This is lecture number nineteen. We come today to the first epistle of Peter. Since earliest days in the history of the church, the claim of the first verse that it was written by Peter, “an apostle of Jesus Christ,” has generally been accepted. There are, indeed, interesting similarities in Peter’s epistles with details we learn about that apostle from both Acts and the Gospels. Nevertheless, in modern days, there have been several objections to this claim of petrine authorship. One relates to the very literate and fluent vocabulary and style: too Greek, some would say, for a native Jew and rough fisherman who would have been learning Greek as his second language, particularly if the unlearned nature of Peter and his fellow apostles as described in Acts 4:13 is pressed.

On the other hand, I Peter gives a clue as to its composition with a verse toward the end of the epistle, 5:12, which is phrased somewhat differently than the language we find in any of the other New Testament epistles. There we read, “With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly.” This may simply be a reflection of who Peter’s scribe or amanuenses for this letter was, but the language with “the help of” can also be construed to mean that Silas took a more active role of putting the letter into the style and form that we now find it in. As a Greek himself, he certainly would have the ability to give the letter this polish.

Other issues related to whether or not Peter could have written this letter surround its date. Does it, for example, as some claim, refer to events that could not have happened within Peter’s lifetime? Two verses that are often referred to here are 4:12, which literally refers to the “fiery trial that Peter’s audience is suffering,” suggesting to some that some Christians are already being martyred, burned at the stake as it were, events which did not occur during the 1st century of the church. Or again in 5:9, we read that “your brothers throughout the world are
undergoing the same kind of sufferings,” suggesting the more intense, at least, empire-wide persecution which did not take place until the end of the 1st century or even into the 2nd century.

On the other hand, it is probable that 4:12 is meant to be taken metaphorically rather than literally. It is significant that the NIV, for example, translates it not as the “fiery trial” but simply as the “painful trial you are suffering.” And 5:9, in fact, even if taken literally, was never true at any point during subsequent Roman persecutions; no persecution was equally severe throughout the entire empire. It is best, therefore, to see a much more sporadic and local type of persecution involved here that did, in fact, emerge at an early date even in the various known parts of the empire within the first generation of Christianity. As one reads, for example, in the beginning verses of chapter 4, we sense a type of persecution that is more a rejection of friends and neighbors in local communities as newly converted believers no longer participate in the same licentious and indulgent activities that they previously had.

Still other issues related to the question of authorship involve apparent similarities with Paul’s epistles, particularly some of his latest, written in prison in the 60s. This could exclude Peter as author, only if some of these epistles, too, are post-Pauline or if there was no way for Peter to quickly learn about Paul’s writings. But indeed, if both are written traditionally as has been suggested from Rome, this need not be a prohibitive concern either.

Typical New Testament introductions can provide further detail about introductory considerations, but we must summarize so we can proceed to our analysis. The pseudonymity of I Peter is perhaps affirmed by a slight majority of current scholars, but among the more moderate conservatives, this is generally not taken too seriously. Given the possibility of Silas’s involvement with Peter, given the unanimity of the traditional claims of the early days in the church, and given the clear reference in 1:1, it seems best to assume this is the apostle Peter, in which case, we need to find a setting for the letter prior to Peter’s death, as tradition ascribes it, under Nero, martyrdom by upside-down crucifixion sometime before the death of Nero in AD 68.
Chapter 5:13 claims that the letter was written from Babylon, but Babylon was largely a city in ruins in New Testament times and we have evidence from the book of Revelation as well as other later Christian authors that “Babylon” was frequently a code word used to describe Rome. Rome, the great evil Empire in Christian eyes in the first century [was] similar to the role Babylon had played in Old Testament times. If Peter was at all concerned that this document get into the wrong hands, such a reference would have been entirely intelligible to Christians, but would not have caused Roman officials the concern it might otherwise have.

We know that Mark is with Peter as well in 5:13, and from Paul’s writings and the book of Acts, we know that Paul, too, asked for Mark to come to Rome in the early 60s. So one can plausibly suggest a Roman provenance for this epistle in the early to mid 60s, written perhaps at roughly the same time as the book of Hebrews near the onset of Neronic persecution and addressed to a scattered group of congregations of Christians in five provinces of what today is western and central Turkey. These are listed in verse 1 as well, “God’s elect strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia [that is Asia Minor], and Bithynia.”

At first glance, the language of “God’s elect” reminds us of language of the opening verse of James, and might suggest again that this an exclusively or predominantly Jewish Christian congregation. Nevertheless, by the time we get to a verse like 4:3, it seems clear that these are largely, predominantly Gentile Christians, those who once did in the past what pagans choose to do: living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, detestable idolatry, and so forth. This identification of the congregation as containing a large number of Gentiles is significant because of the language that Peter will use not only in verse 1 but throughout the letter which comes out of the Old Testament, and once did refer exclusively to Jews as God’s elect people. This is language, as we will see, as we proceed through the letter now being transferred to the church.

J. H. Elliott, in an influential book, Home for the Homeless, has gone one step further to make the case that not only are these newly converted Gentile Christians scattered throughout these provinces of Asia but that they are in many instances literal refugees. The language of scattering, of strangers in the world, echoing the language of the illegal alien or sojourner
or immigrant who is so often a point of God's concern in Old Testament times, suggests that because of the natural societal upheavals, as well as more specifically persecution and other upheavals caused by one's Christian faith in the mid-1st century, that we have here communities who needed to draw on the resources of the church to find literal, physical, as well as emotional and spiritual provision since they had been uprooted in their society. Whether or not this is too specific a reconstruction of the background, there is no question that the purpose of this epistle is for Peter to give those being persecuted and unsettled by circumstances in this life hope in the midst of their suffering.

But there is a second theme and purpose which in some way seems at odds with the first, though it is perhaps better to think of it as a counterbalancing theme, namely to call the church to right relationships within families and the household of the church, but also within society. The temptation when times become difficult, then as in every generation of suffering Christians, is to withdraw from society. But indeed, as Bruce Winters in several recent studies has suggested, one can think of I Peter in light of the famous line out of Jeremiah, “seeking the welfare of the city.” Even though they were metaphorically or literally exiled for their faith, that was no excuse for withdrawing from social involvement and good behavior as citizens.

Turning to the outline of the epistle itself then, we read the greetings to which we have already alluded in 1:1-2. It is of some interest to note in passing the incipient trinitarian theology of verse 2, similar to what we have seen in some of the greetings in Paul's letters, references to “the foreknowledge of God the Father,” “sanctifying work of the Spirit,” and “obedience to Jesus Christ” and “sprinkling by His blood.”

The thanksgiving occupies verses 3-12. This, indeed, in Greek is one long sentence whose main thought is to praise God for our salvation. Note the recurring refrains in verses 3, 9, and 10. The main focus is on the future aspect of that salvation. The only sufficient reassurance for suffering Christians [is] in verses 3-9. [Verses] 4-5 stress the certainty of that hope as preparation for encouragement to tolerate and even appreciate the purifying role of the present suffering (verses 6-7).
But there is a backward glance as well reminding the believers of the advantage they have over the prophets of old and even over angels in verses 10-12 as Peter talks about the privilege of living in the age of seeing the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies through the ministry of Christ. People of old longed to look into such things and understand the time and circumstances. Or another way of translating verse 11 here is “the time and person,” in which case would be referring more directly to the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy. People back then did not know all the details of how their prophecies would be fulfilled. But now these things have been made more clear. “The Spirit of Christ” in them, in passing, is also an important text concerning the inspiration of those Old Testament Scriptures.

The body of Peter’s epistle begins with 1:13 with a section that starts by calling the Christians to holiness modeled on the Old Testament call. One thinks of Leviticus 19, in particular, calling the Israelites to be holy just as their God was holy. This section extends from 1:13–2:10 and begins with a summary of the overall lifestyle involved, namely rejecting evil and obeying the truth (1:13-25). A summary of God’s will here appears as we have just stated the levitical holiness code in verses 13-16. And then Peter gives the rationale in verses 17-21, namely that our role as aliens, as immigrants merely sojourning among the things, the values of this world, most notably its riches and material possession, means that we recognize the true nature of redemption which is spiritual rather than materially centered.

In this section is the first of three major christological confessions that Peter intersperses along the way in the body of his epistle. We saw repeatedly with the letters of Paul that Paul had extended sections of theology which then led to the exhortational material that flowed from it. Theology gave rise to ethics. We noted in passing in discussing the letter to the Hebrews that the author had the same two-pronged approach, but instead of storing up all of his theological material and grouping it together, then followed by the exhortation, he interspersed the two sections back and forth throughout the epistle. Peter does the same with the difference being that exhortation dominates and theology intrudes only in a minority of passages as the undergirding for that predominant exhortation. This perhaps fits the modern spirit that often has less tolerance for theology than in some generations past and suggests a way that we can make theology again relevant to us today.
Each of these christological confessions provides Christ’s example as a key motivation for the various commands of Peter all tied together by this context of how to persevere through suffering. Particularly inasmuch as Christ was, indeed, our model and exemplary illustration of such perseverance. The result of following this model of verses 17-21 is in verses 22-25, “a lifestyle of love. One thinks again of Paul’s comments, as in Galatians 5:6 and elsewhere where love is not only the summary of the Law but that which faith produces and which in turn produces holiness.

With chapter 2, we begin a sub-section focusing on the growth in Christian living, which holiness produces, illustrated by means of two metaphors in verses 1-10: first in verses 1-3, craving spiritual milk. Here milk is not, as it was in Paul in I Corinthians 3 or in Hebrews, a reference to baby food and a metaphor for immaturity, but rather that which should sustain believers throughout their lives. The adjective spiritual milk in verse 2 is the Greek word logikos, which could also be translated “rational” or perhaps better still, “of the Word.” It is, above all, God’s Word which nourishes us throughout our lives so that we may grow up into our salvation. The second metaphor, in verses 4-10, is the concept of building the spiritual house with Christ as either the cornerstone or capstone. The Greek word could be used in either way. The NIV margin is perhaps slightly preferable here with the idea of a cornerstone since it is, in verse 8, described as a stone that makes people stumble, that people can trip over.

Based on that cornerstone language that Jesus Himself applied to Himself from Psalm 118:22, Peter then makes two contrasting points: On the one hand, we are building for believers a corporate entity, living stones built on top of the Cornerstone. On the other hand, those who reject the Cornerstone stumble over Him—that is, that they take offense at His teaching, something which verse 8 suggests is what they were also destined for. That is, if they take offense, they are destined to stumble. As Phillips, in his paraphrase, puts it, “which makes stumbling a foregone conclusion.”

Here is the passage where we see a dramatic series of language out of the Old Testament which once was applied to refer to the exclusively Jewish privileges of the nation of Israel, now transferred over to the Christian church, a church which we have seen in I Peter, at least, and certainly, by this time, empire-wide,
was predominantly, though not exclusively, Gentile in nature.

In verses like 5 and 9-10, we read that the church is God’s chosen people, “a holy and royal priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.” Certainly we cannot conclude from this that Israel and the church are entirely equated as in pure Covenant Theology, though there is nothing, on the other hand, to prevent that equation from this book alone. On the other hand, it is equally difficult to keep some of the older, classical Dispensationalist distinctives, which put a hard and fast break and dichotomy between Israel and the church in light of this substantial transfer of Jewish terminology to the Christian fellowship. A mediating perspective must be sought. We also read in these verses of the antidote to the suffering and possibly literal homelessness of Christians, namely the fellowship that the church and believers’ new homes within the church, spiritually speaking, can provide. Surely there are key implications for all kinds, literally and figuratively, of homeless people in our church today. We must make a place for them, welcome them, and allow them to be involved to the fullest.

A second major section of the body of Peter’s letter then begins in 2:11 and continues at least until 3:22 (some commentators would see the theme continuing on into chapter 4). This theme involves principles of submission, which remind us of Paul’s haustafeln, his domestic or household codes, which we discussed in some detail in our various conversations concerning Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5 and 6. Chapter 2:11-12 enunciate the general principle that moral lives are a powerful testimony to unbelievers, though some will still unjustly accuse us. But this evangelistical principle of submission is clearer in Peter than in Paul in three of the next four subsections of this part of his epistle. Compare 2:15, 3:1, and 3:16. A key motivation for submission to divinely ordained authorities is to provide a good testimony before an unbelieving and watching world often quick to accuse believers, often unjustly, of not being good citizens.

Ancient Greece and Rome indeed were preoccupied with proper family and social roles and saw that the new cults, most notably the mystery religions of their day, as a threat to this proper order in society. So it was particularly important for Christians not to fall into the same mold. An important debate about contemporary application arises from the fact that in many subcultures, particularly of our modern western world, such
submission is no longer seen as exemplary among unbelievers and, in fact, seems counterproductive in a radically egalitarian society. There may be principles at work here that have to be applied in somewhat different ways in these kinds of contexts.

Like Paul, in Ephesians and Colossians, Peter then goes on to enunciate specific examples of these roles of submission to authority. A category which did not appear in those household codes, but certainly did appear in Paul’s writings in Romans 13, is that of submission of citizens, including Christians, to the government (I Peter 2:13-17). As in Romans 13, Peter here speaks only of the positive role of government, his own precedent in Acts 4–5 of disobeying the Jewish authorities when they directly contravened the Word of God must also be kept in mind. But his focus in this context is on the appropriate way, as he summarizes in verse 17, “to show proper respect to everyone,” “loving the brotherhood of believers,” “fearing God,” and “honoring the king.”

[Chapter] 2:18-25 then develops the theme of submission of slaves to masters. Here the teaching is very similar to that of Paul’s in Ephesians and Colossians but with even more of an emphasis on the virtue of unjust suffering. Again, there are precedents for rebellion and for obtaining freedom, as in I Corinthians 7 and Philemon, but they are not Peter’s focus here. Revolution and violence should be the last desperate step after everything else has failed. Christians will continue to disagree as to when this state has been reached because there are no hard and fast guidelines for its implementation. But such actions should not be taken without great agony of soul.

Again, Peter inserts a christological confession. Many have seen these indeed as hymnic or creedal, perhaps even tied in with primitive baptismal liturgies. This one is focused in 2:21-25. There are, of course, unique features to Christ’s suffering, which is enunciated here, most notably, that it was for our redemption. We cannot atone for anyone’s sins, as we suffer similarly. But the example does mean that we can accept suffering and persecution and even martyrdom, knowing who and where our true Ruler—note the combination of the terms “Shepherd” and “Overseer” in this confession in verse 25—is and what He has done for us.
Chapter 3:1-7 proceeds to discuss the roles of wives and husbands and is the only one of the three specific examples of this household code in which mutual responsibilities are enumerated, whereas Paul followed that practice consistently and other Jewish and Greco-Roman parallels seldom, if ever, did. Wives’ submission is described in greater detail in verses 1-6 because the specific example that is Peter’s primary focus here of a believing wife submitting to an unbelieving husband. Verse 1a says, “In the same way be submissive to your husbands,” tying this passage back in with the discussions of citizens with government and slaves with masters.

That does not however mean that in the same way means that wives are to consider their relationship with their husbands as if they were slaves to masters but merely that Peter is bringing another example of a relationship of submission to authority. Specifically these are husbands who, if any of them do not believe the Word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives. Of course, the “if” means that this is not limited to non-Christian husbands, and, similarly, we would not expect an absolute interpretation of the final part of this verse either.

Peter is surely not against all verbal testimony, as verse 15 of this same chapter will make clear, but, rather, is seeking a healthy balance here between one extreme which would never expose a husband to the verbal proclamation of the gospel and what apparently was a more common problem or concern among his audience, a constant nagging which took the place of living appropriately reverent and godly lives as itself a powerful testimony.

These wives, too, are to understand where their proper beauty lies, verses 3-4, “not with outward adornment,” and here the language reminds us of the same ostentation that we saw in I Timothy 2:9-10, but rather as in verses 5-6 appealing to the precedent of Sarah, the gentle and quiet spirit, which is “the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful.” Sarah is also then put forward as an example of submission in the particular context of obedience, but not in a sense grammatically that allows us to assume that obedience is always or is the only manifestation of the transcultural principle of submission, particularly when we read Genesis 18:12 and see other features of the story alluded to there, not least Sarah’s doubt and laughter at the divine promise...
which had come to her.

Verse 7 introduces us to the husband’s role, which dare not be overlooked in the process, namely to live considerately with their wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as joint heirs of the gracious gift of life so that nothing will hinder their prayers. The famous phrase literally here in the Greek, “the weaker vessel,” has been taken somehow meaning a woman’s greater moral weakness. And in more recent times, influenced by modern psychology, a more positive bent has tried to be given to that by thinking of a greater spiritual sensitivity, but neither of these can be derived from the language that is used in the Greek. Either Peter is thinking simply of the general principle even more prominent in the ancient world of the generally greater physical weakness of the wife—though it would be hard to see how that would fit too aptly into this context—or perhaps more probably to their more vulnerable position, voluntarily adopted in marriage by means of their subordinating themselves to their husband.

Husbands, in short, are not to take advantage of this position realizing that despite the seemingly unequal relationship of authority and submission, they are ontologically or essentially co-equal as joint heirs of God’s grace and salvation and that, indeed, if husbands neglect this command to treat their wives with respect, if, instead, they abuse them, they cannot expect their prayers successfully to get through to God.

[Chapter] 3:8-22 then generalizes to the submission of all believers, even in unjust situations, of not repaying evil for evil (verses 8-12), of recognizing that eagerness for doing good often deters evil (verse 13), but also recognizing that if it, nevertheless, comes, it is Christians’ responsibility to continue to reverence Christ as Lord and to follow His example (verses 14-22). Verses 15-17 have, from this context, been used as a key support for the discipline of apologetics, more generally, of being prepared to give an answer, to give an account for the hope that is within us.

Verses 18-22, then, provide the third and final christological confession in Peter’s writing as support for his exhortational material. Because it was likely a preexisting confession, it includes additional material that, at first glance, does not seem directly relevant to Peter’s call for perseverance in persecution but which has raised enormous theological controversies and,
indeed, has probably been the most extensively debated passage in this entire letter.

Verse 18 begins clearly enough, “for Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.” Verse 18b begins to introduce some ambiguity, “He was put to death in the body but made alive (either in His (small “s”) spirit, or by the (capital “S”) Spirit, which then will determine, as the NIV margin suggests, whether we translate verse 19 as “through whom” or “in which”) also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,” This has traditionally been seen, taking the Greek to mean, “made alive in His Spirit,” that is, in His disembodied Spirit, before the resurrection but after His crucifixion, as support for some ministry of Christ which the Apostle’s Creed, no less, summarized with the line, “He descended into hell” in between His death and resurrection.

If we translate with the NIV, however, this does not necessarily have to refer to anything that took place immediately following His death, and indeed as the passage unfolds, we see the same participle translated “went” in verse 19 as “has gone” in verse 22, referring to the activity of Christ’s ascension. Perhaps we need to be open to the option as well that this is something Jesus did en route to heaven at the time of His ascension and exaltation.

What precisely was this ministry? Verses 19-20 describe it as “preaching to the spirits in prison.” Some off and on in the history of the church have assumed this to be a second chance offer of salvation for some or all the people who die without faith in Christ. But surely that would contradict Hebrews 9:27 in which “it is appointed for a man [or a woman] to die once, and then comes the judgment.”

Others have seen this merely, therefore, as an opportunity for the Old Testament saints who had not heard the gospel to have what we might call a “first chance” at salvation. But the larger context of [I Peter 3] verses 19-20 seem to make it clear that these are wicked dead, those who disobeyed long ago.

Yet a third approach, therefore, is to pick up on the theme of Noah in verse 20 and language that is also used later in II Peter about Noah as a preacher of righteousness, to assume that this is a reference to Christ’s ministry. Not at all following His crucifixion, but through Noah as the preacher of righteousness to his generation in the days of the early chapters of Genesis.
That, however, would seem to take us too far afield from the introductory statement that this took place somehow being linked with Christ’s being put to death in the body, namely, His crucifixion. That leads to what has become perhaps the most commonly held view, still, among a wide diversity of current scholarly opinion; namely that this is an event after the crucifixion of Christ in which Jesus went to spirits in prison, not offering them a chance at salvation but proclaiming His victory over the grave which the cross accomplished. The fact that the common Greek verb for preaching the gospel euaggelizo is not the word used here but merely the more general and neutral word kerusso, to “announce a message,” seems to give some corroboration to this view.

What is more, the term “spirits,” whenever it is not qualified by any other modifying words or phrases in every other instance in the New Testament, means angelic or demonic beings rather than humans, which would then also fit the notion of Christ going to the place of the demonic abode and announcing His triumph over them and, therefore, over death. Should we think of this then as a descent into hell? Perhaps not, if indeed verse 22 is an indication that this is something that takes place as Jesus was ascending into heaven.

We are reminded that Jewish thought could at times conceive of the demons living metaphorically underground, but also in the unseen places of spiritual warfare in between the first and third heavens. Recall the language of II Corinthians 11, Paul being caught up to the third heaven and also of Ephesians 2 where Satan is called “the prince of the power of the air.” So perhaps this is an announcement of victory as Jesus ascended to heaven, metaphorically envisioning part of His return to the Father as His announcement of victory of the demonic realm still engaged in some type of unseen spiritual and atmospheric warfare.

Along the way also are two verses, triggered by the reference to Noah and the ark, which have provided grist for controversies over the doctrine of baptism. [First Peter 3] verse 21, “this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you,” has, without completing the verse, been used as support for baptismal regeneration. But in light of the entire sentence almost surely cannot be so used. It continues, “not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God” or the response of a good conscience towards God, in other words, the external sign of an inward commitment.
How does this somewhat convoluted confession function in Peter’s final argument? [Chapter] 4:1 makes that clear. It is meant to encourage Christians to persevere amidst suffering. “Since Christ suffered in His body, arm yourselves with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin, “ not in any absolute sense but in the purifying sense that the thanksgiving of chapter 1 has stressed. This is important because all with have to stand before God’s judgment as verses 5-6 stress. All die physically as part of the judgment for sin of the entire race, but believers will have new spiritual life, including those who have already died. And the NIV translation of verse 6, “the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead,” is probably a correct solution to another exegetical crux in which in the original Greek text the word “now” is not explicitly present. We are to realize as well, 4:7-19, that the end is near so that faithfulness is all the more incumbent and all the more possible (verses 7-11), and that we need not be surprised by but can even rejoice in sufferings (verses 12-19).

This leads Paul to the closing exhortation, tying in with the theme of submission to appropriate authorities, namely that believers are to recognize their proper role within the church as well (5:1-7)—elders, with those who are younger and also under them (verses 1-7). Elders here, as in Acts, are equated with both pastors and shepherds and overseers and are to serve, not under compulsion, not for gain, and not autocratically. Young men and the rest of the congregation more generally are, therefore, called to submit in humility to such godly leadership. Whatever anxieties remain, God can deal with if we turn them over to Him.

Finally, we are “to resist the devil” (5:8-11). This present suffering is only temporary and, indeed, others are coping. God’s grace moreover will ultimately triumph bringing full restoration. [Chapter] 5:12-14 then provide the formal epistolary closing which we have already made allusion to in our introduction.

As we think of applying this epistle, we come back to the two contrasting studies that we referred to in the introduction which correspond to the two key themes and indeed two ways of reading Peter’s letter as a whole. How are Christians to hold up under difficult circumstances? These two approaches need not be seen as competing or as mutually exclusive. One is surely to take refuge in the fellowship and countercultural standards and values that only the Christian community can provide. We truly are refugees, strangers living in a foreign land, and must
make the church and Christian fellowship a way station, a place of refuge for people who feel repeatedly and consistently scarred by the difficult circumstances of life in a fallen world.

On the other hand, I Peter, like Jeremiah before him, indeed does afford a call to Christians to seek the welfare of the city, to be good citizens, to provide good testimonies for the upright nature of Christian living in a hostile society quick to accuse them. Peter does at several points contrast those who are persecuted unjustly with those who are persecuted justly. And it is sad and tragic that Christians in many ages, including our own, often bring a certain amount of hostility on themselves by the unthinking and callous and less than submissive ways in which they relate to the leadership and the laws of the land.

Persecution, on the other hand, does not have to be the only, or even the predominate, response to a positive Christian witness which puts itself forward in as many ways as is legally and ethically possible as cooperating with and taking part as good citizens with the authorities of society and, indeed, with the large number of people in every society. [This is] certainly true of Greece and Rome and of our day as well. [People] who are not actively hostile to the faith, even if not necessarily believers, but are concerned for the welfare of all of God’s children, believers or otherwise. What a powerful evangelistic tool this can be as well.