It says, “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” Here, we see the idea of Christianity which is “a holy priesthood.” In verse six, Peter uses $\delta\iota\omicron\tau\iota$ to point the source from where the idea comes from. It says, “For it stands in Scripture: ‘See, I lay in Zion a stone, a chosen and precious cornerstone; and the one who believes in Him will never be put to shame.’” In verse seven, Peter uses $\sigma\upsilon\tilde{\nu}$ and $\delta\epsilon$ once again to develop the idea. It says, “To you who believe, then ($\sigma\upsilon\tilde{\nu}$), this stone is precious. But ($\delta\epsilon$) to those who do not believe, ‘the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’” Peter uses many $\delta\epsilon$ here to create a pattern of comparison. In verse eight, we read, “‘A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.’ They stumble because they disobey the word—and to this they were appointed”.

Finally, in verse nine, the key text for this study, Peter uses $\delta\epsilon$ once again to introduce new development. It says, “but ($\delta\epsilon$) you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. This text parallel with verse five. Verse five is the initial development of the idea of the church, and this verse (v. 9) is the full development of the idea of the church. Verse five highlights that the church is a spiritual house made up of the believers. The church is a community of a “holy priesthood.” In verses six to eight, Peter develops it, explaining the separation process from the old life to the new life. And now, in verse nine, we see Peter put them together in one sentence, the nature of the church, its purpose, and its transformation process. These are the elements of the church that Peter presents in this chapter. There is inclusio or chiasmic structure here, which is a common literary device for Jewish writers for emphasizing their main idea. Either way, the transformation from darkness to the light, to become a royal priesthood, a holy nation, set apart for a specific purpose is the prominent idea of church. The author emphasizes those elements with repetition, comparison, parallelism, and other literary devices.

The thesis discourse argues, the church is called to be set apart as a holy nation, a royal priesthood. And then, Peter characterizes the church as a holy nation, by its practical moral ethic, submission to the local authority, and self-denial; become a servant of truth. Now in the conclusion discourse (2:21-25), Peter concludes that the church is to follow the footsteps of Jesus. From verse nineteen to twenty as the transition verses, Peter has used some conclusion markers such as $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$, $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$, and $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$. Peter continues the comparison pattern to consistently remind the hearer the two different lives as the main point of his thesis regarding the church. We read, “For ($\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$) this ($\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$) is acceptable if anyone endures the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. For ($\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$) what kind of credit to you if for doing wrong you endure beaten? But ($\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$) if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this ($\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$) is acceptable before God.

Furthermore, in verse twenty-one, Peter puts four conclusion markers in one sentence to show how significant the argument. Peter uses $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$, $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$, $\omicron\tau\iota$, and $\tilde{\iota}\nu\alpha$, all just in this verse. It says, “For ($\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$) to this ($\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$) you were called, because ($\omicron\tau\iota$) Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ($\tilde{\iota}\nu\alpha$) you should follow in His footsteps.” The combination of $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$ - $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$ is especially a very strong forward-pointing device. It points to “because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His footsteps” as the main conclusion. This strong statement supports by a set of quotation and allusion from the OT in verse 22-25 and from Exodus 19:5,6, conclude that to be the holy nation of God means willing to give life for the world because “the whole earth is Mine.”

Is the Church Exclusive? Comparing the Modern and Post-modern Views of the Church and the Concept of Church in 1 Peter 2:9

Conclusion

We have discussed that at least there are five positions among Christians regarding the nature and the relationship between the church among the denominations and toward other religions or non-religious entities. Exclusivists believe in their own group superiority. The second one, Neo-Exclusivists, focuses on contextualization. What is important in this position is that to find a new form of the never-changing truth to be more relevant to the contemporary world, including the form of life and the ministry of the church. The third, Inclusivists, believe in the superiority of their own beliefs but somehow acknowledge other experiences as valid in some extent. Next, the pluralist, on the other hand, just simply rejects all the claims of superiority. They believe that all religious experiences are unique and acceptable. The last view is an ongoing study. Many are not satisfying with all the definitions and thus are looking for a better theological explanation about the nature, authority, and role of the church in the community.

The existing terminologies that are used to define the nature and the authority of the church might not fully represent what the bible meant the church to be. Looking from Peter's ecclesiology and from the reality of the world society, the church is not called to exercise authority or meant to be the only group that is worthy of salvation. Instead, they are called to bring the whole world back to God, even if it means that they have to sacrifice their life. Friendship and servant ministry are some of the terms that suit to describe the nature of the church from the perspective of Peter. Exclusive does not well describe the characteristic of the church. We lack terminologies that can best describe the true relationship between the church and the world. Therefore, more terminologies should be proposed, and further study needs to be done.

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