

“O Taste and See”: Septuagint Psalm 33 in 1 Peter

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By exploring the intertextual context formed by quotations and allusions to the Greek Old Testament, this paper considers how to understand the referent of τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα ἐπιποθήσατε (to logikon adolon gala epipothēsate; “crave pure, spiritual milk”) in 1 Pet 2:2. The understanding of the milk as the word of God is rejected in favor of a reading that refers to craving the moral transformation necessary to sustain life in Christ.

One of the intriguing exegetical issues in 1 Peter is how to interpret the phrase τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα (*to logikon adolon gala*; “pure, spiritual milk”) in 2:2. This study argues the intertextual space created by the allusion to LXX Ps 33:9 in 1 Pet 2:3 is the determining interpretive context for understanding this metaphor.

Psalm 33, as it is found in the Greek translation in the Septuagint (Psalm 34 in the Hebrew and English), permeates the first letter the apostle Peter wrote to Christians scattered across northern Asia Minor.¹ While Isaiah 53 forms the backbone of Peter’s Christology, LXX Psalm 33 forms the scriptural basis of his exhortations about how Christians are to live in a society not congenial to the beliefs and worldview of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A COMPARISON OF THE HEBREW PSALM 34 AND ITS GREEK PSALM 33

As the extensive use of LXX Psalm 33 in 1 Peter shows, Peter did not simply proof-text when quoting the OT but grounded his point in the original sense of the Hebrew Psalm, albeit as it had been contextualized by the Greek translator for the Diaspora setting. The psalm originally referred to an incident in David’s life when he was living in the land of the Philistines to escape Saul’s pursuit (1 Sam 27:1).

¹For example, W. Bornemann, “Der erste Petrusbrief—eine Taufrede des Silvanus?” ZNW 19 (1920) 143-165; K. R. Snodgrass, “1 Peter ii 1-10: Its Formation and Literary Affinities,” NTS 24 (1978); Sue Woan, “The Psalms in 1 Peter” in *The Psalms in the New Testament* (ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken; London and New York: T&T Clark, 2004) 213-229.

But life among the Philistines had become threatening, and David “changed his face”—possibly feigning insanity—to allow him to escape from that dangerous situation (1 Sam 21:10-15). The Hebrew Psalm 34 is David’s hymn celebrating how the LORD delivered him from his fears and the threats against him in that bleak period of his life.

The Hebrew psalm writer reinterpreted this event in David’s life for a broader audience, transforming narrative into parenetic and making David an example of a faithful Israelite to encourage his readers to learn the LORD delivers those who fear him.²

The later Septuagint translator further contextualized the psalm when he translated it into Greek for his Jewish readers living in Diaspora under the Hellenistic kings. The Greek translation capitalizes on the fact that the event that inspired the psalm occurred when David was living *outside* of Jerusalem, in a place under the control of pagan rulers—when, in other words, he was living in exile, sojourning in a place that was not his home.

The translator accomplished this contextualization for Diaspora readers primarily by translating the ambiguous Hebrew word *מַגִּירוֹת* (*m^ggûrôt*) in 34:5, pointed in the Masoretic Text (MT) to mean terrors or fears, with the Greek *παροικιῶν* (*paroikiōn*; “sojournings”).³ Either the translator read *מַגִּירוֹת* as a participle of *גָּר* (*gûr*; “to sojourn”) or he interpreted the “fears” more specifically as the fears arising from sojourning in a dangerous place, from which the Lord delivered David when he was living in exile among the Philistines away from Judah. Just as the Lord delivered David from the dangers of sojourning, so he would deliver his people living in the precarious Diaspora under the Hellenistic kings.

The Greek translation of Ps 34:8 also reinforces this contextualization with the translation of the Hebrew *Qal* participle *הִנֵּה* (*hōneh*; “encamps”) as the future *παρεμβάλει* (“will encamp”), underscoring the verse as an assurance for future generations of readers: “an angel of the LORD *will encamp* around those who fear him.”

In the NT the apostle Peter has framed his letter to Christians of Asia Minor with the Diaspora motif (see 1 Pet 1:1 [“scattered”]; 5:13 [“Babylon”]). And in 1 Pet 1:17, he uses *παροικία* (*paroikia*, “sojourn”), the same Greek word as found in LXX Ps 33:5, to refer to the threatening situation of his original readers.

Peter wants his Christian readers also to learn the fear of the Lord who rescues those who fear him, and he directly applies the hopes and promises of LXX Psalm 33 to his contemporary readers. This application of the Greek Psalm 33 in 1 Peter as a basis for Peter’s instructions about Christian living is very congenial to his use of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 for his Christology because Psalm 33 is also about the righteous sufferer whom God does not abandon.

² John Goldingay, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006) 1:478.

³ Judged to be the original translation by Rahlfs.

The example of Christ as the perfect righteous sufferer is a nexus in which Peter's use of the Isaiah prophecy and Psalm 33 meet. "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Pet 2:21), and "you" should recall LXX Psalm 33 as an assurance that the LORD delivers the righteous sufferer.

THE QUOTATION OF LXX PS 33:13 IN 1 PET 3:10-13

LXX Psalm 33 is quoted most extensively in 1 Pet 3:10-13. A comparison of the verse in the MT and the LXX (see below) shows the Greek translator follows the Hebrew word order but construes טוב (*tób*; "good") to modify יָמִים (*yāmím*; "days") and therefore puts ἀγαθός (*agathas*; "good") in the feminine, plural, accusative form to agree with ἡμέρας (*hēmeras*; "days"), resulting in the difference between "who loves days to see good" (MT) and "who loves to see good days" (LXX):

MT Ps 34:13: מִי־הוּא־שׁוֹמֵר־חַיִּים (*mí hā'š'š' hehāp̄rēs hayyím*; "who is the person who desires life,")

טוֹב לְרֹאֵת יָמִים לְאֹהֲבֵי־טוֹב (*'ohēb yāmím lir'ót tób*; "who loves days to see good?")

OG Ps 33:13: τις ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ὁ θέλων ζωὴν (*tis estin anthrōpos ho thelōn zōēn*; "who is the person who desires life")

ἀγαπῶν ἡμέρας ἰδεῖν ἀγαθὰς (*agapōn hēmeras idein agathas*; ("who loves to see good days?")

When the quotation of LXX Ps 33:13 in 1 Pet. 3:10 is compared to its source text, most of the differences between the two are accommodations to the flow of the letter. The biggest difference between the quote as it is found in 1 Peter and that in LXX Psalm 33 is that in the Greek of the psalm, ἀγαπῶν (*agapōn*) is a masculine, singular, participle used substantively, but in 1 Peter its form has been changed into the present, active, infinitive, ἀγαπᾶν (*agapān*), with the change of a single vowel: the omega to an alpha:

1 Pet 3:10: ὁ γὰρ θέλων ζωὴν ἀγαπᾶν (*ho gar thelōn zōēn agapān*; "for the one who wishes life")

καὶ ἰδεῖν ἡμέρας ἀγαθὰς (*kai idein hēmeras agathas* ("to love and to see good days")

Was this a variant reading already found in the Greek Psalm Peter quoted? Or was it his own creative interpretation and adaptation of the quotation for his purposes? Given that the difference is only one vowel, textual corruption is strongly suggested.

However, there are no extant variant readings of LXX Ps 33:13 involving this vowel difference nor are there any extant variant readings of 1 Pet 3:10. Therefore, the manuscript evidence tilts toward concluding that the difference was the work of the apostle as he adapted the quotation for his purposes.⁴

And what difference in meaning might the infinitive form make? That is, is ἀγαπᾶν a complementary infinitive of ὁ θέλων with ζῶν its direct object? That would read, “For the one who wishes *to love life* and *to see good days*.”

Or is the infinitive expressing the result of the desired life: “For the one who wishes life *to love* and *to see* good days”? This is not clear syntactically, but perhaps the context can help. Peter is writing to Christian believers, to those who have expressed desire for a new life in Christ (in other words, “the one who wishes life”). He writes to instruct them how to live this new life they have entered through new birth (1 Pet 1:3). Leonhard Goppelt construes “life” here to refer to the entire existence of the Christian with God, both the temporal present and the eschatological future.⁵ “Good days” for the Christian are those that enjoy the fellowship of God, days that are already present in this life because of the eschatological new birth in Christ. Earlier in the letter, the apostle has mentioned his readers’ love for the Lord Jesus (1:8) and has exhorted them to love one another (1:22; 2:17).

Thus given the context, the infinitive seems to express the result of the new life they desire. That is, those who are born again into the living hope will, as a result, love (ἀγαπᾶν) others and see (ἰδεῖν) good days instead of evil. Just as the psalmist wanted to teach the fear of the Lord (LXX Ps 33:12), so Peter wants to warn his readers the new birth in Christ must result in a transformed way of life.

Sue Woan has made an extensive and convincing analysis of Peter’s use of this quotation. She argues that the explicit OT quotations in 1 Peter act as a summary to the preceding section—all except the quotation under discussion here, which she considers to be a janus verse. This quotation not only summarizes “the kind of behavior expected from someone who has entered the ‘new life’ of the Christian. But it also seems to act as a springboard to the section that follows. . . . it both summarizes and introduces material . . . at both a linguistic and a thematic level”⁶

Woan’s analysis has convincingly demonstrated that the “quotation from Psalm 34 at 3:10-12 is indeed pivotal to the thinking of the whole letter. This quotation not only stands at the climax of the letter, it not only concludes one section

⁴ Karen H. Jobes, “The Septuagint Textual Tradition in 1 Peter,” in *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures* (ed. Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006) 326-327.

⁵ Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (trans. J. E. Alsup; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 236-237.

⁶ Sue Woan, “The Psalms in 1 Peter,” 213-229, in *The Psalms in the New Testament* (Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken, eds.; London: T&T Clark, 2004) 223.

and introduces another, but it also contains vocabulary and themes that pervade the entire letter."⁷

The pervasive influence of LXX Psalm 33 throughout the letter also illuminates 1 Pet 2:1-3. This psalm, rather than the immediately preceding quotation from Isaiah 40, provides exegetical key to the referent of τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα (*to logikon adolon gala*; "the pure spiritual milk") mentioned in 2:2. Viewed from this perspective, a very different understanding of the milk metaphor results than has been seen by the majority of interpreters.

THE INTERPRETIVE CONTEXT OF τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα

In 1 Pet 2:3, the apostle Peter writes, "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind." As Woan points out, the wording of this exhortation most likely echoes LXX Ps 33:14, since both texts refer to evil (κακοῦ; *kakou*) and deceit (δόλον; *dolon*) and "there is also a strong thematic resonance."⁸

The exegetical crux of this verse is in the interaction between the sensory metaphor of τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα and "tasting that the Lord is good," which is a direct allusion to LXX Ps 33:9, "Taste and see that the LORD is good."

The King James translation of this verse reflects a long-standing interpretive tradition that identifies the referent of the milk metaphor as the word of God: "As newborn babes, desire the *sincere milk of the word*, that ye may grow thereby" (italics added). This paper suggests, along with a minority of interpreters, that the referent of the metaphor τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολο γαλά is something other than and broader than the word of God and something related to moral transformation that allows the Christian believer to grow toward the end goal of salvation.⁹

The interpretation that τὸ λογικὸν γάλα refers to the word of God, whether in the form of apostolic preaching or inscripturated in the Bible, is based largely on two exegetical missteps. The first is the etymological fallacy of closely associating the meaning of the adjective λογικόν with the noun λόγος (*logos*; "word").¹⁰

The second concerns which OT quotation or allusion, if any, forms the interpretive context. Is it LXX Isa 40:6-8, quoted in 1 Pet 1:24-25 or is it LXX Psalm 33? The quotation of LXX Isa 40:6-8 does mention the word of the LORD, though

⁷ Ibid., 226.

⁸ Ibid., 222.

⁹ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005) 130-141; See also Jobes, "Got Milk? Septuagint Psalm 33 and the Interpretation of 1 Peter 2:1-3," *WTJ* 64 (2002) 1-14.

¹⁰ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996) 28; Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (rev. and exp. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 44-51.

the word there is τὸ ῥῆμα (*to hrēma*), not λόγος.¹¹ The phrase διὰ λόγου ζῶντος θεοῦ (*dia logou zōntos theou*; “through the word of the living God”) occurs outside of a quotation in 1:23. Or does LXX Psalm 33 form the intertextual context in which to determine the referent of the metaphor?

Consider that the main clause is found in 2:2, “as newborn babies, crave τὸ λογικὸν γάλα so by it you may grow up in your salvation.” The metaphor is a sensory metaphor of taste. Had Peter still been thinking of the Isa 40:6 quotation and of the word of the LORD, he could have chosen to continue with a quotation that would echo the phrase “word of the LORD/God,” such as LXX Ps 118:103 (Eng., Heb., Ps 119:103), “How sweet to my throat are your words [τὰ λόγια σου; *ta logia sou*].” The echo created within the intertextual space between 1 Pet 2:1-2 and LXX Ps 118:103 would then have reverberated on the referent of the word(s) of God. But instead, the author of 1 Peter alludes to LXX Ps 33:9, “now that you have tasted that the LORD is good,” which creates no reverberation of the concept of the word of God, for neither LXX Psalm 33 nor its corresponding Hebrew text (Ps 34) mentions the word of God.

To understand what the metaphor does refer to, three additional exegetical points must be considered, all of which point away from the majority interpretation “milk of the word”: 1) the author’s syntax and lexical choice, 2) the belief in the Greco-Roman world that the quality of breast milk ingested as an infant determined the later character of a person, and 3) the relationship of the participial phrase to the imperative verb “crave” (ἐπιποθήσατε *epipothēsate*).

Turning to the first point about syntax and lexical choice, it must be noted that the expression τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα (*to logikon adolon gala*) is not a very apt or straightforward way of referring to the word of God, even though the very influential KJV sent English interpreters in that direction by translating it as “the sincere milk of the word.” The straightforward phrase “word of God” occurs more than eighty times in just about every book of the New Testament. Had Peter meant to restrict the referent of the metaphor to the preaching of the gospel or the reading of Scripture, he had a straightforward way to say that. But the unusual adjective λογικός (*logikos*) occurs otherwise in the NT only in Rom 12:1, where it refers to Christians offering themselves to God as their “λογικὴν (*logikēn*)” worship.¹²

¹¹ For instance, Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988); Stephen Ayodeji A. Fagbemi *Who Are the Elect in 1 Peter? A Study in Biblical Exegesis and Its Application to the Anglican Church of Nigeria* (ed. Hemchand Gossai; New York: Peter Lang, 2007); Joel B. Green, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Paul A. Holloway, *Coping with Prejudice: 1 Peter in Social-Psychological Perspective* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2009); John Phillips, *Exploring the Epistles of Peter: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005).

¹² See Karen H. Jobes, “Distinguishing the Meaning of Greek Verbs in the Semantic Domain for Worship” in *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* by Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 204.

Defending the association of λογικός with λογὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (*logos tou theou*) Paul Achtemeier writes,

Since, therefore, in this context, the word of God (λογὸς θεοῦ) was the agency by which the readers were rebegotten as Christians (1:23), and since the word of the Lord (ῥῆμα κυρίου) was the good news that has been communicated to them (1:25b), some relationship between the divine word and the adjective λογικός seems most likely.¹³

But when Peter exhorts his readers to crave pure spiritual milk, is he really telling them to listen to more sermons or to read more Scripture, even as good and necessary as those activities may be?

There are a few relevant parallels in the extrabiblical corpus that clearly show the sense of the adjective to mean "rational" (for example, Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.16.20; Philo *Spec.* 1.277; *T. Levi* 3.16). For instance, Epictetus, a pagan Greek philosopher, can say that because he is λογικός, in comparison to a nightingale or a swan, he must sing praises to God (*Diatr.* 1.16.20).

But to be rational in the Greek world influenced by Stoic thought meant to conform oneself to the *Logos* as the divine rationality that ordered the universe. So this paper argues that for Peter and Paul, the sense of the adjective as "rational" or "reasonable" suggested conformity, not to the Stoic *Logos*, but to Christ as the one who inaugurated and ordered a new eschatological reality.¹⁴ If so, the syntax and lexical choice in the phrase τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα likely points to craving only what is consistent with life in the new reality that Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension has created.

This understanding of λογικόν seems to be that of Oecumenius when he writes on 1 Pet 2:1: "These few words say a great deal, for it is unworthy of those who have been born again to an incorruptible life to be ensnared by evil and to prefer things which have no existence to *that which truly exists*" (emphasis added).¹⁵ Λογικόν milk therefore corresponds to what nourishes new life in the reality that the believer enters through new birth, and without which the believer will perish.

But there is another adjective modifying "milk:" ἄδολον (*adolon*), which is often translated as "pure." At the time Peter wrote, many in the Greco-Roman world believed the quality of breast milk ingested as an infant determined the later character of a person.¹⁶ Prior to the modern invention of infant formula in the nineteenth century—and certainly at the time 1 Peter was written—all babies either

¹³ Paul J Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 147.

¹⁴ S.v. "logos" in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (rev. ed.; ed. Moisés Silva; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

¹⁵ On *First Peter*, PG 93:47 quoted in *James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude* (ACCS; ed. Gerald Bray; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000) 84.

¹⁶ Philip. L. Tite, "Nurslings, Milk and Moral Development in the Greco-Roman Context: A Reappraisal of the Paraenetic Utilization of Metaphor in 1 Peter 2.1-3" *JNST* 31 (2009) 371-400, esp. 386.

received their life-sustaining nourishment though breast-feeding for the first couple years of their lives or they died. And so to crave milk *as newborn babies* is a direct reference to breastfeeding.

On this point, much modern thought about the metaphor is anachronistic, reading modern cultural values back into the ancient text. Wayne Grudem, for instance, and others who consider this to be a reference to the word of God and who are shaped by modernist controversies concerning biblical inerrancy, understand ἄδολον (*adolon*) to mean “unadulterated” or “uncontaminated;” that is, truth unmixed with false doctrine.¹⁷ They wrongly take this as a statement about the inerrancy of the Bible.

Furthermore, when Peter employs the metaphor of milk, he does not contrast it to solid food, creating a negative evaluation of spiritual maturity, as does the apostle Paul (compare 1 Cor 3:2; also Heb 5:12,13). Rather, Peter’s point is that *all people* born anew as children of God must be nourished by τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα or their new life will die. There is no point at which the Christian outgrows the need for this milk.

Because it was believed the moral character of the baby was imparted by the quality of the milk it ingested while nursing, great moral significance was attached to the decision of who would be best to nurse an infant.¹⁸ Some ancient writers raised moral suspicions about the widespread practice of hired wet nurses in order to argue that the ideal mother nursed her own baby. Against that background, Philip Tite offers this thought about the adjective ἄδολον as it describes the quality of the milk Christians are to crave:

. . . bad milk [that is, the opposite of ἄδολον γάλα in Peter’s rhetoric], therefore, is milk that leads the nursling (=Petrine Christian) to vice rather than virtue; and it is this possibility of falling into vice that threatens the proper growth of the Christian into salvation. With this adjective, therefore, the nursling-milk metaphor becomes an exhortation for moral development, to follow the path of virtue rather than vice.¹⁹

This cultural background on the quality and source of breast milk helps to explain the rather bizarre imagery in the later church of the Father as having breasts that are milked by the Holy Spirit and references to Christ as the “breast of life.”²⁰

¹⁷ Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 95; see also Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988) 79.

¹⁸ Soranus, *Gyn.* 2.19 (88), 2.24 (93) -27 (96); Galen, *On the Powers of Food*, Book 3.

¹⁹ Tite, “Nurslings,” 389.

²⁰ A cup of milk was offered to me / And I drank it with the sweetness of the Lord’s kindness. / The Son is the cup, / And He who was milked is the Father, / And she who milked Him is the Holy Spirit.” (The Odes of Solomon, 2nd century) and references to Christ as the “breast of life” in Ephraim the Syrian, *Hymns of the Nativity* XV.

Peter seems to be saying that any source of spiritual nourishment that is not of the Lord himself is unhealthy for the Christian.

And so both the apostle's syntax and lexical choice, combined with the cultural significance of the metaphor in light of beliefs about nursing in the Greco-Roman world, support an understanding of the metaphor that is broader than just reference to the word of God preached or inscripturated.

The third exegetical issue is the relationship of the participial phrase beginning ἀποθέμενοι . . . (*apothemenoi* . . . ; "put off . . .") to the imperative ἐπιποθήσατε (*epipothēsate*; "crave"), and this also suggests that to crave milk is to pursue moral virtue. Elsewhere in the NT, the same verb, ἀποτιθημι, occurs six times to describe turning from the vices and sins of the life lived before faith in Christ (Rom 13:12; Eph 4:22,25; Col 3:8; Heb 12:1; James 1:21).

In each case, the admonition to "put off" the negative vices is followed by a positive expression of what to do instead. These six statements written by three other apostolic authors bear striking similarity to the statement of 1 Pet 2:1-2, where to crave τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα parallels Paul's concept of "putting on the armor of light," Hebrews' "running the race with eyes fixed on Jesus," and James's "humbly accepting the word planted in you. . . ."

It seems evident that the use of this verb with these parallel concepts should inform our understanding that craving τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα refers to the passionate desire to reorient one's whole self and life to the reality of one's new birth. As Tite also observes, the Petrine rhetoric presents "the antithesis [of the exhortation to 'put off'] through the nursing-milk metaphor rather than a virtue list."²¹

And so, four exegetical points point away from the traditional understanding of the referent of the milk to be the word of God: 1) the pervasive use of LXX Psalm 33 throughout the letter as constitutive of the intertextual space in which the metaphor should be interpreted; 2) the author's syntax and lexical choice; 3) the belief in the Greco-Roman world that the quality of milk ingested by an infant determined one's moral character; and 4) the relationship of the participial phrase to the imperative ἐπιποθήσατε in comparison to other similar constructions in the NT.

Consequently, to crave "pure spiritual milk" means to crave that which nurtures growth of spiritual life after rebirth into the new reality that Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension has created. Although this is a minority position among today's interpreters, it nevertheless reaches back to at least Venerable Bede in the eighth century, Calvin in the seventeenth century, F. Hort in the nineteenth, and J. Ramsey Michaels and Douglas Harink today.²²

²¹ Tite, "Nurslings," 394-395.

²² Bede, *On First Peter*, PG 93:47 quoted in *James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude* (ACCS; ed. Gerald Bray; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000) 84; John Calvin, *Hebrews and 1 & 2 Peter* (trans. W. B. Johnston; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); F. J. A. Hort, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London:

To crave the pure spiritual milk means to crave Christ himself, for only he can sustain the new life he created. Only by “ingesting” Christ can the Christian experience the moral transformation necessary to live the new life.

Kelly Liebengood finds this reading “compelling” because “it runs with the grain of what Peter has been developing throughout 1 Peter 1.1–2.10.”²³ Using Augustine’s anthropological insight that to flourish as a Christian one must learn to properly order their affections, Liebengood reads the milk metaphor as craving the true *telos* of the Christian’s new life.²⁴ He writes,

Peter consistently reminds his readers that they are on a journey in which their allegiances and affections are constantly being challenged and tested. Peter urges his addressees to understand their suffering in this context of competing allegiances and affections, and reminds his readers that in order to make it to the object of their love, the incorruptible inheritance, they will need to cultivate and keep their affections fixed on Jesus.²⁵

Although it may seem strange to think of Christ as the pure, spiritual milk that must be ingested to sustain the new life, it is no more strange than the Bread of Life discourse in John 6, where, after feeding the five thousand, Jesus says, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink” (John 6:53-55; NIV). On hearing such a difficult teaching, many who were following Jesus turned away, prompting Jesus to ask the Twelve, “You do not want to leave too, do you?” (John 6:67). And who was it who replied, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”? Simon Peter, the stated author of 1 Peter.

CONCLUSION: THE MAJOR THRUST OF PETER’S USE OF LXX PS 33

Peter’s extensive use of LXX Psalm 33 to ground his ethical teaching for Christians indicates his readers are heirs of the spiritual heritage of ancient Israel, and more specifically, that God will deliver Christians who suffer for living righteously. Peter writes to teach Christian believers a “fear of the LORD” that must be embodied in a transformation of their ethics.

Macmillan, 1898); J. R. Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC; Waco: Word, 1988); Douglas Harink, *1 & 2 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009).

²³ Kelly D. Liebengood, “Augustine *con leche*: Reading the Milk Metaphor of 1 Peter 2.2 with Help from Augustine’s Insights Regarding the Affections,” *Leaven: A Journal of Christian Ministry*, 20/3 (2012) 127-132, esp. 131.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 131.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Cliff Barbarick observes, "The milk grows the community into salvation; or, to translate the metaphor, Christ, through the parabolic pattern of his own life, shapes the community who remembers him into those who will likewise persevere through suffering and share in his glory."²⁶ They must put off all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind and must crave all the ways Christ gives himself to his people as the only nourishment that will sustain the new life. **scj**

²⁶ Cliff Barbarick, "Craving the Milk in 1 Peter: The Pattern of Christ as Salvific Nourishment," *Leaven: A Journal of Christian Ministry* 20 (2012): 133-140, esp. 136.