

JAMES A. KELHOFFER

# Persecution, Persuasion and Power

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament  
270*

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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# Persecution, Persuasion and Power

Readiness to Withstand Hardship  
as a Corroboration of Legitimacy  
in the New Testament

Mohr Siebeck

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*for Jörg and Clare*

*Komm, süßes Kreuz, so will ich sagen,  
Mein Jesu, gib es immer her!  
Wird mir mein Leiden einst zu schwer,  
So hilfst du mir es selber tragen.*

J. S. Bach, *Matthäuspassion* (BWV 244, Teil 57 [vormals 66])

## Acknowledgments

In Fall 2004, prior to the American presidential election, I was driving home from the university and happened to be listening to a National Public Radio program about a meeting of Pentecostal Christians gathered to pray for the country and the outcome of the election. That they prayed for the re-election of George W. Bush was not surprising. The reporter asked one Pentecostal pastor how they would later pray if Bush's opponent John Kerry were to be elected. The pastor answered that they would, of course, pray for him too, adding that if Kerry were to be elected President they would accept "that it is God's will for the church to be persecuted in the next four years." The jolt of that last statement nearly brought the car to a halt so I could process the assumptions underlying the pastor's pronouncement. The pastor exemplifies that a claim to persecution is an assertion of power that includes judgments about both the persecuted and the persecutor. An analysis of such judgments can reveal much about an individual or group's concept of self-definition, as well as views toward outsiders, including (ostensible) persecutors.

In subsequent months, I noticed that an appreciation of such dynamics offers a heuristic device for interpreting claims of persecution in the NT. Most of the secondary literature on persecution in early Christianity deals with (important) questions of historical reconstruction. I soon became convinced that an examination of how the NT's assorted claims about persecution function in the formation of religious identity – confirming believers' standing in Christ because they withstood persecution in the past, or if they will remain faithful amidst present or anticipated oppression – would complement previous research. At the November, 2004 SBL Meeting, Prof. Dr. Jörg Frey encouraged me to pursue this line of research and to apply to the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung for a *Forschungsstipendium*. Prof. Frey would eventually be my gracious and supportive host at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich and become a dear colleague and friend as well. The result is the present volume, the majority of which was written during my residence as a Humboldt Fellow in Munich (2007–09).

Portions of this monograph were presented at the following meetings, conferences, and colloquia: Apokalypse-Symposium (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München), Biblical Studies Research Seminar (University of Edinburgh, Scotland), Chicago Society for Biblical Research, Exegetiska storsemi-



nariat i Nya Testamentet (Uppsala University, Sweden), Institut zur Erforschung des Urchristentums (Universität Tübingen), Lutheran World Federation Theological Seminar, “Theology in the Life of Lutheran Churches” (Augsburg), Neutestamentliches Kolloquium (Evangelisch-Theologische Fakultät, München), Neutestamentliches Kolloquium (Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät, Regensburg), Neutestamentliches Oberseminar (Universität Leipzig), Neutestamentliche Sozietät (Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät, München), Society for New Testament Studies, Society of Biblical Literature, University of St. Andrews (Scotland), and Women in the Religious and Intellectual Activity of the Ancient Mediterranean World: An Interdisciplinary and International Conference in Honor of Adela Yarbro Collins (Ohio, USA). My thanks are due to those who offered feedback and suggestions at these meetings. Additionally, students at Saint Louis University in my seminar on “Suffering and Persecution in the New Testament” and in the Early Church Doctoral Seminar have offered valuable feedback on this work. I am also grateful to colleagues at Saint Louis University – especially my departmental Chair, Fr. J. A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. – for their support of a sabbatical and professional leave to pursue this research in Munich. As is indicated in the bibliography, preliminary portions of chapters 2, 5, and 6 have appeared, or will soon appear, elsewhere. At Verlag Mohr Siebeck I am indebted to Frau Tanja Mix for overseeing the production of this book, as well as to others in Tübingen for their assistance. Any remaining errors or infelicities in this work are, of course, my own.

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St. Louis, November, 2010

James A. Kelhoffer

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## Abbreviations

The Greek New Testament is cited from *Novum Testamentum Graece*, the Nestle-Aland 27<sup>th</sup> Edition. Abbreviations correspond to those listed in *The SBL Handbook of Style* (1999); the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (<sup>3</sup>1996); Liddell, Scott, Jones, McKenzie, *A Greek-English Lexicon*; and G. W. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, and include the following:

<i>1 Clem.</i>	<i>1 Clement</i>
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	D. N. Freedman (gen. ed.), <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ABG	Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
ANTC	Abington New Testament Commentaries
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology</i>
<i>Barn.</i>	<i>Epistle of Barnabas</i>
BBET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BDAG	W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> ( <sup>3</sup> 2000)
BDF	F. Blass, A. Debrunner and R. W. Funk, <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BTZ</i>	<i>Berliner theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CH</i>	<i>Church History</i>
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
ConBNT	Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series
<i>CurTM</i>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>

Diss.	Dissertation
EAC	Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique
ÉBib	Études bibliques
EKK	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ET	English translation
ÉTR	Études théologiques et religieuses
Euseb.	Eusebius of Caesarea
EvQ	Evangelical Quarterly
FB	Forschung zur Bibel
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FS	Festschrift
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte
Gk.	Greek
Gos. Thom.	Gospel of Thomas
GRBS	Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies
Greg	Gregorianum
HBT	Horizons in Biblical Theology
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
Hermeneia	Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible
Hist. eccl.	Historia ecclesiastica (Church History)
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
Hom.	Homily
HR	History of Religions
HTK	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
HUT	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	Interpretation
JbAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JECS	Journal of Early Christian Studies
Jos., Ant.	Josephus, Antiquitates Judaicae (Jewish Antiquities)
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSSR	Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
JTSA	Journal of Theology for Southern Africa
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
Lat.	Latin
LCL	Loeb Classical Library

LSJ	Liddell, Scott, Jones, and McKenzie, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i>
<i>Mart. Eup.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Euplus</i>
<i>Mart. Fruc.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Fructuosus and Companions</i>
<i>Mart. Iren.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Irenaeus of Sirmium</i>
<i>Mart. Pal.</i>	[Eusebius of Caesarea,] <i>The Martyrs of Palestine</i>
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum, Supplements
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church
n.s.	New series
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>Pace</i>	In contrast to
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RBL</i>	<i>Review of Biblical Literature</i>
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
<i>RHPR</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
s.v.(v.)	<i>sub verbo (verba)</i> (under the word[s] or heading[s])
SBA	Stuttgarter biblische Aufsatzbände
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSCS	SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBM	Stuttgarter biblische Monographien
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SC	Sources chrétiennes
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra pagina
SPB	Studia postbiblica
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
<i>StPatr</i>	<i>Studia patristica</i>
<i>TBl</i>	<i>Theologische Blätter</i>
<i>TGl</i>	<i>Theologie und Glaube</i>
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
THNTC	Two Horizons New Testament Commentary

TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TPI	Trinity Press International
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VCSup	Supplements to <i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>Vita Const.</i>	[Eusebius of Caesarea,] <i>The Life of Constantine</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WF	Wege der Forschung
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum</i>
ZB	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

## Chapter 1

# Introduction to the Problem, Terminology and Conceptual Framework

Νῦν χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ ἀνταναπληρῶ  
τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου  
ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ. (Col 1:24)

The preceding verse from Colossians has for years given interpreters pause. One could ask, for example, what the author construes as the “shortcomings” or “deficiencies”<sup>1</sup> in Christ’s afflictions “on behalf of his body.” Likewise, one could wonder what was so valuable about Paul’s “sufferings” that they have some relationship to Christ’s “afflictions.” The present monograph examines the latter question, namely how the New Testament (NT) authors *assign value to the withstanding of persecution by Jesus’ followers* and, in particular, how these authors utilize the clout or “cultural capital”<sup>2</sup> gained from this value for apologetic or other purposes. This posited value could, for example, be used to corroborate believers’ standing as Christ’s followers or even the authority of one or more apostles. The author of Colossians depicts a Paul whose sufferings are highlighted as “counting” for something of such worth that they complete Christ’s afflictions and benefit the body of Christ.

Col 1:24 is just one of many NT passages that this monograph will examine with an eye to the role that appraised or valued suffering plays in asserting power, influence, or standing<sup>3</sup> and, on this basis, in persuading others to form beliefs or take action. Rom 8:17b offers another example of value attached to suffering: Paul states that being “glorified with” Christ (συνδοξάζω) depends on whether (εἴπερ) Christians “suffer with” Christ now (συνπάσχω). At least for Paul, believers’ readiness to suffer with, or for, Christ has value for confirming their standing as God’s children (8:17a) who anticipate future glorification with Christ.<sup>4</sup> In this study I argue that assertions of

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<sup>1</sup> Gk.: ὑστερήματα. NRSV: “what is lacking.” Unless otherwise stated, English translations of Scripture are from, or reflect only minor variations from, the NRSV.

<sup>2</sup> On the concept of “cultural capital,” see the discussion below in this chapter’s second section (“Forms of Capital,” pp. 9–25).

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of these terms, see “Definitions,” p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Rom 8:17b: εἴπερ συμπάσχομεν ἵνα καὶ συνδοξασθῶμεν. See further the analysis of Rom 8:12–17 in chapter 2.



standing, authority, and power on the basis of withstanding persecution play a prominent and heretofore under-appreciated role in much of the NT.

## A. Prolegomena, Methodology, and Definitions

### 1. Historical Reconstruction and Other Methodological Approaches to Suffering, Persecution, and Martyrdom in Early Christian Literature

Scholars in Early Christian Studies<sup>5</sup> who investigate persecution have first and foremost examined legitimate and important questions of historical reconstruction, seeking *inter alia* to ascertain how many people suffered, how they suffered (for example, financially, by imprisonment, or even death), why they suffered, and whether the claims of persecution or their extent can be verified. Numerous fine articles and essays,<sup>6</sup> as well as books,<sup>7</sup> focus on such “facts” of

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<sup>5</sup> I take Early Christian Studies to include both New Testament Studies and Late Ancient Christian Studies (i.e., Early Church or Patristics).

<sup>6</sup> Timothy D. Barnes, “Pre-Decian *Acta Martyrum*,” *JTS* n.s. 19 (1968): 509–31; Jan den Boeft and Jan Bremmer, “Notiunculae martyrologicae,” *VC* 35 (1981): 43–56; *VC* 36 (1982): 383–402; *VC* 39 (1985): 110–13; *VC* 45 (1991): 105–22; Hans von Campenhausen, “Bearbeitungen und Interpolationen des Polycarpmartyriums,” in idem, *Aus der Frühzeit des Christentums* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1963), 253–301; Richard B. Cook, “Paul and the Victims of His Persecution: The Opponents in Galatia,” *BTB* 32 (2002): 182–91; G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, “Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?” in idem, *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy* (ed. Michael Whitby and Joseph Streeter; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006 [1963]), 105–52; Boudewijn Dehardschutter, “The *Martyrium Polycarpi*: A Century of Research,” *ANRW* 2.27.1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 485–522; Robert Doran, “The Martyr: A Synoptic of the Mother and Her Seven Sons,” in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms* (SBLSCS 12; ed. J. J. Collins and G. W. E. Nickelsburg; Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 183–221; David Frankfurter, “The Cult of the Martyrs in Egypt Before Constantine,” *VC* 48 (1994): 25–47; Martin Goodman, “The Persecution of Paul by Diaspora Jews,” in *The Beginnings of Christianity: A Collection of Articles* (ed. Jack Pastor and Menahem Mor; Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2005), 379–87; Karl Holl, “Die Vorstellung vom Märtyrer und die Märtyrer-Akte in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung,” in idem, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* (Vol. 2: *Der Osten*; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1928), 2:68–102; L. Ann Jervis, “Suffering for the Reign of God: The Persecution of Disciples in *Q*,” *NovT* 44 (2002): 313–32; Frederick C. Klawiter, “The Role of Martyrdom and Persecution in Developing the Priestly Authority of Women in Early Christianity: A Case Study of Montanism,” *CH* 49 (1980): 251–61; reprinted in *Women in Early Christianity* (Studies in Early Christianity 14; ed. David M. Scholer; New York: Garland, 1993), 105–16; Ekkehard Mühlenberg, “The Martyr’s Death and Its Literary Presentation,” *StPatr* 29 (1997): 85–93; Harold Remus, “Persecution,” art. in *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches* (ed. Anthony J. Blasi et al.; New York: AltaMira, 2002), 431–52; Anna Maria Schwemer, “Prophet, Zeuge und Märtyrer: Zur Entstehung des Märtyrerbegriffs im frühesten Christentum,” *ZTK* 96 (1999): 320–50; Grant R. Shafer, “Hell, Martyrdom, and the War: Violence in Early Christianity,” in *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity,*

Christian persecution in the first through the early fourth centuries. These many learned studies offer indispensable resources for the present investigation.

In recent decades several innovative studies have argued that *because early Christian depictions of unjust suffering and persecution stemmed from particular agendas and contexts, these depictions warrant critical examination for purposes other than, or in addition to, historical reconstruction*. Within

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and Islam (Vol. 3: *Models and Cases of Violence in Religion*; ed. J. Harold Ellens; London: Praeger, 2004), 193–246; Morton Smith, “The Reason for the Persecution of Paul and the Obscurity of Acts,” in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion* (ed. Alexander Altmann et al.; FS Gershom G. Scholem; Jerusalem: Magnes Press/Hebrew University, 1967), 261–68; Nicholas H. Taylor, “Who Persecuted the Thessalonian Christians?” *Hervormde Theologiese Studies* 58 (2002): 784–801; Klaus Thraede, “Noch einmal: Plinius d. J. und die Christen,” *ZNW* 95 (2004): 102–28; Guy Wagner, “Le motif juridique des persécutions des premiers chrétiens par les autorités romaines,” *ÉTR* 75 (2000): 1–8.

<sup>7</sup> Anna Sapir Abulafia, ed., *Religious Violence Between Christians and Jews* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Paul Allard, *La persécution de Dioclétien et le triomphe de l'église* (Paris: V. Lecoffre, 1890); Theofried Baumeister, *Die Anfänge der Theologie des Martyriums* (Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie 45; Münster: Aschendorff, 1980); Gary A. Bisbee, *Pre-Decian Acts of Martyrs and Commentarii* (HDR 22; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); Christel Butterweck, “Martyriumssucht” in der alten Kirche? *Studien zur Darstellung und Deutung frühchristlicher Martyrien* (BHT 87; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995); Hans von Campenhausen, *Die Idee des Martyriums in der alten Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964 [1936]); Leon H. Canfield, *The Early Persecutions of the Christians* (Studies in History, Economics and Public Law 136; New York: Columbia University, 1913); Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires* (Brussels: Bollandistes, 1966); Henri Grégoire, *Les persécutions dans l'Empire romain* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1964 [1951]); Élie Griffe, *Les persécutions contre les chrétiens aux Ier et IIe siècles* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1967); Patrick J. Healy, *The Valerian Persecution: A Study of the Relations Between Church and State in the Third Century A.D.* (New York: B. Franklin, 1972 [1905]); Polydore Hochart, *Études au sujet de la persécution des chrétiens sous Néron* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1885); Edward H. Koster, “The Persecutions of the Christians in the Early Roman Empire,” (Diss., University of Chicago, 1923); Richard Laqueur, *Eusebius als Historiker seiner Zeit* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 11; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1929); Pierre Maraval, *Les persécutions des chrétiens durant les quatre premiers siècles* (Bibliothèque d'histoire du christianisme 30; Paris: Desclée/Mame, 1992); Arthur James Mason, *The Historic Martyrs of the Primitive Church* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1905); idem, *The Persecution of Diocletian: A Historical Essay* (Cambridge: Deighton Bell, 1876); Andrea L. Molinari, *The Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles (NHC 6.1): Allegory, Ascent, and Ministry in the Wake of the Decian Persecution* (SBLDS 174; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); Jacques Moreau, *La persécution du christianisme dans l'Empire romain* (Mythes et religions 32; Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1956); Jacques Ryckmans, *La persécution des chrétiens himyarites au sixième siècle* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut in het Nabije Oosten, 1956); Joyce Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion: The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Herbert B. Workman, *Persecution in the Early Church* (New York: Abingdon, 1960 [<sup>4</sup>1923; 1906]; reprinted, Oxford: Oxford University, 1980).

NT studies, the seminal works by Adela Yarbro Collins and John H. Elliott emphasizing the psychological aspects of claimed or anticipated persecution in Revelation and First Peter opened new avenues for considering these authors' attempts to influence their addressees' self-understanding and actions because of the need to persevere amidst suffering.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Collins and Elliott caution that claims about Christians' suffering may be real, anticipated, or exaggerated and that such claims may even stem from envisioning an alternate universe informing the addressees' perception of their present context.

Likewise, in the area of Late Ancient Christian Studies three innovative works merit mention. Judith Perkins argues that in the early Roman imperial period a new concept of "the suffering self" arose, offering to at least certain Christian authors, including those of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* and the *Acts of Peter*, opportunities to foster religious identity on the basis of other Christians' suffering (that is, suffering other than that of the addressees).<sup>9</sup> Developing further the concept of identity derived from suffering, Elizabeth A. Castelli holds that the early Christian martyrdom literature played a role in the formation of Christian self-understanding and culture and that Christians both criticized Roman spectacles and offered an equivalent alternative through making a spectacle of martyrdom.<sup>10</sup>

Another important – and controversial – investigation is *Dying for God*, by Daniel Boyarin.<sup>11</sup> An expert in Judaism in late antiquity, Boyarin claims that similarities in Jewish and Christian conceptions of martyrdom call into question the thesis that Judaism and Christianity had already become two entirely

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<sup>8</sup> See Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984); Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1990) and the discussions of First Peter and Revelation in chapters 3 and 5, respectively. See further Charles H. Talbert, *Learning Through Suffering: The Educational Value of Suffering in the New Testament and in Its Milieu* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991). Although I admire the questions Elliott poses about First Peter and its community, in chapter 3 I criticize several of his conclusions.

<sup>9</sup> Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in Early Christianity* (London: Routledge, 1995); cf. eadem, "The 'Self' as Sufferer," *HTR* 85 (1992): 245–72.

<sup>10</sup> Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (Gender, Theory, and Religion; New York: Columbia University, 2004), 4, states that her purpose is to study "such practices of collective memory in relation to early Christian martyrdom. My thesis is that the memory work done by the early Christians on the historical experience of persecution and martyrdom was a form of culture making, whereby Christian identity was indelibly marked by the collective memory of the religious suffering of others." See further in the same series and with a similar interest in the construction of social identity L. Stephanie Cobb, *Dying To Be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (Gender, Theory, and Religion; New York: Columbia University, 2008). Cf. Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1999); cf. idem, "Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism," *JECS* 6 (1998): 577–627.

separate religions.<sup>12</sup> His fourth chapter, “Whose Martyrdom Is This, Anyway?” explores in postmodern terms the rhetoric of late ancient Jewish and Christian discourse(s) on martyrdom.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, in an appendix to the aforementioned chapter, Boyarin offers an insightful critique of W. H. C. Frend’s classic study, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*.<sup>14</sup> The varied responses to Boyarin’s book reflect the methodological and theoretical diversity of contemporary scholarship in Early Christian Studies. For example, Brian E. Daley largely dismisses the approach and conclusions of Boyarin’s chapters 2–4, objecting in particular to “the imposition of contemporary literary theory” on the primary sources.<sup>15</sup> By contrast, Arthur J. Droge hails the innovation of Boyarin’s work as setting the tone for future scholarship.<sup>16</sup>

One need not agree with all – or several – of the aforementioned scholars’ conclusions to learn from their approaches to persecution, suffering, and martyrdom in early Christian literature. What I view as particularly important are Boyarin’s and others’ laudable attempts to move beyond previous scholarship’s nearly singular focus on historical reconstruction, analyzing instead an

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<sup>12</sup> *Dying for God*, esp. 1–21.

<sup>13</sup> *Dying for God*, 93–126.

<sup>14</sup> Boyarin, “On the Methodology and Theology of W. H. C. Frend’s *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*,” in idem, *Dying for God*, 127–30, on Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965). In this appendix, Boyarin also criticizes Glen W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995). Two other thoughtful essays on how scholars of early Christianity should critically assess claims to persecution and martyrdom are by Arthur J. Droge and Robert M. Grant and concern the indispensable, but immensely problematic, early fourth-century *Ecclesiastical History* by Eusebius of Caesarea. See Droge, “The Apologetic Dimensions of the *Ecclesiastical History*,” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism* (SPB 42; ed. Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 492–509; Grant, “Eusebius and Imperial Propaganda,” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, 658–83.

<sup>15</sup> Daley, review essay of *Dying for God*: “Postmodernizing the Martyrs,” *First Things* 115 (August/September, 2001): 65–68 at 68. Cf. Robin Darling Young, review of *Dying for God* in *Modern Theology* 17 (2001): 393–95 at 393 (“the book accomplishes little more than an ebullient display of contrasts”).

<sup>16</sup> Droge, review of *Dying for God* in *HR* 42 (2002): 175–80, also urges that Boyarin and other scholars compare not only Jewish and Christian conceptions of martyrdom, but also ‘pagan’ ones. See further Jan Willem van Henten, “The Martyrs as Heroes of the Christian People: Some Remarks on the Continuity Between Jewish and Christian Martyrology, with Pagan Analogies,” in *Martyrium in Multidisciplinary Perspective: Memorial Louis Reekmans* (BETL 107; ed. M. Lamberigts and P. van Deun; Leuven: Leuven University, 1995), 303–22; J. W. van Henten and Frederich Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2002); J. W. van Henten et al., eds., *Die Entstehung der jüdischen Martyrologie* (SPB 38; Leiden: Brill, 1989); J. W. van Henten, “Zum Einfluß jüdischer Martyrien auf die Literatur des frühen Christentums (2: Die Apostolischen Väter),” *ANRW* 2.27.1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 700–23.

emerging “discourse” about unjust suffering and persecution in early Christian (and some ancient Jewish) literature. The present study builds on the premise that *claims to persecution and unjust suffering offer a lens through which scholars can study Christian responses to, and constructions of, oppression, as well as the identity derived from such claims*. Boyarin, for example, does not study martyrdom per se; instead, he asks what light Jewish and Christian reflections on martyrdom can shed on these ancient religious movements and their self-definitions and relations to one another. This shift in emphasis, exemplified by Collins, Elliott, Perkins, Castelli, and Boyarin, informs the agenda of my investigation of readiness to withstand persecution as a basis of confirming one’s standing as Christ’s follower in the NT.

Therefore, complementing the important task of historical reconstruction, we can learn much by posing additional questions to early Christian literature on suffering and persecution, drawing from other disciplines as heuristic models of comparison. The different methodological foci should not be seen as historical versus interpretive approaches. Rather, we must recognize that *any* concept of “persecution” is itself a construct. As constructs, depictions of persecution are of high value, and they merit additional critical attention for understanding both historical and literary milieux. Building on the aforementioned studies in particular, the present monograph represents a new contribution to the field of Early Christian Studies. No one to date has examined the use of persecution to legitimize the standing of believers,<sup>17</sup> ecclesiastical authority, or both in the literature that eventually came to comprise the New Testament.

## 2. *Prolegomena and Methodology*

In our age of ever evolving and emerging methods of inquiry, an academic monograph could do any number of trendy and potentially interesting things with such a multivalent topic as “persecution.” My approach to the NT literature is primarily contextual, being both rooted in historical-critical exegesis and informed by theoretical conceptions of power. To the extent necessary for each NT writing examined, I discuss briefly the socio-historical context<sup>18</sup> that a NT author addresses, and I examine, in light of this context, depictions of unjust suffering and the value attributed to remaining faithful amidst oppression. My purpose is to analyze how depictions of unjust suffering and perse-

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<sup>17</sup> See further below under definitions of key terms. I do not use “status” derived from suffering to denote an elite spirituality or standing before God. Rather, I use the term “status” in a more restricted sense, e.g., in regard to Paul’s sometimes disputed status as an apostle. In regard to believers in general, I use the term “standing” to denote stature as a believer because of readiness to withstand persecution.

<sup>18</sup> Discussions of socio-historical context include standard introductory points, such as author, date, audience, opponents, and occasion.

cution serve to further an author's attempts to persuade (that is, to influence people's beliefs and actions), including efforts to corroborate or assert a particular standing, power, authority, or legitimacy on the basis of having withstood persecution. These interests are reflected in the book's title, *Persecution, Persuasion and Power* – for assertions of authority, legitimacy, or standing (possibly excluding that of other people) are naturally claims to power. In order to further articulate the aims of this study, several additional prolegomena will be outlined in the following paragraphs.

First and foremost, I make the basic assumption that the NT writings are occasional, having arisen out of particular contexts. Furthermore, these contexts are oftentimes in no small part defined by inter-Christian disputes over power, legitimacy, and self-definition. The NT literature attests to these struggles within emerging Christianity to assert authority and influence over others on the basis of any number of claims to legitimacy.

Some readers may be surprised by the observation that certain NT authors sensed the need to bolster their own authority. For an example of such bolstering, however, one need look no further than 2 Corinthians 10–12, where the apostle Paul defends his authority at great length against Christian opponents (the so-called “super-apostles,” 2 Cor 11:5; 12:11), who denied that Paul was a legitimate apostle. A central argument is 2 Cor 11:23–33, which describes his many sufferings for Christ, including “dangers” (κίνδυνοι) he encountered from bandits, Jews, Gentiles, and false brethren (ψευδαδελφοί, 11:26). According to Paul, his extensive sufferings corroborate his status as an apostle of Christ. Yet Paul's Christian opponents in Corinth would undoubtedly have given a different assessment of the worth of Paul's sufferings in this context of disputed authority.<sup>19</sup> The distinctive focus of this monograph is to highlight the extent to which appeals to persecution and suffering in the NT bear witness to such struggles to assert authority and influence others.

An additional prolegomenon is that with claims of suffering, people can, and oftentimes do, disagree about “what happened.” Such disagreements can bear on the authenticity or extent of the suffering or, if it is granted that some suffering did occur, whether it was indeed unwarranted and deserves to be called unjust. The latter distinction is not a modern one, given that both Paul and the author of First Peter exhort Christians not to suffer as criminals<sup>20</sup> but to submit to the Roman governing authorities, lest, as lawbreakers, they incur

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<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, the notion that the authors of Scripture could simply presume such authority for the audiences they addressed is both a distortion and an anachronism. See further the discussion of 2 Cor 11:23–33 in chapter 2.

<sup>20</sup> Rom 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:13–17; see further the analyses of these passages in chapters 2 and 3. Of course, the distinction between what constitutes justly bestowed *punishment* for criminal behavior and unjust *persecution* of Jesus' followers may be open to different interpretations, both within and outside the church.

the Romans' divinely authorized judgment. These two NT authors assume that a civilly disobedient Christian would be justly punished and could not afterward claim to have been persecuted.

### 3. Definitions: Persecution, Valuation, and Other Key Terms

A brief clarification of key terms is in order. In this monograph I use *persecution* and *unjust suffering* interchangeably to designate any undeserved penalty or punishment – whether real, imagined, anticipated, or exaggerated – that is said to be incurred in the course of the Christian life. Moreover, I use the related, albeit distinguishable, terms *status*, *standing*, *power*, *authority*, *stature*, and *legitimacy* in similar contexts to indicate the benefit that an author wishes to derive for himself or to confer upon those who suffer under persecution. In regard to the term *status*, I do not find any NT author arguing that by suffering one gains a higher, or even an elite, level of spirituality or favor before God vis-à-vis the standing of Christians who do not suffer. What I mean in regard to *status* is assurance of one's identity and salvation "in Christ," which is perhaps better captured, at least in English,<sup>21</sup> by the term *standing*. That is to say, readiness to endure hardship is a component of fidelity to Christ and, as such, confirms authentic Christian existence or a person's standing in the community. A possible implication that we shall examine in certain NT writings (most notably, Hebrews and Revelation) is that those who fail to withstand persecution lack this assurance and means of confirming their standing as Christ's loyal followers.

Furthermore, I refer to the *valuation*, or *appraisal*, of unjust suffering as the premising of arguments<sup>22</sup> upon persecution, in order to corroborate or assert standing, power, authority, or legitimacy. By this I mean the attributing of value to something that ordinarily cannot be quantified – in this case, a particular trauma, context of suffering, or persecution – thereby construing it as a type of "*cultural capital*" whose value can then be transferred to corroborate standing as Christ's follower or apostolic authority. The following section clarifies this study's use of the term cultural capital and this term's relevance to studying the value of withstanding persecution in the NT.

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<sup>21</sup> An additional potential for misunderstanding is that the German equivalent for the English term "status" (cf. Lat. *status*) as defined above would be *Stand* (meaning "standing") and not the *Status* (a "*faux ami*"), which in German carries hierarchical connotations not presumed in the present study.

<sup>22</sup> See below ("Persecution and Persuasion," pp. 24–25) on this point.

## B. Forms of Capital: Cultural, Social, and Symbolic

In recent decades, scholars have used terms such as “cultural capital,” “symbolic capital,” and “religious capital” in a variety of ways, endeavoring to describe or explain constructions of status and the origins of power and wealth within social systems and cultures, as well as in religious communities and traditions. This section clarifies how I define such terms and to what ends I use them. In particular, it explains why, for heuristic purposes, I usually refer to withstanding persecution as a form of *cultural capital* and how this credential can be “translated” into *social capital*, corroborating a believer’s standing within the community or apostolic authority. Further, I explain why in this study I do not use the terms *religious capital* or *spiritual capital*.

### 1. Pierre Bourdieu on Economic, Cultural, Social, and Symbolic Capital

This study’s use of the concepts of cultural capital and social capital (as well as symbolic capital) is indebted to the late French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002).<sup>23</sup> In his 1983 article, “Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital,”<sup>24</sup> Bourdieu emphasizes three kinds of capital<sup>25</sup> – eco-

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<sup>23</sup> From the beginning of this study, I knew that I wanted to explore aspects of “persecution and power” in the NT and that I would eventually need to work out the methodology and conceptual framework. For the latter, I have found Bourdieu quite helpful, as the present section elaborates.

<sup>24</sup> Bourdieu, “Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital,” in *Soziale Ungleichheiten* (Soziale Welt, Sonderheft 2; ed. Reinhard Kreckel; Göttingen, 1983), 183–98; reprinted in Bourdieu, *Die verborgenen Mechanismen der Macht* (ed. M. Steinrück; Hamburg: VSA-Verlag, 2002 [1992]), 49–79; ET: “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (ed. John G. Richardson; New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241–58; reprinted in *Education: Culture, Economy, Society* (ed. Albert H. Halsey et al.; Oxford: Oxford University, 1997), 46–58. According to both Richardson (*Handbook of Theory*, 241) and Halsey (*Education: Culture, Economy, Society*, p. ix), the 1983 German article is the original version. Email correspondence with Étienne Ollion (on 10 April 2009), a Visiting Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Chicago who teaches a seminar on Bourdieu, confirmed to me the exceptional instance that this article appeared originally in German rather than French, as it expands upon two shorter articles: Bourdieu, “Les trois états du capital culturel,” *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 30 (1979): 3–6; idem, “Le capital social,” *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 31 (1980): 2–3. In what follows, I cite the ET in Richardson, ed., *Handbook of Theory*, 241–58.

<sup>25</sup> Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital,” 241 defines “capital” as “accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its ‘incorporated,’ embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor.”



nomie, cultural, and social – although the concept of “symbolic capital” also receives some attention.<sup>26</sup> He defines these three forms of capital as follows:

[C]apital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain occasions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as *social capital*, made up of social obligations (‘connections’), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility.<sup>27</sup>

Broadly speaking, if social capital has to do with *whom* a person knows, cultural capital bespeaks the honor or stature derived from *what* a person knows and has experienced.<sup>28</sup> In an ancient Mediterranean context, examples of social capital would be one’s (extended) family and the Roman patronage system. For many early Christians, acceptance into the church community could be a treasured form of social capital with the added symbolic significance of

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<sup>26</sup> Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital,” 255 n. 3 writes in regard to *symbolic capital*: “capital – in whatever form – insofar as it is represented, i.e., apprehended symbolically, in a relationship of knowledge or, more precisely, of misrecognition and recognition, presupposes the intervention of the habitus, as a socially constituted cognitive capacity.” Bourdieu discusses at greater length what he means by symbolic capital in his study, *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 2003 [1979]); ET: *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1984). This study has been translated into numerous other languages, including German: *Die feinen Unterschiede: Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982). Symbolic capital has to do with the honor, attention, or prestige ascribed to an item of value and, according to Bourdieu, is necessary for sustaining economic and social capital. Thus, whereas economic, cultural, and social capital may be distinguished from one another, symbolic capital may complement the value attached to any of them. As applied to the study of the New Testament, one could consider, e.g., in the Revelation of John the symbolic capital of honor accorded to the martyrs as evidenced by their place under the heavenly altar (Rev 6:9b) and their being given a white robe (6:11a). Likewise, the apostle Paul’s claim to bear the “marks of Jesus” (τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, Gal 6:17) qualifies as both cultural capital, attesting to his faithfulness in suffering as Christ’s apostle (which in turn confirms his social capital as an approved member of Christ’s apostolate) and to Paul’s symbolic capital, qualifying him to receive honor rather than opposition from the Galatian agitators, whom he accuses of preaching a false gospel in order to avoid persecution (Gal 6:12).

<sup>27</sup> Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital,” 243, emphases original.

<sup>28</sup> See further Bourdieu’s discussions of cultural capital (“Forms of Capital,” 243–48) and social capital (248–252). Bourdieu (248–249) defines “social capital” as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of . . . membership in a group which provides each of its members with the backing of collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.” He further suggests (256 n. 13) that “[m]anners (bearing, pronunciation, etc.) may be included in social capital insofar as . . . they indicate initial membership of a more or less prestigious group.” See further David Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997), esp. 74–82 for a discussion of Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital.

promised salvation.<sup>29</sup> In Bourdieusian terms, the thesis I shall argue is that *in much of the NT withstanding persecution*<sup>30</sup> constitutes a form of cultural capital that can be translated into social capital, namely standing, or even a position of leadership, within the church community.

Bourdieu maintained that a person's position in society could not be explained solely by the amount of accumulated economic capital.<sup>31</sup> He therefore highlighted the need to speak of additional factors that impact economic and other disparities in society: "It is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory."<sup>32</sup> His primary thesis is that in any society the outcome of who attains wealth and power is not analogous to a random game of chance, such as roulette.<sup>33</sup> Rather, it is determined by the influence, opportunities, and power yielded by *all three* forms of capital – economic, cultural, and social.

Furthermore, Bourdieu emphasized, against a reductionist approach to economics and sociology, how *non-economic forms of capital*, whether cultural or social, *can be converted* into economic capital. In particular, he argued that a person's value, influence, and power as derived from education, networking, and constructions of social "class" can be translated into concrete economic advantages, wealth, and power. By introducing the concepts of cultural and social capital, Bourdieu sought to broaden the parameters for understanding economic differences between social classes. He was particularly

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<sup>29</sup> See further Jan N. Bremmer, "The Social and Religious Capital of the Early Christians," *Hephaistos* 24 (2006): 269–78, esp. 270–76 at 270, who discusses "the social capital of the early Christians" in the first through the early fourth centuries in terms of the early Christians' "charity, their interconnectedness, their family aspect, and the processes of bonding and bridging." On the concept of social capital as applied to the study of religion, see Corwin Smidt, ed., *Religion as Social Capital: Producing the Common Good* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2003), especially the essay by John A. Coleman, S.J., "Religious Social Capital: Its Nature, Social Location, and Limits," 33–47. See further Robert Wuthnow, "Religious Involvement and Status-bridging Social Capital," *JSSR* 41 (2002): 669–84.

<sup>30</sup> The NT authors may or may not name the persecution's source, whether from polytheists, Jews, other Christians, or a combination of diverse parties. Regardless of the source of the persecution, the question that this study addresses is what *value* is posited for withstanding that persecution.

<sup>31</sup> Already W. E. B. Du Bois, "Of Work and Wealth," in idem, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1999 [1920]), 47–59 at 57: "The chief meaning of our present thinking is that the disproportion between wealth and poverty today cannot be adequately accounted for by the thrift and ignorance of the rich and the poor." This principle accords with the view that a human being cannot be reduced to his or her possession or production of material goods or their worth. Cf. Deut 8:3; Matt 4:4||Luke 4:4; Mark 8:36 par.

<sup>32</sup> Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 242–43 at 242; cf. 252–53, where he dubs such economic theory as "economism."

<sup>33</sup> Bourdieu cites the example of a game of roulette toward the beginning of his article ("Forms of Capital," 241).

unsatisfied with Marxist economists, who focused on struggles between competing classes solely within the economic arena.<sup>34</sup> He was likewise unsatisfied with the wealthy French bourgeois, who touted the superiority of their social capital, cultural capital, and sense of “taste”<sup>35</sup> to legitimate their retention of wealth and power. Arguing against both the Marxists and the bourgeois, Bourdieu presented his social theory as a kind of *tertium quid* in opposition to the myopic perspectives of both groups.<sup>36</sup> On the basis of his social theory, moreover, he called for reform of inequalities in his French society, including in the educational system, which he accused of reinforcing both economic and social disparities.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Cf. D. Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, 73 on how “Bourdieu distances himself from Marxism . . . by extending the idea of capital to all forms of capital, whether they be material, cultural, social, or symbolic.”

<sup>35</sup> On this point, see Bourdieu’s 1979 study, *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (ET: *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*). See further John Codd, “Making Distinctions: The Eye of the Beholder,” in *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu: The Practice of Theory* (ed. Richard Harker et al.; New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 132–59; Derek Robbins, *The Work of Pierre Bourdieu: Recognizing Society* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991), 117–31, esp. 127–31.

<sup>36</sup> Bourdieu pointedly criticizes both groups in his “Forms of Capital,” 242–43. This particular aspect of his social theory could be described as “neo-Marxist,” although his diverse interests and agenda were arguably too broad to be adequately encapsulated by this category. For example, Bourdieu also disputed at length – in both academic and public contexts – against J.-P. Sartre’s existentialism and C. Levi-Strauss’ (post-)structuralism. See further on this last point D. Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, esp. 29–31, 36–38; D. Robbins, *The Work of Pierre Bourdieu*, 91–92; Bridget Fowler, *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory: Critical Investigations* (London: Sage, 1997), 19, 24; Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* (London: Routledge, 1992), 16–20.

<sup>37</sup> E.g., Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital,” 243–44 at 243 (cf. 256 n. 11): “The notion of cultural capital originally presented itself to me, in the course of research, as a theoretical hypothesis which made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from different social classes by relating academic success, i.e., the specific profits which children from the different classes and class fractions can obtain in the academic market, to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes and class fractions.” As a precedent for his work on non-economic forms of capital, Bourdieu (p. 255 n. 2) refers to Gary S. Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education* (Human Behavior and Social Institutions 5; New York: National Bureau of Economic Research/Columbia University, 1975 [1964]). Cf. Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital,” 246, highlighting the leisure or free time that is required to obtain education and other forms of cultural capital, which wealthier families tend to supply in greater abundance to their children. See further Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital,” 253–55 at 254–55: “As an instrument of reproduction capable of disguising its own function, the scope of the educational system tends to increase, and together with this increase is the unification of the market in social qualifications which gives rights to occupy rare positions.” For an overview and analysis of Bourdieu on this point, see Richard Harker, “Bourdieu: Education and Reproduction,” in *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu: The Practice of Theory* (ed. R. Harker et al.), 86–108; D. Robbins, *The Work of Pierre Bourdieu*, esp. 45–56.

Bourdieu further notes that “the accumulation of cultural capital . . . costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor.”<sup>38</sup> As such, it constitutes “an effort that presupposes a personal cost . . . with all the privation, renunciation, and sacrifice that it may entail.”<sup>39</sup> The religious, and even ascetic, language that Bourdieu uses to describe the cost and dedication necessary for acquiring cultural capital suggests this concept’s transferability for analyzing principles of self-definition and constructions of power within religious traditions. In this book when I refer to *withstanding persecution as a form of cultural capital*, I build on Bourdieu and call attention to the requisite faithfulness, effort, hardship, “privation, renunciation, and sacrifice”<sup>40</sup> that is needed to do so. The common English proverb “There is no royal road to learning” succinctly expresses Bourdieu’s point, which raises inviting questions for interpreting the later acts of the Christian martyrs, the majority of which were written after the conversion of Constantine, when Christianity was officially tolerated and no longer suppressed.<sup>41</sup>

Under certain circumstances, moreover, the believer may have a choice about whether to identify as Christ’s follower and thereby face the likelihood of encountering hardship (for example, Heb 13:13). Chapters 2–10 will demonstrate that several NT authors expected believers to demonstrate faithfulness amidst hardship and persecution and that such faithfulness offered a means for verifying possession of the social and symbolic capital of belonging to Christ’s body.<sup>42</sup> As Bourdieu observed in the case of education,<sup>43</sup> such experiences of hardship cannot be transferred to another person or group by any economic or social means but must be endured by the individual. Afterward the person who has withstood persecution may claim to have acquired the cultural capital as evidenced by endurance, as well as the *resulting value* that could be claimed from having done so.

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<sup>38</sup> Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital,” 244.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. Cf. Bourdieu’s contention (“Forms of Capital,” 245) that cultural capital “defies the old, deep-rooted distinction the Greek jurists made between inherited properties (*ta patroa*) and acquired properties (*epikteta*).”

<sup>40</sup> Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital,” 244.

<sup>41</sup> My question for the martyrdom acta would be: does this literature fill a void perceived from the lack of opportunity for later Christians to suffer persecution and thereby confirm later Christians’ standing as sincere believers? If so, does the production and reading of this literature, as well as the development of cults of the martyrs and interest in their relics, offer opportunities for anamnesis, allowing the faithful to experience what they personally cannot suffer? As is discussed toward the end of this chapter, such questions are beyond the scope of the present study.

<sup>42</sup> See the discussions of, e.g., Rom 8:17; 2 Thess 1:4–5; 1 Pet 2:11–17; 4:12–19; Rev 20:4–6 in the following chapters.

<sup>43</sup> See above on Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital,” 244.

## 2. The Transference of Capital

Particularly helpful to the present study is Bourdieu's thesis that non-economic forms of capital can, under certain circumstances, be translated, or converted, into other forms of value. The final section of Bourdieu's article treats this point about the "conversions" of capital.<sup>44</sup> This argument of Bourdieu also plays a role in his criticism of reductionist "[e]conomic theory" informed by dialectical materialism, which "defines as disinterested those forms of exchange which ensure *transubstantiation* whereby the most material types of capital – those which are economic in the restricted sense – can present themselves in the immaterial form of cultural capital and social capital and vice versa."<sup>45</sup>

On the possibility of exchanging one form of capital for another, Bourdieu highlights the great *uncertainty* about how efficiently (or not) this may take place.<sup>46</sup> As an illustration, Bourdieu observes that completing an education may or may not result in receiving a particular job.<sup>47</sup> Given the sometimes tenuous relationship between the labor market and the university (or other educational) system, in many instances there is no assurance that a particular course of study will guarantee economic gain in the form of wages or other opportunities to produce wealth. In general, I find this argument illuminating and persuasive. It nonetheless stands in tension with Bourdieu's somewhat overgeneralized, pragmatic principle about "strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital."<sup>48</sup> Bourdieu's principle construes human decisions as far too rational, calculating, and pragmatic and runs in the opposite direction of observations he offers elsewhere in his article, including in two footnotes.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 252–55.

<sup>45</sup> Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 242.

<sup>46</sup> "Forms of Capital," 253–54: "Thus the (apparent) incommensurability of the different types of capital introduces a high degree of uncertainty into all transactions between holders of different types."

<sup>47</sup> "Forms of Capital," 254.

<sup>48</sup> Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 253 writes, "The convertibility of the different types of capital is the basis of the strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital . . . by means of the conversions least costly in terms of conversion work and of the losses inherent in the conversion itself. . . ." Moreover, I do not agree with Bourdieu ("Forms of Capital," 252) "that economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital" or that non-economic forms of capital (which Bourdieu refers to as "disguised forms of economic capital") "produce their most specific effects only to the extent that they conceal . . . the fact that economic capital is . . . at the root of their effects."

<sup>49</sup> Bourdieu acknowledges in a note ("Forms of Capital," 256–57 n. 14) that "[n]ational liberation movements or nationalist ideologies" can arise at great expense to economic capital, thus privileging a form of *social* capital (freedom, independence, liberation) over *economic* gain. Moreover, Bourdieu's generalization (cited above) also stands in counterpoint to a clarification he offers in another note (257 n. 18) "that the investment in question here is not necessarily conceived as a calculated pursuit of gain, but that it has every likelihood of being

Despite such tensions within Bourdieu's overall argument, his observation has merit to the extent that people sometimes learn for the reward of learning without giving significant consideration to the likelihood of "converting" the cultural capital of education into the economic gain of a particular job.<sup>50</sup> In such instances, one could observe the conversion of economic capital (the wealth, leisure, and means for studying) into cultural capital (becoming educated) that would probably not thereafter be directly, or perhaps ever, converted back into economic profit. Similarly, people sometimes pursue virtue, philanthropic activities, or the arts (including music) for these undertakings' own sakes and without thought of economic reward<sup>51</sup> – if not also at a substantial cost of time and money.

My study does not take a stand on whether early Christians withstood persecution primarily out of faithfulness to the good news rather than to gain a transferable credential. Generally speaking, I do not address the question of early Christians' "motive(s)" for enduring hardship, since ascertaining motive or intent in any work of literature can be extremely difficult, if not speculative. What we can examine are the NT authors' statements and assumptions about the value ascribed to withstanding persecution – that is, the rationale for why the faithful should endure, as well as potential consequences should they not. Regardless of the motives, ultimate causes, or circumstances of the persecution depicted, the question that interests this study is the extent to which faithfulness amidst persecution is regarded as a form of non-economic (in this instance, cultural) capital and how its posited value may then be transferred to serve an author's agenda of corroborating legitimacy, authority, or self-definition, among other matters.

Additionally, this study examines a point of ambiguity and uncertainty about the transferability of a particular type of cultural capital, namely withstanding persecution. In the NT, assertions of transferability are often based upon criteria that were fluid (that is, not clearly defined) or even disputed. Moreover, one cannot assume that the NT authors' various addressees agreed with their leaders' definitions of what constituted valuable cultural capital. Particularly interesting is the opportunity to observe the NT authors attempting to define such criteria and to persuade others of what counts as bona fide

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experienced in terms of the logic of . . . an involvement which is both necessary and disinterested." Thus, he recognizes that human behavior cannot be entirely explained by competition to acquire the different forms of capital in order to convert them into economic advantage. The resulting tension between these two notes and the above cited generalization is not resolved in his essay, however.

<sup>50</sup> "Forms of Capital," 254. See further on this point below.

<sup>51</sup> Besides economic benefits, such activities may nonetheless reward one's social capital by offering access to people who likewise place a high value on virtue, philanthropy, or the arts.

cultural capital and how the value of that capital could be transferred for other purposes.<sup>52</sup>

### 3. Bourdieusian Theory and Early Christian Studies

Inasmuch as this book does not examine economic disparities among stratified social classes in early Christian communities,<sup>53</sup> Bourdieu's theory must be contextualized for the study of early Christianity. With the exception of articles by Jan N. Bremmer and Troels Engberg-Pedersen,<sup>54</sup> the possible importance of Bourdieu's work for Early Christian Studies remains largely unexplored. As applied to the study of early Christianity more generally, Bourdieu's work on diverse forms of capital could suggest that group(s) that eventually emerged with the most power and influence did so on the basis of having acquired various forms of cultural, social, symbolic, and economic capital. The church's eventual leaders would also need to convince others about the worth of the posited values of the forms of capital used to corroborate legitimacy and authority.

The thesis of my book, to be argued in the exegetical analyses of NT texts (chapters 2–10), is that numerous NT passages construe the withstanding of persecution as a form of cultural capital convertible to power, authority, legitimacy, or standing within the Christian community. This study builds upon Bourdieu's framework to show *the conversion of cultural capital of withstanding persecution into social capital*. The cultural capital of having withstood persecution or readiness to withstand persecution confirms that one truly belongs to Christ or has the stature of an approved Christian leader.

In emerging Christianity, however, the "rules of the game" about who possessed authority (and on what basis) and whose suffering counted (and for

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<sup>52</sup> Bourdieu referred to attempts to persuade on the basis of symbolic capital as "symbolic violence." See further on this point D. Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, 82–93; Terry Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion: Imposing Faith and Legitimacy* (London: Equinox, 2007), 53–55, 99–103; Robert Schmidt, ed., *Symbolische Gewalt: Herrschaftsanalyse nach Pierre Bourdieu* (Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2008), esp. the essay by Franz Schultheis, "Symbolische Gewalt: Zur Genese eines Schlüsselkonzepts der bourdieuschen Soziologie," 25–44.

<sup>53</sup> Such an investigation of later periods of church history, for which more data may be available, could prove to be quite interesting and rewarding.

<sup>54</sup> Bremmer, "Social and Religious Capital of the Early Christians"; Engberg-Pedersen, "Paul's Necessity: A Bourdieuesque Reading of the Pauline Project," in *Beyond Reception: Mutual Influences Between Antique Religion, Judaism, and Early Christianity* (Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity 1; ed. David Brakke et al.; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2006), 69–88. Of these two essays, Bremmer's on social and religious capital is more relevant to the present study and is discussed below. Engberg-Pedersen brings other aspects of Bourdieusian theory to bear upon the acceptance of the "Gentiles as Gentiles," upon Paul's "concept of the person and self," and upon Paul's relationship to "the Jewish and Greco-Roman sides of [his] context" (87, emphasis original).

what) would not be resolved for generations – indeed, centuries – if ever. Pierre Bourdieu seems to be aware of the potential for differences of valuation, depending on the context, but does not address the problem directly: “Dispositions that are given a negative value in the educational market may receive very high value in other markets – not least, of course, in the relationships internal to the class.”<sup>55</sup> Moreover, Bourdieu does not allow for differences of valuation within the same context, whether “the educational market,” a social class, or a particular religious tradition. The present study explores such potential differences among people who ostensibly belong to the *same* subgroup – that is, the nascent Jesus movement – and are battling for the right to define that group’s principles of self-definition and constructions of authority.

The earliest church, of course, possessed neither a fixed, authoritative canon of Christian Scripture nor an established episcopate that could enforce such definitions about the posited value of non-economic capital. Especially when early church leaders disagreed and competed with one another for influence, they would at times seek additional means of bolstering their authority or legitimacy. Appeals to suffering constitute one such means. I have previously examined other such appeals that were popular in early Christianity, including miracle working and, at least as early as the second century, ascetic practices.<sup>56</sup> This is not to allege that the primary objective of withstanding persecution, miracle working, or asceticism was to gain power or influence.

The present study calls attention to the additional *utility* of such activities when disputes about authority or self-definition would arise. The book’s subtitle, *Readiness To Withstand Hardship as a Corroboration of Legitimacy in the New Testament*, highlights competing early Christian definitions of standing and authority. Economic language of cultural capital, appraisal, and valuation offers a heuristic device to elucidate a neglected aspect of numerous NT texts without ignoring the richness and complexity of this literature. Any number of early Christian authors attached great “value” to Jesus’ suffering and death.<sup>57</sup> With Michael Wolter, moreover, we note a corollary reflection of

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<sup>55</sup> Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital,” 255 n. 5. See further p. 258 n. 21 on competition between “dominant factions” for influence and attempts of such factions to evade each other’s influence.

<sup>56</sup> Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark* (WUNT 2.112; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 245–339; idem, “The Apostle Paul and Justin Martyr on the Miraculous: A Comparison of Appeals to Authority,” *GRBS* 42 (2001): 163–84; idem, *The Diet of John the Baptist: “Locusts and Wild Honey” in Synoptic and Patristic Interpretation* (WUNT 176; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), esp. 132–93; idem, “Early Christian Ascetic Practices and Biblical Interpretation: The Witnesses of Galen and Tatian,” in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context* (NovTSup 122; ed. John Fotopoulos; FS David E. Aune; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 439–44.

<sup>57</sup> For example, Mark 10:45||Matt 20:28; Rom 3:25; 1 Tim 2:6; Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:2.



several NT authors that *the suffering of Jesus' followers likewise has some value*, a reflection that arises as a natural inference from treasuring Jesus' passion:

Ihr theologisches Zentrum . . . findet die frühchristliche Leidensdeutung jedoch im Leidensgeschick Jesu Christi selbst: Weil sich die Gemeinden zu dem bekannten, der selbst gelitten hat, konnten sie ihre eigene Leidenswirklichkeit als einen integralen Bestandteil ihrer christlichen Identität wahrnehmen.<sup>58</sup>

One task of NT Christology is to define how NT authors appraised the value of Jesus' suffering and its benefits for humanity.<sup>59</sup> A possible implication for the value of suffering by Jesus' followers has received significantly less attention from NT scholars and is the focus of the present study.<sup>60</sup>

I submit that the use of economic language for heuristic purposes offers a valuable aid to understanding the appraisals of suffering's value that the NT authors either argue or presuppose in both hortatory and polemical contexts. This study poses a theoretically informed question about the worth of withstanding persecution. Findings will be supported by historical-critical exegesis of the relevant NT passages. The goal is to analyze *how, why, and to what ends these authors attached value to Christians' sufferings* and how these valuations aided the authors' overall arguments. Accordingly, this book will illuminate how attaching value to Christians' suffering plays a role in the various purposes, or occasions, of the NT literature.

#### *4. Bourdieu, His Interpreters, and His Critics on Religious and Spiritual Capital*

The preceding subsections have touched upon only a small portion of Bourdieu's numerous and diverse scholarly pursuits.<sup>61</sup> Even prior to his death in 2002, the importance and complexity of his contributions on a range of mat-

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<sup>58</sup> Wolter, "Der Apostel und seine Gemeinden als Teilhaber am Leidensgeschick Jesu Christi: Beobachtungen zur paulinischen Leidenstheologie," *NTS* 36 (1990): 535–57 at 537.

<sup>59</sup> This, too, may be described as a form of "cultural capital" bestowed somehow upon Jesus' true followers.

<sup>60</sup> A prime example of such reflection appears in the passage with which this chapter began (Col 1:24), where the Paul of Colossians compares the value of his "sufferings" (παθήματα) with that of Christ's "afflictions" (θλίψεις) "for the sake of" (ὕπέρ) the church. At the very least, these introductory remarks demonstrate the plausibility that certain NT authors attached value not only to Jesus' suffering but also, at times, to the suffering of Jesus' followers. How NT authors utilize the ascribed value of this cultural capital is the subject of this monograph.

<sup>61</sup> His extensive publications are listed in Yvette Delsaut and Marie-Christine Rivière, *Bibliographie des travaux de Pierre Bourdieu: suivi d'un entretien entre Pierre Bourdieu et Yvette Delsaut sur l'esprit de la recherche* (Pantin: Temps des Cerises, 2002), 9–169. See further the online bibliography of Bourdieu's works (HyperBourdieu WorldCatalogue; ed. Ingo Mörtz and Gerhard Fröhlich): <http://hyperbourdieu.jku.at/> (on 2 April 2009).

ters had already given rise to numerous introductory volumes on his writings and social theory.<sup>62</sup> A scholar as prolific and influential as Bourdieu will naturally be succeeded by others who wish to refine, build upon, and respond to his work.<sup>63</sup> For example, his theory of cultural capital has been cited as playing a role in contemporary debates over the definition of academic canons of literature.<sup>64</sup>

*a) Bourdieu and His Interpreters on Religious Capital: The Question of Applicability to the Study of Emerging Christianity*

Building on Bourdieu, a number of historians and sociologists of religion have employed the concepts of “religious capital”<sup>65</sup> and “spiritual capital”<sup>66</sup> to

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<sup>62</sup> What follows is only a selection of the introductory literature on Bourdieu and his work: Richard Harker et al., eds., *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu: The Practice of Theory* (1990); D. Robbins, *The Work of Pierre Bourdieu: Recognizing Society* (1991); R. Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* (1992); D. Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (1997); B. Fowler, *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory* (1997); Markus Schwingel, *Pierre Bourdieu zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, <sup>2</sup>1998 [1995]); B. Fowler, ed., *Reading Bourdieu on Society and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Jeremy F. Lane, *Pierre Bourdieu: A Critical Introduction* (London: Pluto, 2000); Bernard Lahire, *Le travail sociologique de Pierre Bourdieu: dettes et critiques* (Paris: La Découverte, <sup>2</sup>2001); Christian Papilloud, *Bourdieu lesen: Einführung in eine Soziologie des Unterschieds* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2003); Alain Accardo, *Introduction à une sociologie critique. lire Pierre Bourdieu* (Marseille: Agone, <sup>3</sup>2006); Boike Rehbein, ed., *Bourdieu-Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2008).

<sup>63</sup> E.g., Craig J. Calhoun et al., eds., *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993); Ingo Mörrth, ed., *Das symbolische Kapital der Lebensstile: Zur Kultursociologie der Moderne nach Pierre Bourdieu* (Frankfurt: Campus-Verlag, 1994); Michael Grenfell and Michael Kelly, eds., *Pierre Bourdieu: Language, Culture and Education. Theory into Practice* (Bern: Lang, 1999); Lisa Adkins and Beverly Skeggs, eds., *Feminism After Bourdieu* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); David L. Swartz and Vera L. Zolberg, eds., *After Bourdieu: Influence, Critique, Elaboration* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2004).

<sup>64</sup> See John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), who, building on Bourdieu, argues that literature itself is a form of cultural capital and that debates over its value reflect not only intellectual arguments but also broader, and competing, social contexts.

<sup>65</sup> See Jerry Z. Park and Christian Smith, “‘To Whom Much Has Been Given...’: Religious Capital and Community Voluntarism Among Churchgoing Protestants,” *JSSR* 39 (2000): 272–86; Lora Stone, “‘Misrecognition of the Limits’: Bourdieu’s *Religious Capital* and Social Transformation,” *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 3/1 (2001), online at <http://www.jcrt.org/archives/03.1/stone.shtml> (on 22 June 2010); Roger Finke and Kevin D. Dougherty, “The Effects of Professional Training: The Social and Religious Capital Acquired in Seminaries,” *JSSR* 41 (2002): 103–20; and, in NT studies, the above cited article by J. Bremmer, “Social and Religious Capital of the Early Christians,” esp. 276–78.

<sup>66</sup> The present subsection is concerned with religious capital. The following subsection will discuss spiritual capital.

better understand dynamics of power within religious movements.<sup>67</sup> Such studies offer much promise and attest to the applicability of Bourdieusian theory to religious and theological studies. Generally speaking, the concept of *religious capital* can overlap considerably, if not wholly, with Bourdieu's concepts of cultural, social, and symbolic capital, but religious capital has significance *within a well-defined religious community or tradition*. The term "religious capital" stems from Bourdieu himself, for whom the study of religion was only a minor interest and whose theory of religion Max Weber heavily influenced.<sup>68</sup> For Bourdieu, examples of religious capital include the (Roman Catholic) Church's control of who receives the sacraments and that church's granting of legitimacy to political and economic domination.

Critically applying Bourdieu's concept of religious capital to the study of early Christianity, Jan Bremmer discusses three examples of the early Christians' religious capital, namely "the love of God"; "the belief in salvation and condemnation"; and "belief in . . . life everlasting."<sup>69</sup> One may question, however, what insight Bremmer's application of Bourdieusian theory yields for a better understanding of early Christian constructions of power and influence, which, as discussed above, is a main concern in Bourdieu's work on the forms of capital. Such early Christian beliefs are rooted in the assurance that one belongs to the people of God. Membership in the community is a form of social capital with numerous potential symbolic meanings, including those Bremmer summarizes. I agree with Bremmer that such beliefs had great value for early Christians. Furthermore, the hope inspired by such beliefs can correlate with a level of fidelity to the early Christian movement and, plausibly, to believers' willingness to suffer persecution because of the social and symbolic value attached to association with that movement.

Bourdieu's studies of religion have been criticized for reflecting his particular French context and for overemphasizing the power of institutional religion to the neglect of popular religious movements.<sup>70</sup> Especially for the pur-

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<sup>67</sup> One could also argue for the importance of additional forms of non-economic capital, as, e.g., Diane Reay does for "emotional capital" and its value for children's development and education: "Gendering Bourdieu's Concept of Capitals? Emotional Capital, Women and Social Class," in *Feminism After Bourdieu* (ed. L. Adkins and B. Skeggs), 57–74.

<sup>68</sup> As Terry Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion*, 94–99 (cf. 117–20) observes. See further Bremmer, "Social and Religious Capital of the Early Christians," 276: "Bourdieu himself had but little interest in religion. His publications are hardly more than a dozen in this field and [are] clearly influenced by his French experience. So it is not surprising that he is not of much use as a source of inspiration in this respect" (i.e., for investigating the early Christians' religious capital).

<sup>69</sup> Bremmer, "Social and Religious Capital of the Early Christians," 277–78 (cf. 276). Bremer (p. 276) acknowledges certain drawbacks to Bourdieu's approach to the study of religion, which we will consider in the following paragraph.

<sup>70</sup> For example, Matthew Guest, "In Search of Spiritual Capital: The Spiritual as a Cultural Resource," in *A Sociology of Spirituality* (ed. K. Flanagan and Peter C. Jupp; Aldershot:

pose of studying a small, emerging, and pre-modern religious movement such as early Christianity, employing a concept of “religious capital” could well prove awkward. One reason for this difficulty is that the term “religion” is problematic for the study of ancient religious phenomena, which cannot be isolated from larger historical, cultural, and philosophical contexts.<sup>71</sup> Generally speaking, ancient religions lacked an organized hierarchy, fixed traditions, and rituals that we tend to associate with a modern “religion.”<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the term “capital,” at least for Bourdieu, denotes the potential to wield power or influence. It is doubtful that the tiny minority of the population associated with the Jesus movement during the first and second centuries C.E. wielded within Greco-Roman society any such power derived from “religious capital,” although the power of church leaders within their emerging constituencies is not to be underestimated.<sup>73</sup>

In light of such considerations, I therefore question whether, for the study of the NT, the term religious capital offers a helpful explanatory tool beyond Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural, social, and symbolic capital. This is not to dismiss the importance of religious capital or its value for the study of an or-

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Ashgate, 2007), 181–200 at 188, 189: “Bourdieu’s understanding of religious capital is not without its problems. Not least, it is shaped by a particular appropriation of French Roman Catholicism, specifically in its conceptual organisation around the priest/laity distinction. His treatment is therefore limited, not least as it advances a conceptual scheme that is . . . applicable [only] to a narrow range of contexts. An uncritical application of Bourdieu’s model to non-Christian or indeed non-Roman Catholic contexts would risk serious misrepresentation of the phenomena under study. . . . Bourdieu presents religious power in essentially dualistic terms, as a struggle between priesthood and laity, thus making little room for a more complex distribution of resources.” See further T. Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion*, 120–27, esp. 126–27.

<sup>71</sup> See, e.g., James B. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Blackwell Ancient Religions; London: Blackwell, 2007), esp. 4–7 at 6 explaining why he offers “a study not of ‘the religions of the Roman Empire,’ but of ‘religion in the Roman Empire’” and 13–53 on the problem of “identifying ‘religion’ in the Graeco-Roman world” and the multivalence of the term *religio*. This is not, however, to criticize Jonathan Z. Smith’s call for greater methodological interaction between scholars in biblical and religious studies and for emphasizing the benefits of a comparative approach (“Religion and the Bible,” *JBL* 128 [2009]: 5–27, esp. 6–9, 26–27). Indeed, I agree strongly with Smith on these points, although for the reasons stated above I would likely be among those whom Smith would chide for “resisting the social category ‘religion’ for” studying pre-modern religious phenomena, including those reflected in biblical literature (“Religion and the Bible,” 5).

<sup>72</sup> With regard to “religious authority in the Graeco-Roman tradition,” James Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 43 observes “that people were to a very large extent in charge of their own religious lives and had no need of religious specialists.” He further suggests (52) that “[i]nstead of ‘a religion,’ we can more usefully think of it [the Graeco-Roman religious tradition] as a group of loosely related but largely distinct ways of thinking about and interacting with the divine world.”

<sup>73</sup> For Late Ancient Christianity subsequent to the conversion of the Emperor Constantine (312 C.E.), one could consider this matter differently in light of the church’s increased power, recognition, and constituency within the larger society.

ganized religion's power and influence in a society *after* that religion achieves a level of organizational coherence and influence over its constituency and, to a certain extent, in the larger society as well. In regard to the emerging Christian movement, the NT and other early Christian literature offer abundant witnesses to struggles to achieve such coherence, to define who would wield the greatest influence within the church, and to establish the grounds on which that influence would hold sway. The following subsection offers a similar critique of the even more recent concept of spiritual capital.

### *b) From Religious Capital to Spiritual Capital?*

Responding to difficulties with Bourdieu's concept of religious capital, a number of recent scholars now favor the term *spiritual capital*, which recognizes dynamics of power within both organized and more "popular" or fluid religious movements, as well as in individual religious (or "spiritual") experiences.<sup>74</sup> In this very recent secondary literature, definitions of what is meant by spiritual capital can be diverse, imprecise, or at times lacking.<sup>75</sup> Spiritual capital can measure individual or congregational empowerment to action to

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<sup>74</sup> Scholars today seem to use the term "spiritual capital" more frequently than "religious capital." See Lynne Friedli, "Social and Spiritual Capital: Building 'Emotional Resilience' in Communities and Individuals," *Political Theology: The Journal of Christian Socialism* 2 (2001): 55–64 on religious communities as a potentially positive influence in promoting mental health; Raquel Romberg, *Witchcraft and Welfare: Spiritual Capital and the Business of Magic in Modern Puerto Rico* (Austin: University of Texas, 2003), which, given the title, surprisingly has only passing interaction with Bourdieu (pp. 6, 273 n. 7); Bradford Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu Against Bourdieu," *Sociological Theory* 21 (2003): 150–74, seeking to broaden Bourdieu's discussion of "religious capital" within an organized and hierarchical religious system, such as the French Roman Catholic Church known to Bourdieu; Hugh B. Urban, "Sacred Capital: Pierre Bourdieu and the Study of Religion," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 15 (2003): 354–89; B. Verter, "Bourdieu and the Bâuls Reconsidered: Response [to H. B. Urban]," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 16 (2004): 182–92; H. B. Urban, "Spiritual Capital, Academic Capital and the Politics of Scholarship: A Response to Bradford Verter," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 17 (2005): 166–75; Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, *Spiritual Capital: Wealth We Can Live By* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2004), applying a concept of "spiritual capital" to "spiritual intelligence," perhaps analogously to how some psychologists refer to emotional intelligence; Douglas J. Davies and Matthew Guest, *Bishops, Wives and Children: Spiritual Capital Across the Generations* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), esp. 5–8, 103 arguing that "cultural, social, symbolic, economic, [and] spiritual" forms of capital merit consideration (103); M. Guest, "In Search of Spiritual Capital: The Spiritual as a Cultural Resource" (2007), similarly to B. Verter, defining "spiritual" as referring to the individual and "religious" to organized religion; W. Duncan Reekie, *Spiritual Capital, Natural Law and the Secular Market Place* (London: Civitas, 2007).

<sup>75</sup> Fine examples of critical analysis include B. Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu Against Bourdieu"; and M. Guest, "In Search of Spiritual Capital: The Spiritual as a Cultural Resource."

pursue social justice and to transform society as, for example, in nineteenth-century liberal Protestant Social Gospel theology or in the twentieth-century Catholic Worker Movement in America. In contrast, the NT writings reflect no agenda of transforming society in ways analogous to those examined in some studies of spiritual capital.

I do not regard the term spiritual capital as a promising advance in Bourdieusian theory, since the expression does not distinguish between forms of cultural and social capital or address the possible transference of spiritual capital into another form of capital.<sup>76</sup> My choice to work with Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and its possible transference as a corroboration of social capital does not entail a sweeping judgment against the commendable work by scholars, including Bourdieu, who utilize concepts of religious or spiritual capital. More than anything, this choice recognizes conceptual and methodological difficulties posed by the vagueness of the terms religious capital and spiritual capital for explaining ancient religious phenomena, including those attested in the NT.<sup>77</sup>

### 5. Cultural Capital and Disputed Authority

In a context of disputed authority or legitimacy, a claim of persecution can serve as a type of cultural capital, or a commodity of power, that can be leveraged in an effort to assert legitimacy and influence others. The present study casts light on numerous arguments in the NT, each roughly claiming either "those who suffer(ed) therefore possess a certain stature"<sup>78</sup> or "I suffered; therefore, you must now believe or do what I say."<sup>79</sup> To these two basic arguments linking persecution with standing or persuasion, numerous variations are possible. Concerning the former, for example, the premises "I suffered

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<sup>76</sup> Within a framework of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital, the points of reference are clear. Using concepts of religious and spiritual capital can result in imprecise terminology and a lack of methodological clarity. In this respect, my approach is closer to that exemplified in Corwin Smidt, ed., *Religion as Social Capital: Producing the Common Good* (2003), which analyzes religion in American cultural and political life under the rubric of Bourdieu's concept of social capital, rather than in terms of religious or spiritual capital.

<sup>77</sup> Bourdieu's definition of cultural capital could, of course, be further refined in light of the massive and ever-increasing body of literature stemming from his followers and critics. For the heuristic purposes of the present study, however, I regard the preceding remarks to be sufficient. Rather than quibble at the beginning of a monograph about possible additional, or nuanced, connotations of cultural capital and its transmission into power, prestige, and social recognition, I prefer to bring the concept to the diverse literature encompassed within the NT and to allow the individual texts to speak for themselves. In the epilogue we shall revisit this point.

<sup>78</sup> For example, 2 Cor 11:23–33 and Col 1:24, mentioned above and discussed at greater length in chapter 2.

<sup>79</sup> E.g., Gal 4:19–20; 5:11; 6:17 (cf. 6:12), discussed in chapter 2.

and you did not”<sup>80</sup> and “You persecuted me” can support the exclusive claim that “therefore, I possess a certain standing, power, authority, or legitimacy which you cannot claim” – at least not on the basis of having withstood persecution. Furthermore, as we will see in Luke-Acts, an author could associate his community with *others* who previously have been persecuted in order to gain stature or influence for that later community. As will be seen in the chapters on First Peter, Hebrews, Revelation, and the Gospel of Mark, moreover, a *community’s* faithfulness (or lack thereof) in withstanding persecution can likewise be appraised as an indication of its current members’ standing (or lack thereof) as sincere followers of Christ. Rom 8:17 (cited above) illustrates that this kind of appraisal is also part of the Pauline tradition.

The straightforward, if not simplistic, presentation of such arguments commends an additional observation: in a context of disputed authority, *the value of withstanding persecution as a form of cultural capital is not self-evident*. On the contrary, such assertions of value are built upon numerous judgments and, as such, are *subject to redefinition or even rejoinder* from others. Therefore, even if people happen to agree generally about “what happened” (for example, that a persecution occurred or what its extent was), there are many different ways that one could appeal to persecution as a basis for the corroboration of standing or authority.

In summary, we will examine three points in the NT literature:

1. Conflicts that an author addresses.
2. Uses of persecution to bolster standing and influence of author, audience, or both.
3. Ways that others could, or did,<sup>81</sup> dispute such claims, or the ascribed value of those claims, as cultural capital, thereby limiting or refuting the assertion of power or standing.

Each of these points merits specific attention within a NT writing, and it is particularly fruitful to discuss them in relation to one another.

## 6. Persecution and Persuasion

When an author argues for the existence and value of persecution as cultural capital, he can then attempt to “transfer” the acquired capital to corroborate the desired standing, power, authority, legitimacy, or response from the congregation. In numerous NT passages examined in this study, the asserted worth of suffering by one or more Christians is what “purchases” the right to corroborate or assert authority to influence others. For example, in 2 Cor 11:23c–33 Paul’s suffering and difficulties as Christ’s servant constitute a cultural capital that Paul leverages to counter his Christian opponents’ denial of

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<sup>80</sup> See esp. Gal 6:12, 17, where Paul contrasts his suffering with the lack of suffering by his Christian opponents, whom he accuses of intentionally avoiding persecution.

<sup>81</sup> Inasmuch as the various opponents of the NT authors rarely, if ever, speak for themselves in the surviving sources, such inferences must be made with caution.