Suffering Strangers, Wandering Witnesses: Migration and Early Christian Positioning in 1 Peter and Acts (7)

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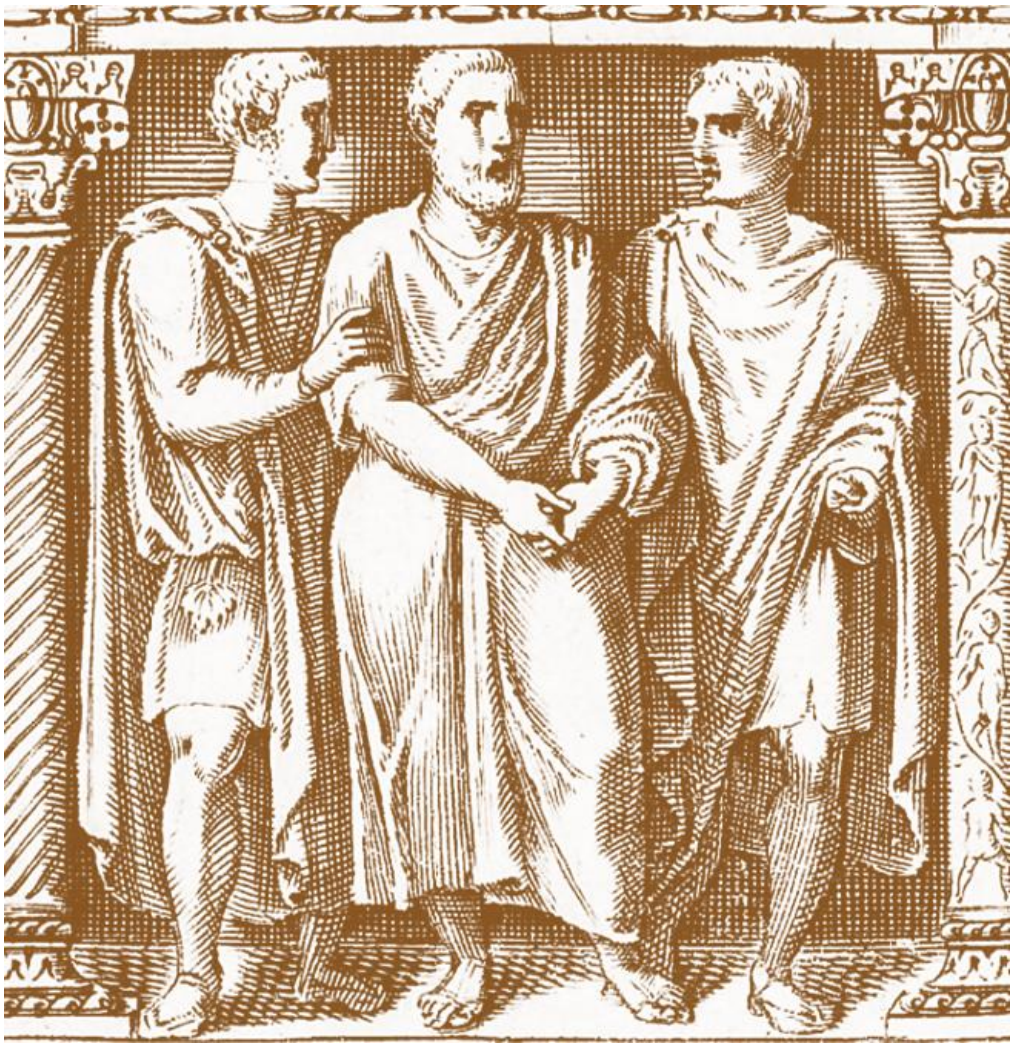

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Master's Thesis Classics and Ancient Civilizations (Classics)

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Submission date: 09-06-2025

14953 words (without title page, table of contents, bibliography)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> "Not all those who wander are lost…"
>
> J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings,* Book I, chapter XI

Migration is a timeless reality for many. People have always migrated, for countless reasons, and always will. And although many migrants seem to be just wandering about without belonging anywhere, migration always has meaning, as the famous quote above indicates – in Antiquity no less than today.

1.1 Overture

In recent years, the concept of migration has sparked the interest of many, not in the least in Classical studies. As we will see below, many scholars have tried to describe the mobility of people in the Roman Empire. But when it comes to early Christian texts, although they are discussing the same subject, their mobility is largely ignored in these studies. Migration and mobility in these texts is often treated on another level than or separately from Greek and Roman literature, with scholars choosing to discuss either Greek and/or Roman, Jewish or Christian sources. This is, however, a missed opportunity: the early Christians were very aware of what kind of world they were living in, and they were interacting with it. Their texts in fact fit very well into the context of the broader Mediterranean world. Therefore, their discourse on migration should be considered as well, especially when examining how migration was experienced and handled in these times.

The beginning of what we now call 'Christianity' was a difficult time for the participants of this movement.[1] The early Christians, often seen as outsiders, originated both from the Jewish faith and the Roman Empire they lived in, and had to position themselves in relation to these two worlds, including as to their opinion of migration and mobility. To do this, they made use of the Jewish Diaspora tradition, with all its connotations, and the Roman fondness of travelling and mobility. Several of their writings reflect on this struggle, exploring how to identify and behave themselves in a world unfamiliar to them.[2] Two of these are of particular interest in this discussion, because of their focus on migration and strangeness: the First Epistle of Peter (hereafter '1 Peter'), who writes to the 'strangers of the Diaspora' (1:1) and Acts 7, a retelling of the migration story of ancient Israel to place Christians in a new mental context, in its context of the entire Acts of the Apostles (hereafter 'Acts'). We will use these texts as case studies to examine how early Christianity experienced and interpreted various kinds of 'migration' and their contexts. Or, to formulate our research question: How do the early Christians use 'migration', as seen in 1 Peter and Acts, to find and define their place in the vast and dynamic Mediterranean world?

While these two texts have not been studied together yet, they can give us a unique perspective on the positioning of these early Christians. Moreover, the answer to this question will shed more light on the identity and self-understanding of early Christians, especially concerning migration, and can encourage others to include more early Christian texts on this topic in their future research. As such, we can get a better, more inclusive understanding of migration experiences and applications in Antiquity.

1.2 Status quaestionis

Before we can examine the background to this question and the research already done, we need to make clear the definition of migration used in this study. 'Migration' will be used in a broad sense, as a person's movement away from the place of origin, either temporarily or permanently, voluntarily or

[1] Although it is disputed how this movement identified itself, we will, for convenience and lack of other terms, keep calling it 'Christianity' and its participants '(early) Christians'.

[2] Besides the two texts discussed in this study, they include the first Epistle of Clement and the Epistle to the Hebrews and to Diognetus.

involuntarily, individually or in a group.[3] It is true that we would call some cases of 'movement' included in this definition just forms of 'mobility' rather than of 'migration', but although some scholars have tried to find distinctions, these boundaries are hard to determine and were not fixed in Antiquity.[4] Indeed, often we can use these terms interchangeably. A migrant, then, is someone who is or has been on the move and has to deal with the hardships inherent to it, which will become apparent later in this study.

Of course, Christians were not the only ones coping with 'migration', as people are migrating to this day. Fairly recently, we have begun to study this phenomenon, especially in literature. The study of migrant literature – not just the product of migrant writers, but all literature having migration as the main theme – has been framed within postcolonial literary studies.[5] Postcolonial literature originally only focused on the struggles of the aftermath of colonisation, but is now also concerned with other situations of groups in the margins of society.[6] As such, it discusses the same things as migrant literature: inequality, hybridity and migration.[7] Furthermore, a search for one's identity is central to both types of literature. Since the implementation of migrant literature into postcolonial literary studies, 'migration' has become a major theme in the works of scholars writing about literature, such as Rushdie, Bhabha, and Boehmer.[8]

As De Jonge points out, however, migration studies have mostly been applied to contemporary literature, whereas it could also be useful for older writings, such as those from Antiquity.[9] With the definition above, we can perceive many ancient texts as migrant literature. Herodotus' *Histories*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Lucian's *The Scythian* and the Septuagint (hereafter 'LXX'), for example, are all dealing with migration and mobility. Acts and 1 Peter, both migration-themed, also belong to this literature. The perspective of migration could benefit our understanding of and debate on these texts, as well as our definition of migrants' ordeals. One should, however, consider the differences between modern and ancient migration, like the relations between Greek, Roman and local culture as opposed to the relation of the colonised and the coloniser, the lack of clear-cut borders in Antiquity and the different meanings of certain concepts then and now.[10]

Much research has been done already on migration and mobility in Antiquity. A fairly exhaustive volume edited by De Ligt and Tacoma (2016) recognises the enormous scope of mobility and migration in the early Roman Empire. A book edited by Yoo, Zerbini and Barron (2018) studies migration in the ancient Near East but excludes early Christianity. Garland (2014) is more interested in the ancient Greek migration of an earlier period. As said above, migration in early Christianity is treated separately, although scholars do try to place these texts into their Greco-Roman context. Hanciles (2021) and Dunning (2009) use modern migration studies to emphasise migration's role in early Christianity but mostly overlook our texts. Different in that sense is the groundbreaking book of J.H. Elliott, 'A Home for the Homeless' (1981), which analyses migration and alienation in the first letter of Peter sociologically and argues for a literal marginalised sociological situation of its audience. De Jonge (2022) likewise proposes research in both fields of study, by seeing Greek literature of the Early Roman Empire as migrant literature. This thesis will see 1 Peter and Acts in this light too, aiming to connect Christian, Jewish and Greco-Roman migration narratives to each other and using the case studies to introduce us two different ways to deal with 'migration' and the search for a place of belonging.

Several works have been published on 1 Peter and migration. Elliott's book (1981; see above), although impressive, did not meet much approval among scholars as to its literal interpretation of 1

[3] The definition is my own, but I have drawn inspiration from Frank (2008: 15) and De Jonge (2022: 16).
[4] De Ligt & Tacoma (2016: 6-8).
[5] Vlasta (2016: 4).
[6] Baldick (2015), Pourjafari & Vahidpour (2014: 682-684) and Vlasta (2016: 30). The latter two discuss this development.
[7] Vlasta (2016: 30), Moslund (2010: 9), Smith (2004: 247) and Pourjafari & Vahidpour (2014: 684).
[8] Rushdie (all his work, e.g. 1991), Bhabha (1994) and Boehmer (1995). For an extensive overview, see Vlasta (2016: 7-35).
[9] De Jonge (2022: 16).
[10] De Jonge (2022: 16-17). *Diaspora*, for example, had specific connotations in ancient times.

Peter. Still, Elliott continued this perspective in 2000 with his commentary on 1 Peter. Elliot's works initiated a great number of complementary studies and commentaries. Achtemeier (1998) and Williams & Horrell (2023) argue for a metaphorical interpretation. Jobes (2007) partly follows Elliott, saying it should be interpreted both literally and metaphorically. None of these focus on migration, however, instead paying more attention to the literary setting and other themes, like suffering. Among the smaller studies of 1 Peter and migration are the ones of Seland (2001), on proselyte vocabulary in this text, and Smith (2016) especially, discussing diaspora and its use in 1 Peter.[11]

Although the debate on Acts 7 from a migration perspective is quite new, the theme in the entire Acts has been discussed extensively, almost as much as for 1 Peter. Some valuable work on the theme of migration in the speech of Stephen in particular has been done by Stenschke (2016), who writes about the portrayal and mission of the migrant church; Buchholz (2021), who focuses more on the theological meaning of migration for the early church; and Hogeterp (2021), who uses the speech to argue for the counter-cultural discourse on migration in the entire Acts. Some useful commentaries that mention the subject but, again, do not place much emphasis on it are the ones of Bruce (1990[3]), Bock (2007) and Keener (2012-2015; 2020).

1.3 Methodology

There are several ways to study migration and mobility in Antiquity. For example, one can study and analyse the facts, like the number of migrants in a certain period and their economic significance. An alternative is focusing on literature as migrant literature in a) a narrow sense, by only including works by migrant authors, or b) a broad sense, by choosing works with migration as a theme. One can then either identify the author as someone who writes about migration and consider the influence of this identity on the author's work, or look for migration experiences in these works and connect them to other topics. In the last years, most editors have chosen a combination of these approaches. We will tend more towards the latter, as our approach is text-focused. In addition, modern migration studies can be of use. Three of its concepts will be particularly helpful in this study:[12]

1) In-betweenness: migrant literature is spatially 'hybrid', not belonging to a single place, but moving 'between spaces, cultures and identities'.[13] This in-between space, both literally and metaphorically, is typical of migrants, who must navigate multiple traditions to thrive.[14]
2) Diaspora: originally a Greek term, 'diaspora' indicates a group of people who have left their homeland, often forcibly, who have a shared, distinctive identity and who are still connected to the homeland, often with the idea of returning in mind.[15] The Jewish Diasporas, during the Assyrian exile, the second Temple period and after the destruction of the second Temple, are the most famous, but certainly not the only ones. Nowadays, the term is applied widely, not only to geographical dispersion, but also to more metaphorical 'movements' like changing one's community without losing one's origin.[16]
3) Alien/stranger/outsider: though their definitions are not the same, these three terms all describe individuals or groups perceived as 'not one of us' and 'not normal', because they either are from a different country, society or (social) group, or do not share a certain identity in another way.[17] Due to their 'strangeness', as is it perceived by others, they can be subject to the in-betweenness above, but also to alienation and marginalisation. The terms are after all often used to define the

[11] I was unable to use the latter, as it became available too late to be delivered in time.
[12] As 'hybridity' has become somewhat controversial (see Moslund 2010), I will use it sparingly. See Vlasta (2016: 6) and Pourjafari & Vahidpour (2014: 686-689) for more concepts.
[13] De Jonge (2022: 18). Bhabha (1988: 22) asserts that the 'in-between' is where the meaning of culture is located.
[14] Nyman (2017: 21).
[15] Cohen (2023: 1-3), who names many more characteristics of diaspora.
[16] Compare Carpi (2017; see vii for a definition) with Cohen (2023) for the varying applications of the term.
[17] Sonnis-Bell (2018: 1); Maazaoui (2019: vii-x).

opposing 'other' and can provide supposed grounds for discrimination.[18] Migrants, as literal 'aliens', are especially vulnerable to this.

In Chapter 2, we will consider 1 Peter's connection to Diaspora experiences, while in Chapter 3, we will examine Acts' presentation of Rome as the place to be, however strange.[19] In both chapters, we will first look at the literary setting before examining how the vocabulary and connotations of migration are used in the text. Next, we will explore the role of migration *in* the text. Finally, zooming out, we will apply all this to a wider perspective: diaspora experiences and Rome. Examining 1 Peter and its use of diaspora vocabulary will demonstrate how early Christians used the contemporaneous Jewish system to consolidate their new beliefs and cope with suffering, while the reflections on Rome and the Roman Empire in Acts 7 will show migration as a positive tool for Acts' audience to position themselves against the majority society and promote this new movement. In the conclusion, we will compare the use of both phenomena in 1 Peter and Acts. How do the authors reuse the concepts of migration and diaspora? And what does that mean for the perception of migration of early Christian society?

[18] Sonnis-Bell (2018: 4-5).
[19] We will discuss these topics in the respective chapters.

Chapter 2: Dealing with strangeness

> Πέτρος ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς Πόντου, Γαλατίας, Καππαδοκίας, Ἀσίας καὶ Βιθυνίας…
>
> Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect strangers of the Diaspora in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia…
>
> 1 Peter 1:1[20]

From this first verse onwards, our first case study – 1 Peter – is filled with terms and arguments concerning migration. After a brief look at the background and the formal questions of the letter, we will discuss the references to migration in 1 Peter. Afterwards, we will see its meaning for the early Christians according to this text and how Peter tries to convey it. How does this letter teach its readers to deal with strangeness?

2.1 Migration in 1 Peter

2.1.1 Overview of the letter

For purposes of clarity, we will start with an outline of the contents of the letter:[21]

1:1-2 Epistolary prescript
1:3-2:10 God's salvation of His elect and holy people
2:11-3:12 How this people should conduct itself among the Gentiles to praise God
3:13-4:19 The right conduct of Christians in the face of suffering
5:1-11 The right demeanour of the Christian *community* in the face of suffering
5:12-14 Epistolary postscript

This short overview already shows some interesting things. Firstly, the letter seems to be mostly concerned with suffering and dealing with such trials. Secondly, a distinction appears to be created between the Christians, God's 'elect and holy people', and non-Christians, the 'Gentiles' (2:11). Before we attend to these issues, however, we need to introduce this letter more properly.

2.1.2 Setting

Audience

There are some debates which we cannot 'solve', but which are interesting for our topic. The first of these is the audience. The author – hereafter 'Peter' – calls them, as we see above, ἐκλεκτοί παρεπίδημοι διασπορᾶς Πόντου, Γαλατίας, Καππαδοκίας, Ἀσίας καὶ Βιθυνίας, 'the elect strangers of the diaspora in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia' (1:1). The mentioned places are Roman provinces in Asia Minor, in modern-day Turkey.[22] As for their ethnic identity, Peter was probably writing to an audience of primarily (but not exclusively) Jewish converts. The letter shows a combination of both Jewish and Hellenistic elements, but Peter's heavy citing of the LXX, especially concerning migration terms, better fits (Hellenistic) Jews, who would be more acquainted with Scripture.[23] And their Hellenistic background explains the 'Gentile' references: they were often well integrated into Gentile society and could act according to its norms, which Peter condemns repeatedly (e.g. 4:3).[24]

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[20] All translations are my own.
[21] Adapted from Elliott (2000: 82-83). For another, ancient outline, see Williams & Horrell (2023: 267-269).
[22] Horrell (2013: 110-114) discusses the Roman influence on the area.
[23] Elliott (2000: 94-97), cf. Williams & Horrell (2023: 207-217).
[24] Van der Horst (2014: 143-160).

Author and date

The second issue appearing in the first verse is that of the author, closely related to the letter's creation date. The author presents himself as Peter, the well-known apostle of Jesus Christ, but the plausibility of this has been contested.[25] One of the main problems is that Simon Peter is known to us as a Galilean, 'uneducated' fisherman, a stark contrast to the person who composed the stylised Greek of 1 Peter.[26] Scholars have tried to solve this problem by proposing either a learned *amanuensis* (secretary) for Peter, a 'Petrine Circle' or complete pseudonymity, while others think of Peter himself as the author.[27] The first and last option require an early date of composition, while the other options, not needing Peter to be alive, are often connected to a later date.

Although many prefer the option of a pseudonymous author or some variation of it, there is no consensus yet. And in fact, it does not matter as much as one might think, as the crucial point is that the author *presents* himself as the apostle Peter. Apparently, he was the right person to deliver the messages of the letter to the addressees. As an apostle of Jesus Christ he had authority, while his reputation as leader of the church appointed by Jesus Himself enabled him to unite the various branches of the early Christian communities – as opposed to Paul, for example.[28] Besides, after the things he experienced according to Acts, he knows what suffering means and as such can understand the problems of the Christians in Asia Minor. The most important aspect of the Apostle for our topic, however, is the amount of travelling he did. Born in Bethsaida, he settled in Capernaum, both provincial towns on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.[29] With the other Apostles he followed Jesus on His wanderings through the country for three years. After Jesus' ascension, he made missionary journeys to cities in the west, near the sea (Acts 9:31-10:48), to Antioch (Galatians 2:11-16), Corinth (1 Cor. 9:5) and possibly Asia Minor (1 Pet. 1:1), not counting additional travels known to his readers. According to tradition, he also travelled to Rome, where he led the church for a long time before being crucified.[30] This migrant identity of Peter makes the message of this letter credible.

Main purpose: dealing with suffering

Which message then does Peter try to convey? Looking at the overview above, the central theme is what we call the 'suffering' (πάθημα) of the addressees. In each chapter references can be found to what this entailed – trials, slander, pain, temptations, oppression – and advice on how to deal with it.[31] Apparently, the addressees experienced social marginalisation and alienation because of their faith. Now, like the letter says (4:12), this should not come as a surprise to them. The idea that followers of God will be suffering is present already in the LXX and is further developed by Jesus.[32] He discusses the trials they will face, which probably applied to Peter's addressees too: the hate of the world, exclusion from the synagogues, persecution, abuse and even death.[33] Yet Peter's audience probably needed some assistance in understanding and facing their ordeals.

Concerning the nature and causes of this suffering, many scholars have thought it should be connected to one of the great Roman 'persecutions' in the first century.[34] Nowadays, however, most agree that it was caused by their fellow residents' hostile attitude, because the Christians left their former 'Gentile' lifestyle (4:3-4) and had a faith that was probably, to quote Williams & Horrell, 'effectively

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[25] Williams & Horrell (2023: 116) provides a recent initial biography.
[26] Matt. 4:18, Acts 4:13. See Williams & Horrell (2023: 122-131) for the supposed 'Attic style' of the letter and its implications. On the other hand, Jobes (2005: 5-8) questions both the style and the training it requires. Cf. Achtemeier (1996: 3-7).
[27] As set out by Williams & Horrell (2023: 117-162) and Elliott (2000: 118-130). Given the limited space, we only touch on this enormous debate.
[28] Matt. 16:18, cf. Williams & Horrell (2023: 188); Achtemeier (1996: 41-42).
[29] John 1:44; Matt. 8:5, 14; Luke 4:31, 38.
[30] Eastman et al. (2024).
[31] E.g. 1:6-7; 2:11-12, 19-25; 3:9, 13-17; 4:3-4, 12-19; 5:9-10.
[32] See Job, Eccles. 7:15-18. Cf. Achtemeier (1996: 306-307).
[33] John 15:18-20, 16:2; Matt. 24:9, Mark 13:7-22.
[34] Williams & Horrell (2023: 235-241) elaborate on both sides of this debate.

illegal' since Nero's actions against them.[35] Although there was no official persecution, the Christians would have needed to tread carefully to not provoke the local Roman government. Pliny's famous letter to Trajan shows the possibility of legal trials and executions, and although there is no proof in our letter of this happening to Peter's addressees, 1 Peter does refer to Christ's suffering (2:21-24, 3:17, 4:13), which culminated in His death.[36] Since these Christians were suffering as Christ did, maybe some of them suffered the same fate.[37] Public hostility could lead to violence and legal accusations, which could mean death.[38] And even without legal consequences of being a Christian *per se*, they were still marginalised and scorned, as this letter shows.

Peter's main goal then is to teach his readers how to deal with this suffering. His advice is firstly to trust God (4:19) and persevere, as a better future awaits them. Even more so, they should rejoice in their trials, because these indicate they are saved (3:14). Furthermore, they are a people chosen by God and should act likewise (1:1-2, 2:1-12), expecting to be marginalised, because Christ was too (4:12-13). Finally, they should obey the authorities (2:13-16) and behave themselves appropriately toward everyone (2:11-18, 3:1-13), to set a good example and possibly lessen their suffering somewhat (3:13).

The entire letter is built around this theme of 'suffering'. To successfully convey his advice on how to deal with this, however, Peter uses another theme: migration.

2.1.3 The role of migration in 1 Peter

In this part of the current chapter, we will examine how the theme of migration plays out in this letter, beginning with Peter's references to migration.

References to migration in 1 Peter

Categories of 'strangers' and their connotations

The most obvious references in 1 Peter to migration are two types of 'strangers': the παρεπίδημος (1:1, 2:11) and the πάροικος (2:11). Typically, a παρεπίδημος, literally 'a sojourner beside' is a 'transient visitor who is temporarily residing as a foreigner in a given locality', 'without intention or opportunity to establish permanent residence'.[39] The word is rare in secular classical literature: we have only four instances of it being used outside of Jewish (e.g. LXX, Philo) and Christian literature.[40] It is therefore very likely that Peter adopted this terminology from the LXX. A πάροικος, on the other hand, is a resident alien, somebody who is living abroad, but has no civil or native rights.[41] He is no ξένος (4:12), an absolute stranger, but no citizen either.[42] This in-between identity is characteristic of the πάροικος, even more so than of the παρεπίδημος. The word is a Hellenistic equivalent of μέτοικος, 'metic', an immigrant foreigner and a non-citizen.[43] The two terms are very similar, with the παρεπίδημος strictly speaking being a less permanent resident, not having to pay taxes (yet).[44]

In classical Athens, metics had a lower legal and social status and were often prejudiced, as seen in Lysias' case.[45] They could be immigrants, their descendants or freed slaves, but in either case, they had

[35] Williams & Horrell (2023: 239, 242, 251-258). Cf. Janssen (2020), which remains under embargo currently, on the role of the Roman emperor.
[36] Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.
[37] Horrell (2013: 188). Jesus was suffering by being shamed too, but His death could be seen as the ultimate shame.
[38] Horrell (2013: 197). The Alexandrian disturbances in 414/415, though much later, show how high tension could rise between Jews and Christians.
[39] Strong's Lexicon, s.v. παρεπίδημος (3927); Elliott (1981: 30, 36).
[40] Namely Polybius, *Histories* 32.6.4; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* V Kaibel 25.10; Aristophanes Byzantinus fr. 299, 303 Slater. Besides the Christian writings and the LXX and NT, this also excludes Philo of Alexandria. See for his use of the words Seland (2001: 252-253).
[41] Elliott (1981: 25).
[42] Elliott (1981: 36).
[43] LSJ, s.v. μέτοικος; Garland (2014: 285).
[44] Aristophanes Byzantinus fr. 303 Slater.
[45] Cartledge (2006). This applies mostly to the status of metics *after* Pericles' citizenship law of 451/450 BCE. See for an extensive history of Athenian metics Watson (2010, esp. 272). For the prejudice, see Lysias 12.4, 11, 19-20.

no reasonable prospect of citizenship and could neither vote nor own land.[46] So although they were obliged to pay special taxes and to do military and civic service and as such bore the same burden of the *polis* as citizens, in reality they were excluded from assuming that identity.[47] Being an essentially hybrid class, metics had to work out their own in-between identity. Although this description captures only the situation of the classical Athenian metics, the same in-betweenness seems to apply to the status of being a πάροικος in the LXX, with the term being applied somewhat more loosely. Here, πάροικος can be a translation of either the Hebrew גֵּר *ger*, 'stranger' – someone who has no ancestry among his hosts and has no possession of land on their territory – or תּוֹשָׁב *toshab*, 'resident alien'.[48] Meanwhile, the other term, παρεπίδημος, which occurs two times in the LXX, translates only the latter.[49] The limits for being a πάροικος are not so fixed here. Moreover, παρεπίδημος is only used in combination with πάροικος – just like in 1 Peter 2:11.[50] This usual pairing of these two words with a slightly different meaning could mean that Peter is primarily referring to the readers' social situation, rather than to their legal status.[51]

Philo of Alexandria uses πάροικος almost interchangeably with yet another term, προσήλυτος, 'proselyte', also a translation of גֵּר *ger*, 'stranger', in the LXX.[52] In Philo's time, proselytes were mainly non-Jewish converts to Judaism, who were circumcised (in the case of men), baptised and had made a sacrifice.[53] Although they had more rights than the metics we saw earlier, they probably shared the same fate of in-betweenness: as converts, they did not belong to their non-Jewish community anymore and still had to adapt to their new Jewish community.[54] This synonymity of πάροικος and προσήλυτος in Philo indicates that both words were a part of the vocabulary of proselytism, and moreover, that Peter may have had this concept in mind when he wrote the opening of his letter.[55] His audience of converted Jews would surely have understood this.

Diaspora and metaphors

The other term appearing already in the first verse is διασπορά, or 'dispersion'.[56] As we will examine its connotations and Peter's use of it in more depth further on in this chapter, for now a short description will suffice. Although διασπορά and its verb, διασπείρω, can be found in classical Greek, it was particularly used in Jewish context, describing (especially Jewish) people who are geographically living as strangers, outside their homeland, either forced or voluntarily, often without citizenship – just like the metics above.[57] But unlike the terms discussed previously, which were applied by a group to *individuals*, namely fellow-inhabitants of inferior status, διασπορά functions as a self-definition, expressing the living conditions of a particular *group*.

Now, Peter is using this term to describe his audience, but how are we to understand this? Were his addressees really in the Diaspora, remaining as strangers in Asia Minor?[58] In that case, his audience would consist entirely of converted Jews. Or is Peter adding this opening to make a point, addressing his readers *as if* they were in the Diaspora? We will come back to this question below.

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[46] Sosin (2016: 5); Watson (2010: 259); Kasimis (2018: 5-6).
[47] Cartledge (2006); Kasimis (2018: 15).
[48] Hiebert (2022: 65-66) describes the consequences of being a *ger* in more detail.
[49] E.g. both Gen. 23:4 and Ps. 39:12 (LXX 38:13) have גֵּר > πάροικος and תּוֹשָׁב > παρεπίδημος; but both Ex. 12:45 and Lev. 25:45 have תּוֹשָׁב > πάροικος.
[50] See Gen. 23:4, Ps. 38:13 LXX.
[51] Horrell (2013: 117).
[52] Seland (2001: 249-256, esp. 254).
[53] Wandrey (2006). Because of this custom of baptising, John the Baptist's practices were not unfamiliar to the Jews.
[54] Wandrey (2006).
[55] This is what Seland (2001) argues. Cf. Van Unnik (1980).
[56] According to Martin (1992), it is even the overarching theme of the letter.
[57] Elliott (1981: 38, 2000: 313); Berlin (2021: 23). Although we refer to διασπορά while discussing these things, the noun is rare, while the verb appears quite often. It is used by Thucydides (e.g. 1.11.1, 3.30.3) and Sophocles (e.g. *Electra* 748, *Antigone* 1010), for example.
[58] This idea is defended by Elliott (1981), but most scholars keep to the metaphorical option.

Other

Before we move on to the text itself, a brief note on the structure of the letter. We have seen that 1 Peter starts with migration language, but it also ends with it, reminding the audience of the theme. In 5:13, Peter refers to 'the co-elect in Babylon'.[59] Although it is possible that Peter meant the real Babylon (one of the few locations bearing that name), it is more likely that this place is used metaphorically, either for Rome (Peter's deathplace, underlining his migrant identity) or some other location.[60] In any case, it is connected to the Jewish Diaspora, being one of the places of deportation, and as such to migration in general.

However, these are only the references in the beginning and the end of the letter. What is migration used for in the rest of it? Peter describes a process of understanding his message, although it is neither obvious nor divided in clear steps.

A migrant identity

In the first half of this chapter, we have seen that the people in Peter's audience are identified as being migrants. Whatever their former status, becoming 'Christians' meant they had become outsiders and strangers (1:1, 2:11). They did not belong to their previous communities anymore, because they behaved themselves differently. That is where their suffering and 'strangeness' came from. Peter describes their change of behaviour and its consequences as follows (4:3-4):

> ἀρκετὸς γὰρ ὁ παρεληλυθὼς χρόνος τὸ βούλημα τῶν ἐθνῶν κατειργάσθαι πεπορευμένους ἐν ἀσελγείαις, ἐπιθυμίαις, οἰνοφλυγίαις, κώμοις, πότοις καὶ ἀθεμίτοις εἰδωλολατρίαις. ἐν ᾧ ξενίζονται μὴ συντρεχόντων ὑμῶν εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν τῆς ἀσωτίας ἀνάχυσιν βλασφημοῦντες.
>
> For sufficient has been the time that has passed to do the will of the Gentiles, walking in licentiousness, lusts, debaucheries, revels, drinking-bouts and lawless idolatries. With respect to this, they think it strange (ξενίζονται) you are not running with them to the same excess of debauchery, and they slander you.[61]

The changes in their lives were apparently significant enough to be noticed and condemned by their respective communities. So significant indeed that these communities rejected (2:4) and excluded them and made them outsiders, both socially and spiritually, as the strangers Peter depicts them. They were, in summary, suffering. That he gives them the additional title 'of the Diaspora' (1:1) is not strange either in this aspect: διασπορά has a certain sense of disconnectedness or in-betweenness, as those in it are in the middle of two cultures, societies and identities. In using these terms, Peter instructs them to identify themselves as migrants and outsiders, not belonging anywhere in this world.

A new oikos

The second step in the progress for these 'migrants' is to recognise the positive side of their strangeness and, by extension, their suffering. The first benefit is that it strengthens their faith. They can see whether their faith is profound and true (1:6-7) and can better understand Christ's suffering (2:19-25; 3:17-20). Peter even speaks of suffering for the sake of Christ as a good thing (3:13-14; 4:12-19). Secondly, it shows they are not the only people believing in God in this situation. Peter's παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους ('resident aliens and strangers'; 2:11) is probably an echo of Genesis 23:4, where Abraham claims to be the same. The Jews among Peter's readers would surely be acquainted with both Abraham's personal relationship with God and his hardships. The suffering Christians are in good company. Thirdly and most importantly, their migrant identity allows them to belong to a new community. Let us explore this idea further.

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[59] 1 Pet. 5:13: ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτὴ.
[60] See Williams & Horrell (2023: 189-197) for a bibliography.
[61] Although ξενίζω is used here as 'being surprised', another meaning of the word, 'to be a stranger', could be playing a part. By their surprise, the Gentiles are estranged from the Christians. See LSJ, s.v. ξενίζω.

Besides πάροικος, οἶκος appears in 1 Peter (2:4, 4:17). This word has three meanings:

1) the 'house', as in the physical building,
2) one's property – everything belonging to someone – and
3) the family living in it.[62]

'Each *polis* is composed of *oikoi*', Aristotle explains its importance.[63] As the central unit of Ancient Greek society in each sense thinkable, the οἶκος formed (or should form) the stable foundation of any Greek's life and one's honour.[64] There, one could find comfort and a community. Terms like πάροικος and μέτοικος, which we saw above, show the extent to which people were concerned about their οἶκος: migrating meant moving one's οἶκος rather than integrating into a new *polis*. To be an ἄοικος, someone without an οἶκος, was to be miserable and could be seen as evil.[65] In ancient Athenian law, the οἶκος was part of the inheritance, making the term virtually synonymous with κλῆρος, 'estate'.[66]

The word is very common in both the LXX and the New Testament (hereafter 'NT'), covering all three senses mentioned above, both literally and metaphorically. In 1 Peter 2:4-5, however, the οἶκος has its own narrative:

> πρὸς ὃν προσερχόμενοι λίθον ζῶντα ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων μὲν ἀποδεδοκιμασμένον, παρὰ δὲ θεῷ ἐκλεκτὸν ἔντιμον, καὶ αὐτοὶ ὡς λίθοι ζῶντες οἰκοδομεῖσθε **οἶκος** πνευματικὸς εἰς ἱεράτευμα ἅγιον ἀνενέγκαι πνευματικὰς θυσίας εὐπροσδέκτους θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.
>
> As you come to [the Lord], as to a living stone that has been rejected by people, but elected and precious for God, and you yourselves are, like living stones, being built up as a spiritual **house**, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

These verses evoke all three definitions through the stones, the spiritual house and the priesthood. Peter's addressees, ἄοικοι in a social sense, are invited to a new οἶκος: God's. They will be part of a spiritual household – a community – in which they are precious and wanted and where their migrant identity plays no adverse part. After all, they are the *stones* of the house, permanent yet 'living'.

After connecting these stones to Isaiah (28:16) and the Psalms (117:22 LXX), Peter (2:9-10) expresses this idea of a new community even more strongly, again by quoting from the LXX.[67]

> ὑμεῖς δὲ **γένος** ἐκλεκτόν, βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα, **ἔθνος** ἅγιον, **λαὸς** εἰς περιποίησιν, ὅπως τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐξαγγείλητε τοῦ ἐκ σκότους ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς· οἳ ποτε οὐ **λαός**, νῦν δὲ **λαὸς** θεοῦ, οἱ οὐκ ἠλεημένοι, νῦν δὲ ἐλεηθέντες.
>
> You however are a chosen **race**, a royal priesthood, a holy **nation**, a **people** to the obtaining [of God], so that you would proclaim the virtues of Him Who has called you out of the darkness into His marvellous light. You, who were once not a people, but are now God's people; who have not been shown mercy, but are now shown mercy.

The three terms used to describe this new community, γένος, ἔθνος and λαὸς, partially overlap, but also have distinctive meanings. In the LXX and the NT, ἔθνος is mostly used to describe nations other than Israel and non-believers, but elsewhere it is also applied to groups of people closely associated with each other, like tribes.[68] The meaning of λαὸς, while often translated in the same way, is already somewhat

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[62] LSJ, s.v. οἶκος; MacDowell (1989: 10-11). The same distinction can be found in the Hebrew equivalent, בַּיִת *bayit* 'house, household'.
[63] Aristotle, *Politica* 1.1253b: πᾶσα γὰρ σύγκειται πόλις ἐξ οἰκιῶν.
[64] Foxhall (2016).
[65] E.g. Plato, *Phaedrus* 240a6, *Symposium* 203d1; Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus* 9.5.
[66] MacDowell (1989: 11-12).
[67] E.g. from Ex. 19:6, Isa. 43:20, etc. See Williams & Horrell (2023: 663-674) for a detailed analysis.
[68] LSJ, s.v. ἔθνος; Williams & Horrell (2023: 672). In Josephus and Philo, it almost equals γένος, see Horrell (2013: 139).

narrower: in our context, it is used specifically for Jews or, later on, Christians.[69] Both terms assume some affinity, but not as much as γένος, which denotes a shared descent.[70] People of the same γένος are of the same race or family, laying the foundation for a strong bond, and as such for sensations of affection and belonging.[71] This is indeed what we see in 1 Peter: the Christians are being built up together and as such form a new community, in a new house. In this way, no longer alone, but with each other's and God's help, they can withstand suffering.

A new, transient way of life

The following verses (2:11-12) mark the third and final part of the process:

> Ἀγαπητοί, παρακαλῶ **ὡς παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους** ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν αἵτινες στρατεύονται κατὰ τῆς ψυχῆς· τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἔχοντες καλήν, ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καταλαλοῦσιν ὑμῶν ὡς κακοποιῶν ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἐποπτεύοντες δοξάσωσιν τὸν θεὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς.
>
> Beloved, I entreat [you] **as resident aliens and strangers** to abstain from the fleshly desires, which war against the soul, keeping your behaviour among the Gentiles right, so that they, in that which they speak evil of you as of wrongdoers, because of the good works they look upon, will praise God on the day of visitation.

This new community and household bring a new behavioural code, though it is mostly about reinforcing the behaviour already there. They have been spurned for it by their 'old' community before, but to show that they are strangers to the world and belong to God, they are encouraged to mingle even less with the Gentiles and their lifestyle – which then, according to these verses, would only make the suffering more intense. So why is this new behaviour required of them? We will look at some other verses (1:17-18):

> καὶ εἰ πατέρα ἐπικαλεῖσθε τὸν ἀπροσωπολήμπτως κρίνοντα κατὰ τὸ ἑκάστου ἔργον, ἐν φόβῳ τὸν τῆς **παροικίας** ὑμῶν χρόνον ἀναστράφητε εἰδότες ὅτι οὐ φθαρτοῖς, ἀργυρίῳ ἢ χρυσίῳ, ἐλυτρώθητε ἐκ τῆς ματαίας ὑμῶν ἀναστροφῆς πατροπαραδότου.
>
> And if you appeal to the Father, Who judges according to the work of each person impartially, dwell in (reverent) fear during the time of your **alien residence**, knowing that you have not been redeemed by perishable goods – silver or gold – from your vain manner of life, handed down from your fathers.

In the previous verses, Peter admonishes the Christians to be holy, because God is holy (1:15-16). God's holiness should be the motivation for them to live in a holy way, distinguishing themselves from their non-believing neighbours.[72] Just like the priests (Lev. 21:6) and especially the entire people of Israel (i.e. Lev. 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:7) in the Old Testament were 'set apart' (which is what the Hebrew word for 'holy', קֹדֶשׁ *qodesh*, means) for the purpose of serving God, Christians are set apart from the rest of the world – and should act accordingly.[73] What this behaviour entails is set out in the entire letter. A part of it is not conforming (again, being 'set apart') to the non-believers and their 'vain manner of life' (1:18). The same message is repeated above and in 2:11-12, but there, the motivation is different. Not God's holiness is why they should do 'good works' and evade earthly desires, but their status as 'resident aliens and strangers' and παροικία (1:17). Their conduct will then encourage the Gentiles to praise God.

Nonetheless, Peter is not oblivious to the consequences of this new behaviour. As we saw above, this new way of life means they will be suffering even more. Still, he orders them to submit to the authorities, even if they are mistreated, as long as they can praise God while doing so (2:13-25). In that

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[69] LSJ, s.v. λαὸς; Williams & Horrell (2023: 672).
[70] Williams & Horrell (2023: 664-665).
[71] L.S.J., s.v. γένος.
[72] Elliott (2000: 361).
[73] Strong's Hebrew, s.v. קֹדֶשׁ (6944), cf. Elliott (2000: 360-362).

way, the Christians are maybe not as 'set apart' as Peter would wish – they are still in-between and ambiguous – but they can show the authorities what it means to live for God as well.

2.2 Diaspora and migration experiences

Diaspora and its connotations

As said above, we still need to study the concept of διασπορά, 'dispersion', in more detail. Afterwards, we will apply it to 1 Peter. The translation sounds neutral, but one of the Hebrew equivalents of διασπορά, גּוֹלָה *gola*, 'exile', illustrates the darker meaning of the word. Its root, גלה *g-l-h*, includes the meaning of 'uncovering' something or someone.[74] Considering that exiles are essentially stripped bare of everything they know – ancestors, land, status –, this negative connotation is not so strange. The Greek word as such embodies more than appears from the literal meaning.

In the LXX, διασπορά usually refers to the deportations of parts of the Israelite and Judean people to Assyria and Babylonia in 722 and 597-586 BCE, respectively.[75] They were moved to other places in the great empires so they would not rebel and could work for their masters, and although they could rise high and become prosperous – see the stories of Daniel or Nehemiah – they were forcefully exiled and had lost their independence.[76] The (post-)exilic literature in the LXX is predominantly negative about this exile.[77] In one famous example, Psalm 136 (LXX), exiles are presented as remaining loyal to their city of origin, Jerusalem (or Sion), by remembering it with sorrow and from afar. Babylon, on the other hand, is seen as an inferior, alien place of doom, isolation and oppression.[78] Exiled Jews were quickly adapting to their new way of life and some saw it as their new *status quo*, but others stayed in contact with the homeland, longing to go back someday, when God's wrath had eased.[79] When the opportunity arose, approximately seventy years after the Judean deportation, some of them went back to their homeland and rebuilt what they had lost.[80] During these years of exile, the concept of diaspora became ingrained in Jewish identity, marking Jewish literature for centuries afterwards.[81]

However, this grim and gloomy picture is only one side of the story, mostly connected to the Biblical past. On the other side, in Hellenistic times, we see thriving Jewish communities, in which new Greek settlements provided a pull-factor for voluntary migration of Jews to all parts of the Mediterranean.[82] These Jews too were 'scattered', and as such 'diaspora Jews', but had not the same experiences as their ancestors. While Jerusalem kept its important role in the life of these Jews as spiritual centre and aim for pilgrimages, it was no longer sought after as the place to definitively return to.[83] Instead, Hellenistic Jews tried to integrate into the communities of the locals and to belong there, while keeping their Jewish identity.[84] For them, 'diaspora' did not have the traumatic sense of biblical and modern times.[85] Still, they did not have the same rights as they had at home and their way of life led to suspicion by their non-Jewish neighbours. Hostility or even expulsion, like the one of emperor Claudius in Rome, were difficulties they often encountered.[86]

An interesting example is Philo's description of the Alexandrian riots in 38 CE, stating, in short, that the prefect, Flaccus, closed the synagogues and wanted to destroy the citizenship (πολιτεία) of the

[74] Brown-Driver-Briggs, s.v. גָּלָה.
[75] Berlin (2021: 24-25).
[76] Berlin (2021: 23, 28-29); cf. the Introduction.
[77] It is already announced negatively in texts like Deut. 28:25, 64, 30:4; some (of many) examples of the negative connotations can be found in Ps. 43:12 (LXX); Jer. 13:24, 15:7; Ezek. 20:23.
[78] Cohen (2023: 24-26), who also mentions this was not universal.
[79] Berlin (2021: 31-32). See for example Jer. 29 and Neh. 1 respectively.
[80] The books of Nehemia and Ezra revolve around the returning of some Jews to Judah.
[81] Gruen (2016: 283). Philo is the obvious example, but elements in Judith and Tobit point to *diaspora* as well.
[82] Gruen (2016: 284). Acts 2:5-11 names some places the Jews visiting Jerusalem came from.
[83] Gruen (2016: 296). However, Scott (1997) argues for a negative interpretation of this diaspora by some Jews.
[84] Gruen (2016: 299).
[85] Cohen (2023: 3-5, 23-24) discusses this modern traumatic element.
[86] Elliott (2000: 314-315).

Jews.[87] According to Philo, Flaccus stigmatises them as 'strangers and aliens' (ξένους καὶ ἐπήλυδας) to rectify his destruction of their livelihoods and the subsequent murders.[88] Even after hundreds of years of living in Alexandria, they could be seen as migrants when the occasion demanded it and suffered because of that identity. This is an extreme case of course, where Jews were targeted specifically. But anyway, serving other gods and having other customs than the majority made them susceptible of being the scapegoat in case of adversity.[89] Their new home meant they were in an emotional and social limbo, where they had to find out where they would belong and what would give them security. They too, like Peter's Christians, were 'in-between'.

Diaspora and 1 Peter

In our introduction, we have seen that diaspora can be used in a metaphorical sense. When subjected to marginalisation and sensations of not belonging, one may experience the same as in a geographical diaspora, as described above. 'Diaspora' and its related terms thus become symbols of the dreadful things they entailed, without the geographical aspect – a process we can already see in the LXX.[90] This brings us back to an earlier question: does Peter use this diaspora vocabulary metaphorically too? There is no simple 'yes' or 'no' answer to this. If Peter means all this literally, then his addressees must all be 'resident aliens', scorned not because of their Christianity, but because of their non-citizen status. Although this is possible, it is not likely that the Christian communities would exist of exclusively Diaspora Jews. Besides, all mentions of marginalisation in the letter relate to their life *after* their conversion, not *before* – something that works better (though not exclusively) with a metaphorical interpretation.[91] However, one does not exclude the other. The addressees were probably scorned *both* because of their non-citizen status and their Christian identity. In fact, Peter reuses his audience's experiences of being marginalised and alienated to help them cope with their suffering *in Christ* – a notion not present in Acts. He then applies diaspora vocabulary on two levels, both dealing with the actual situation and giving their situation a new meaning, teaching them to identify themselves as the πάροικοι in Christ and as such deal with their suffering.

Zooming out: alien Jews, strange Christians

Considering all of this, it appears that Peter draws a parallel between the Christians' situation and the experiences of the Diaspora Jews. These Jews too were 'suffering' by being marginalised and suspected of wrongdoing and were 'resident aliens and strangers' (2:11), in a literal sense. Peter seems to be playing with everything we have seen. On the one hand, he is adopting the migration vocabulary of the LXX and adapting it to fit his own audience. Its implications are magnified and inextricably intertwined with the purpose of the letter. These Christians' strangeness becomes the cause of their suffering, which in turn is not so strange anymore. On the other hand, Peter uses the Diaspora to claim similar experiences for the early Christians: their suffering, caused by their strangeness, does not come out of nowhere, but is grounded in an age-old tradition. Jewish converts especially would have understood both these references. What Peter does with their strangeness and Diaspora identity, however, is new. Their migrant status is portrayed positively, as the opportunity to become a new community as strangers in the world, but a household in Christ.

This is then one way of dealing with strangeness for these early Christians: looking for a foundation in both the Diaspora and in a new, transient identity, and as such positioning themselves in the world they are living in.

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[87] Philo, *In Flaccum* 53. Cf. Bilde (1993: 108), who also gives similar examples, and Gambetti (2009).
[88] Philo, *In Flaccum* 54, 64-72.
[89] Elliott (2000: 94).
[90] See Williams & Horrell (2023: 222), against Elliott (2000: 314). 1 Chron. 29:15 is the most obvious metaphorical example.
[91] Williams & Horrell (2023: 222-223).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at 1 Peter's literary setting and explained the meaning of several concepts related to migration used in it. We have seen that migration is used throughout the letter to show its addresses that they are migrants without a home on this earth, but that they have a home and family in God and their Christian peers. They are holy and should behave themselves as such, still being strangers to the world, but being residents with God. They should understand their suffering through this lens. Afterwards, we looked at how Peter helps his readers to understand this message: through the concept of Diaspora. Just like the Jews were socially and culturally 'in-between' their place of origin and were suffering in all kinds of ways, so the early Christians were marginalised strangers. By understanding this and the positive aspects of being 'aliens', they could learn how to cope with and thrive despite this strangeness.

Chapter 3: Celebrating mobility

> ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ, οὗτος οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὑπάρχων κύριος οὐκ ἐν χειροποιήτοις ναοῖς κατοικεῖ.
>
> The God Who made the world and everything in it – He, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made by hand.
>
> Acts 17:24

In this chapter, we will examine our second case study: Acts, and especially chapter 7. Although Acts' purpose and context differ significantly from those of 1 Peter, it also addresses migration, focusing on entirely different aspects of the issue. First, we will look at the setting and vocabulary and see how migration functions in this book. Afterwards, we will explore the broader narrative the author had in mind.

3.1 Migration in Acts (7)

3.1.1 Overview and context of Acts 7

Again, we will provide an outline of the contents of Acts 7. The speech of Stephen, one of the seven deacons (whose job was to support the poor) of the early Church in Jerusalem (6:5), is preceded by the description of his appointment (6:1-7), his ministry (6:8), his conflict with Diaspora Jews (6:9-12) and his trial before the (Great) Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish court (6:13-7:1).[92] In this trial, Stephen is allowed to defend himself. The topics of his speech can be outlined as such:[93]

1. A call to hear/*exordium* (7:2a)
2. Abraham as an alien (7:2b-8)
3. Joseph as a rejected, alienated deliverer (7:9-16)
4. God and Moses (7:17-43)
    a. Moses as a rejected deliverer (7:17-28)
    b. Moses as an alien (7:29-34)
    c. Moses as the prototype of the rejected deliverer; Israel's rebellion (7:35-43)
5. Tabernacle and temple (7:44-50)
6. Charge and application: a history of rejecting the Spirit (7:51-53)

Stephen's speech infuriates the members of the Sanhedrin so much that they stone him to death outside the city (7:54-60). His death instigates a major persecution, led by a not yet converted Saul/Paul, and disperses Jesus' followers in Jerusalem all over the country (8:1-4). As such, the Stephen-episode marks the beginning of a new phase of the early Church: the spread of Christianity far and wide.[94]

This outline already shows the heavy dependency of Stephen's speech on the 'Old Testament', the LXX to be precise. Indeed, it is the foundation of his defence and his way of communicating with his audience – but more on this later.

3.1.2 Setting

Before we can move on to the background of Acts 7 in particular, it is important to remember that this chapter, unlike 1 Peter, does not stand on its own. For this reason, we first need to discuss the broader background of Acts.

[92] As in the previous chapter, all references existing of only numbers refer to Acts.
[93] Adapted from Bock (2007: III.A.2) and Keener (2020: 234-252).
[94] Acts 11:19 tells us that these followers fled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch.

Acts of the Apostles

Author and date of publication

The author of Acts has no name in the book itself, and his identity is disputed. Tradition, from the end of the second century onwards, unanimously attaches the name of the Greek physician Luke to both Acts and the Third Gospel, because of their similarities in style and the name 'Theophilus'.[95] As such, Acts is the second part of a diegesis and refers back to the Third Gospel. On several occasions in the second half of Acts, the author involves himself in the travels of Paul by referring to 'we' (16:10, 21:1, etc.). While it could have been applied to *pretend* that the author was an eyewitness, the specific selection of only a few passages makes it more likely that the author was in fact present, and as such a companion of Paul.[96] There are only a few co-workers of Paul who are not called by name in these sections, among whom Luke.[97] His obscure status and lack of prominence in the NT actually contribute to the likelihood of his authorship: if one were to invent an author, Luke would be an unlikely candidate.[98] Although there is no way of assuring he has written Acts, we will keep to his name, for lack of a better option.[99]

Combining what we know about 'Luke' and Acts, the author knew something of the world.[100] He shows a considerable knowledge of geography, travelled to several areas and was with Paul shortly before his death in Rome.[101] Travelling with Paul, he also experienced suffering and being an outsider. Because of this, he, just like Peter, would know quite well how to discuss migration.

It is not clear when Acts was published. Various dates in the last four decades of the first century have been suggested, but the issue is not yet decided.[102] Since we do not know the date of 1 Peter either, it does not matter much: we cannot make out the relative date of the two texts anyway.

Recipients

Acts 1:1, just like the beginning of Luke, is dedicated to a certain 'Theophilus', unknown to us beyond these references. He was probably a patron to Luke's work and affiliated with the early Christians. In Luke 1:3 he is called κράτιστος, 'most excellent', a title elsewhere used for the Judean procurators, but also denoting someone of high(er) rank in a more general sense.[103] Still, this does not mean that Luke's entire audience was like Theophilus. Luke probably had something broader in mind – Greek-speaking, somewhat educated people who were open to the idea of Christianity.[104] Where these people lived or what they believed, we do not know. However, to understand this letter in the right way, they would have needed to be multiculturally versed, understanding something of Greco-Roman literary practices, Jewish principles and the geography of the Mediterranean, as Luke does not explain these basics.[105] It could also be, however, that Luke aimed his narrative, more universally, at a wide variety of readers, each understanding certain aspects.[106] Whatever Luke's desired audience was, his work was widely accepted and appreciated in the churches of the late second century and later.[107]

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[95] Bruce (1990[3]: 1-3) gives an overview of the external evidence. See for example Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 3.1.2, Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 5.12.82.4. For the similarities in style, see the references in Bruce (1990[3]: 3). Luke is named in Phil. 1:24, Col. 4:14 (where he is called a doctor) and 2 Tim. 4:11.
[96] Bruce (1990[3]: 3-5).
[97] Philem. 1:24; Bruce (1990[3]: 6).
[98] Keener (2020: 50), Bock (2007: 16).
[99] As does Keener (2020: 48-51).
[100] Bruce (1990[3]: 8-9) also explains Luke's possible Antiochene origin.
[101] 2 Tim. 1:17, 4:11; Keener (2020: 20-22, 49).
[102] For the discussion, see Bock (2007: 25-27), Bruce (1990[3]: 9-18).
[103] LSJ, s.v. κράτιστος. Luke uses the same title for Felix and Festus (Acts 24:3; 26:25).
[104] Bruce (1990[3]: 34); Keener (2020: 52).
[105] Parsons (2008: 20).
[106] Marguerat (2018).
[107] Bock (2007: 27-28).

Goal, genre, themes

In line with ancient historiographical tradition, Luke states his purpose in the prologue of his Gospel (1:1-4): he seeks to describe the beginnings and advance of Christianity accurately for Theophilus.[108] This probably also applied to Acts, as can be gathered from Jesus' words in the beginning of Acts, right before His ascension (1:8):[109]

> ἔσεσθέ μου μάρτυρες ἔν τε Ἰερουσαλὴμ καὶ [ἐν] πάσῃ τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ καὶ Σαμαρείᾳ καὶ ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς.
>
> You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

By the end of Acts, the Gospel has reached Rome, which was indeed very far away from where Jesus ministered. The prologue of Luke has, just like the rest of his work, many similarities with ancient historiography, as opposed to Peter's letter.[110] Luke's account strives for accuracy, has a consistent theme, is grounded in its social context and uses eyewitnesses (Luke 1:2).[111] And although Luke follows the tradition of enhancing and filling the gaps of speeches, he refrains from this in the rest of his narrative.[112]

There are other themes than the spread of the Gospels too, of course. Think of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, the role of the Holy Spirit, suffering and persecution and the movement's connection to Judaism.[113] All these themes are important, and yet, they do not tell the entire story. Wherever one looks in Acts, there is movement. It belongs to the Gospel: the entire earth is its stage (1:8) and where its proclaimers should be. Christians are travelling and fleeing constantly, adapting to different environments and people and evangelising everywhere. Diaspora Jews come to Jerusalem for Shavuot (a Jewish festival) and Paul and the Apostles journey extensively to spread the Gospel. Paul, Philip and Stephen are even Jews from the Diaspora themselves.[114] Therefore, in recent years, several scholars have proposed migration as a theme in Acts – particularly in Acts 7, the speech of Stephen, and the surrounding narrative.[115] Accordingly, we will now turn to this speech and analyse it further.

Acts 7

Genre

So far, we have called Stephen's long spoken text a 'speech', but it is much more. Stephen stands trial before the Sanhedrin (6:12-15), after Hellenistic Jews, possibly people from Stephen's own (former) community, are enraged with Stephen's power, wisdom and preaching (centred around Jesus; 6:14) and let false witnesses accuse him of blasphemy (6:13-14):

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[108] E.g. Herodotus, *Histories* 1.0, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 1.1. Bruce (1990^3: 21); Bock (2007: 45).
[109] Although Jesus says this just to His disciples, the audience of Acts would probably have understood it more generally. Cf. Kahl (2014: 74-75).
[110] Bruce (1990^3: 27-34).
[111] Bruce (1990^3: 27-34) compares these characteristics to Lucian's later requirements.
[112] Keener (2020: 32-36), Bruce (1990^3: 34-40) and Bock (2007: 20-23) discuss the authenticity of these speeches. The tradition is already mentioned by Thucydides (1.22.1).
[113] Keener (2020: 59-63, 65, 70-74).
[114] Kahl (2015: 188), who argues for the great importance of Diaspora Jews for early Christianity; Stenschke (2016: 133). Dunn (2016: 83-84) discusses the probability of two distinctive groups (Diaspora Jews and Aramaic speakers) in the early church.
[115] See Kahl (2015), Stenschke (2016), Buchholz (2021) and Hogeterp (2021).

> ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὗτος οὐ παύεται λαλῶν ῥήματα κατὰ τοῦ τόπου τοῦ ἁγίου [τούτου] καὶ τοῦ νόμου· ἀκηκόαμεν γὰρ αὐτοῦ λέγοντος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος οὗτος καταλύσει τὸν τόπον τοῦτον καὶ ἀλλάξει τὰ ἔθη ἃ παρέδωκεν ἡμῖν Μωϋσῆς.
>
> This man does not stop uttering words against this holy place and the Law. For we have heard him say this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which are given to us by Moses.

Not respecting the Law and Moses are heavy accusations. The high priest asks for confirmation (7:1) and Stephen takes the stage, one would assume to defend himself. However, he never refers to his own ordeal: the only 'I' in these 52 verses is spoken by God. Instead, what the Sanhedrin gets resembles a sermon, recapitulating several important steps in the history of God with his people. While Stephen does refute the charges, he does not stay defensive. On the contrary, he ends his speech attacking both his accusers and his judges (7:51-53) and angering them (7:54) – not the best way to be acquitted, one could argue.[116] However, this pattern is typical of Jewish and Greco-Roman (judicial) speeches and part of their rhetorics.[117] Therefore, Luke is adhering adequately to the classical model, in spite of what modern readers might think. What is more, this sermon is an example of retrospective history, as Keener calls it: Stephen imitates the LXX, which he cites vigorously, by retelling the history of Israel with the emphasis elsewhere, as also happens in Deuteronomy 6:20-24 and 26:5-9, for example.[118]

Themes

There are several reoccurring topics in the narrative around Stephen. A few of them are:

1. Mirroring Jesus: many aspects of the Stephen-episode, especially at the end (7:54-60), are reminiscent of Jesus' last days.[119] Stephen too prays for the forgiveness of his executioners (7:60; Luke 23:34) and for the acceptance of his soul by God (7:59; Luke 23:46), for example. By mirroring Jesus in this way, Luke emphasises that Stephen obeys God with his martyrdom, and that he, because of his obedience, can be seen as an authority.
2. Law and Temple: Stephen is accused of opposing the Law and the Temple (6:13) and defends himself against this. He argues that his accusers have rejected God's servants and have fallen into idolatry of the Temple.[120]
3. Diaspora (see below): Stephen stresses the exile of Israel's ancestors; the Christians flee.
4. Migration: the last theme of Acts 7, and the one we will elaborate on, is migration.

Context: diaspora

The basic concept of diaspora has been explained in the previous chapter, but we need to specify it here. Although the word does not occur in Stephen's speech itself, in 6:9 we read that his accusers are from the (Hellenistic) Diaspora.[121] And after the speech, in 8:1b and 8:4, the word is used for the early Christians who fled after Stephen's death and who were now, too, in the Diaspora. So, although it is not said explicitly in the scene itself, diaspora and its connotations are always present at the back of the audience's minds. Unlike Peter, however, Luke does not provide direct ways to cope with the dispersion, instead focussing on presenting it as the ideal, as discussed below. While dispersion has made Peter's audience 'homeless' on earth, God and Luke's Christians have a home everywhere (7:49). Luke uses diaspora to connect with his readers and their own experiences, but not, as in 1 Peter, as a method or the main theme.[122]

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[116] Keener (2020: 233).
[117] See Keener (2020: 235-251) for a rhetorical analysis.
[118] Keener (2020: 235). See Dunn (2016: 89) for these and more examples.
[119] Keener (2020: 228-229).
[120] Dunn (2016: 90-91); Bock (2007: III.A.2).
[121] The other Jews are also foreigners but are living in Jerusalem.
[122] Much more can be said on the subject, but as this is not the focus of our chapter, we will leave it for now.

3.1.3 The role of migration in Acts (7)

In the second part of this chapter, we will look at how the theme of migration plays out in Acts (7). First, we will give a summary of where and how migration occurs in Stephen's speech. Afterwards, we will discuss some ways in which Luke emphasises this theme.

Analysis of 'migration' in Acts 7

We will now dive deeper into Stephen's reply to the Sanhedrin (7:2-53). He tells the history of the people of Israel but is transforming it into *his own* story, just like Peter does with diaspora and migration experiences. Stephen begins with retelling the story of Abraham's calling and migration to Canaan (Gen. 11:31-12:5).[123] Although in his speech he keeps to the original narrative, often citing it directly, he uses some later (extra-)biblical traditions.[124] Most notably, he changes the story from Genesis by placing God's command *before* Terah, Abraham's father, moved the family from Ur to Haran (7:2), making this migration from a foreign place God's plan too. He also specifies that God kept Abraham a stranger and alien (7:5):

> καὶ οὐκ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ κληρονομίαν ἐν αὐτῇ οὐδὲ βῆμα ποδὸς καὶ ἐπηγγείλατο δοῦναι αὐτῷ εἰς κατάσχεσιν αὐτὴν καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ μετ' αὐτόν, οὐκ ὄντος αὐτῷ τέκνου
>
> And yet He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a footstep, and promised to give it to him as a possession, and to his seed after him, although he had no child.

Although he was at God's appointed destination, Abraham still had no place he could call his own: he stayed a stranger. Stephen further emphasises this appropriation of the story in the next verse (7:6) by selecting God's promise (Gen. 15:13-14) that Abraham's offspring would serve as πάροικοι in a strange land and adding (7:7) that they would worship God 'in this place'.[125] For Stephen's audience originating from the land of Israel was of great importance, but Stephen, born elsewhere like many other early Christians, shows that even their ancestors did not meet that requirement.[126] Still, God was with them, wherever they were.

Stephen seems to be discussing deliberately only the role models of the Jews who could be considered strangers. So, after a brief genealogy, his attention shifts to the next character in this retelling, Joseph. Although he was sold and taken away to Egypt and was a slave and stranger there, God – not bound by a location – did not leave him (7:9). On the contrary, Joseph became the right hand of the Pharaoh and delivered his family, who moved to Egypt too. This country then becomes the scene for the story of Moses, who features most prominently in Stephen's speech (7:20-44), because the deacon was accused of disrespecting him.[127]

When Abraham's descendants become too many, they are scorned and mistreated. Moses, an Israelite, is raised by the daughter of Pharaoh, but consequently is considered an outsider by his own people, even though he kills an Egyptian for abusing an Israelite (7:24). The Israelites reject him not only as their judge, but also, already, as their deliverer (7:25). When he realises their ill will towards him, he flees and becomes a πάροικος in Midian (7:29). When discussing Moses' calling in this foreign place, which happens some forty years later, Stephen underscores this earlier rejection by his people. Moses was an alien outsider, a prince downgraded to be a refugee, but God still chooses him to be Israel's deliverer. But this time, on their long journey, he is even rejected by his brother, as well as the Israelites (7:39). They worship a calf instead of God and fall into idolatry, abusing the tabernacle, and only then God leaves them (7:42). Stephen argues that He went with His people everywhere, even into

[123] Cf. Philo, *De Migratione Abrahami*.
[124] Keener (2020: 238-239).
[125] ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τούτῳ, maybe citing Ex. 3:12 (Moses' calling), where it refers to Mount Sinai. Here, its meaning is disputed. It could mean the promised land in a general sense, see Bruce (1990[3]: 194), but also, as Hogeterp (2021: 300) argues, Jerusalem. Keener (2020: 240) thinks this verse just refers to Sinai, which appears again in 7:30.
[126] Buchholz (2021: 101).
[127] Keener (2020: 244).

foreign places, but when they do not worship Him in that place, that is where He draws the line. Being a stranger or migrant is no problem – it is characteristic of Israel's heroes –, but idolatry is.[128]

After this, Stephen skips over a great part of the history of Israel. He does mention David and Solomon, who wanted to build God a home in which He, as Stephen argues, does not live (7:45-50), but there is nothing about the Judges, other kings or the Babylonian exile. The only reference to the latter is Stephen's citation of Amos 5:25-27 in 7:43, changing Damascus to Babylon to emphasise the realisation of the exile. For Luke, Stephen has now said enough to make his point: God needs no fixed abode; He dwells where He is worshipped, among others by His estranged 'prophets', like Moses. And Stephen's accusers have both idolised the Temple as a place, instead of serving God, and rejected the very prophet they are so proud of.

Vocabulary of Acts 7 and meaning

Dwelling and settling

There are several verbs concerning migration that appear in this chapter, with κατοικέω being the one used most often. It denotes both the process of 'settling' in an area and the state of being settled or 'dwelling', but in either case the result is permanent: the subject stays where he is.[129] As a permanent resident, one would likely also belong to the local community, with the associated rights and position.[130] When contrasting this term with παροικέω, 'to reside as an alien', explained in the previous chapter, there is a clear distinction in meaning: the πάροικος lives 'in-between', being not quite at home, in a temporary state, while the κάτοικος is a permanent inhabitant with at least the opportunity to feel at home.[131]

In the LXX, the verb κατοικέω is mostly used as the equivalent of the Hebrew יָשַׁב *yāshaḇ* 'to sit, remain, dwell'.[132] Just like in the New Testament, it is used of people (e.g. Num. 14:14, Acts 1:9), traits in a person (e.g. Isa. 32:16, Col. 1:19) and God (e.g. 1 Kings 8:27, Matt. 23:21). It is just as common in Luke's books, appearing more than twenty times, as elsewhere. In Acts 7, it is used four times: two times of Abraham in Haran (7:2, 7:4), one time to refer to Stephen's audience and the land of Israel (7:4) and one time of God, Who does not dwell in temples (7:48). Abraham only 'dwells' in Haran, not in Canaan or Egypt. After all, Abraham, Moses and Joseph are all πάροικοι in these places.

Forced migration and flight

Another thing that Stephen highlights in his speech is the manner of the forefathers' migrations. First, the word μετοικίζω (7:4) resembles μετοικέω/παροικέω in the first chapter, but has an added sense of force: 'to cause to migrate', or literally 'to cause to be a μέτοικος'. In Classical Greek, moreover, it sometimes has the meaning of 'resettling' colonisers.[133] The resulting migration is forced. The verb does not occur in the LXX, but its related term, μετοικεσία, 'exile', does.[134] Just like in the NT (Matt. 1:11, 12, 17) it usually denotes the Babylonian exile (discussed in Chapter 2) and as such interacts with diaspora. Here though, μετοικίζω is used of Abraham (7:4) and the Israelites (7:43). In both cases, God is the instigator of the forced migration, but while Abraham has done nothing wrong, Israel must endure exile as a punishment.[135]

The verb φεύγω, 'to flee', is also used in this passage, for Moses fleeing out of Egypt (7:29). Although its implication (being prosecuted in a lawsuit), can refer to Stephen's situation, it is primarily a further description of Moses' situation.

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[128] Buchholz (2021: 102).
[129] Strong's Lexicon, s.v. κατοικέω (2730).
[130] Moulton & Milligan (1929: 338).
[131] This distinction becomes clear in Gen. 37:1: **κατῴκει** δὲ Ἰακὼβ ἐν τῇ γῇ οὗ **παρῴκησεν** ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ, ἐν γῇ Χανάαν. 'And Jacob **dwelt** in the land in which his father **had resided as an alien**, in the land of Canaan.'
[132] Strong's Lexicon, s.v. κατοικέω (2730); Strong's Lexicon, s.v. יָשַׁב (3427).
[133] E.g. Aristotle, *Oeconomica* 1352a33, but see Thucydides 1.12 and Plutarchus, *Romulus* 17.1 for the same meaning as in the NT.
[134] E.g. Judg. 18:30, Ezek. 12:11; 1 Chron. 5:22.
[135] Cf. Hogeterp (2021: 298).

What is interesting in Stephen's sermon is the focus on forced migration, both with these terms and with the contents of the speech in general. We see famine and oppression, but also a 'political refugee' and God's divine plan.[136] This combination of divine and human factors mirrors that of the LXX, as do the references to God's promises.[137] Stephen mentions several times that God will deliver those living as aliens, using them to execute His plans.[138] Even though – or maybe even *because* – Abraham, Joseph and Moses are living abroad and in-between, God is with them. The same could be said of the early Christians, who were persecuted in Luke's time and as such needed the message that being alien and exiled was not strange, but rather a good thing, just like it was of old.[139]

Houses and dwellings

In the second half of Stephen's speech the vocabulary of dwelling-places appears. Three different words are used for the structures meant to 'house' God: οἶκος (7:46, 47), which we have seen in the previous chapter, σκηνή (7:43, 44) and σκήνωμα (7:46). The latter two are used of tents, temporary sanctuaries that can be taken down and brought along – perfect for migrants. Οἶκος, on the other hand, denotes a permanent structure, in its physical sense at least. It is stationary, and therefore more typical of a settled people. The same thing happens in Acts 7: the Israelites use the tabernacle, a tent, during their travelling and settling (7:44-45), but start looking for a permanent solution once they are settled in their promised land (7:45-47). Stephen seems to say this is wrong, because God does not dwell in such a fixed abode (7:48).[140] This would be odd, however. Jesus did, after all, not despise the Temple, but the profit-driven practices on its grounds (Luke 19:45-48). Moreover, in Acts, the early Christians congregated near the Temple without judging its existence (3:1-11, 5:12).[141] Not the Temple itself is wrong, because a central place for worship is beneficial, but the people's idolatrous attitude towards it.[142] They confined God to the Temple and formed their own ideas of Who God is based on that place alone, while the Temple is only a representation of God's presence in the form of a 'house' (οἶκος) and His promises, no more than that.[143]

Migration and meaning

This speech then focuses on migration to show that the (future) wanderings of the early Christians, wanted by God, follow historical examples, and that He migrates with them instead of staying put. They will be rejected, but so were their spiritual ancestors; it is nothing new, and that helps to ground this new movement.[144] And Luke's Stephen goes even further (7:51-52): because God's servants were migrants, but were rejected, he, who is rejected by his accusers and is an alien and outcast, is also a servant of God, deployed by Him. Stephen tries to show that this attitude of God has always been present, and that the leaders of his time, having forgotten this, disobey the Law.[145] Accusing them of rejecting both Moses and the Law, Stephen returns the charges. Moreover, he thus opposes the philosophy of the Jews and makes them into 'others' and 'strangers' too, but then of God.

Analysis of migration in Acts in general

Stephen's speech fits well into Luke's narrative of dispersion and migration in the entirety of Acts. After the stage is set by Acts 7, the early Christians indeed begin 'migrating'. They, most notably Paul and Peter, branch out from Jerusalem and travel to all sorts of places.[146] The Gospel is spreading, as Jesus

[136] Hogeterp (2021: 311).
[137] Hogeterp (2021: 311).
[138] Buchholz (2021: 100). For Stephen's references, see Acts 7:5, 7, 17, 34, et cetera.
[139] Buchholz (2021: 108-109).
[140] After Stenschke (2016: 135).
[141] See Hogeterp (2021: 305).
[142] Hogeterp (2021: 306); Buchholz (2021: 97).
[143] Buchholz (2021: 97-99).
[144] As Bock (2007: 23-24) explains.
[145] Hogeterp (2021: 306).
[146] Cf. De Jonge (2022: 28-29), who proposes further research into the migrant perspective of Paul.

said it would (1:8), and for that, the mobility of its proclaimers is needed. It begins with forced migration (8:1-4), but soon, Paul goes on bigger, voluntary, missionary journeys (13-21). Thanks to this mobility and his in-between identity as a Greek-speaking Diaspora Jew, new communities arise everywhere, spreading the Gospel further.

But they and the Gospel are not just 'moving' geographically: the Gospel also spreads to the Gentiles, though it was primarily preached to the Jews in Jesus' ministry, and by Jews since His ascension (1-7).[147] Philip travels with an Ethiopian eunuch (8:26-40), Peter is forced to step into the world of Cornelius, a Roman centurion (10-11), and the church in Jerusalem deals with problems caused by the expansion into Gentile territory (15:1-30). Each time, they need to cross social and cultural boundaries, rethinking what they believe is 'normal'. Especially on their missionary journeys, far away from their homes, they become strangers and aliens, navigating their way through the unknown – just like the patriarchs – and at the same time looking for the familiar, for ways to break through the strangeness. Thus, Paul always visits the local synagogue first and, in his speech on the Areopagus in Athens, uses an altar for an unknown god to introduce his God to the Athenians (17:15-34).[148] And taking his part-Greek assistant Timothy with him to preach to the Jews, he seeks peace by circumcising him (16:1-3).[149] It is partially due to this adaptability of Paul that his missions are so successful. Yet Paul and his colleagues stay outsiders, people of 'the Way' (9:2), never fitting in completely. Knowing God travels with them (e.g. 11:21) and has meant it this way, they are not seeking a new, permanent home, as in 1 Peter, as they are at home everywhere.[150]

Yet Luke remains realistic. He neither denies nor idealises the suffering migration involves. Paul is for example almost beaten to death (e.g. 16:22-24), stoned (14:19), shipwrecked (27:14-44), persecuted by both Jews (e.g. 13:50) and Gentiles (e.g. 19:23-20:1) and imprisoned (e.g. 22:24, 23:33-27:2).[151] The hardships of the patriarchs are not ignored by Stephen either. Rather, migration and its difficulties are *both* marked as the distinctive identity of these early Christians, as it was of the patriarchs, and as the opportunity they should act upon to spread the Gospel.[152]

One other thing stands out when looking at Acts: the book ends in Rome.[153] After Paul's arrest, trials and sea voyage, the statement that he, in chains, preaches in his rented home in Rome (28:30-31) seems anti-climactic, but is in fact the climax of the work. Here, Luke takes his narrative of migration further than expected. But how?

3.2 Acts, migration and the centre of the Empire

In the final part of this chapter, we will explore the meaning of migration in Acts in a bigger sense. While Peter's letter has a mainly inward focus, Acts ventures further: outward, to the great stage of Rome.

Rome: The (migrant) centre stage

As the capital city of the Roman Empire, Rome attracted people from all over the Mediterranean world; so many in fact, that Seneca the Younger, during Acts' timeline, could remark that aliens made up the majority of the city's populace.[154] Globalisation, extensive road networks and the relative peace in the early Roman Empire made it easier for well-to-do people to travel to Rome for various reasons.[155] Although most of these migrants probably were either (involuntarily migrating) enslaved people or those

[147] Alexander (2007: 73).
[148] In 17:24, Paul copies Stephen (7:48) regarding the non-temple dwelling God.
[149] See also Kahl (2014: 80-81).
[150] Stenschke (2016: 138); Alexander (2007: 73-75).
[151] 2 Cor. 11:23-33 summarises Paul's suffering.
[152] Stenschke (2016: 144-146).
[153] Considering the (other) themes Luke concludes in the previous chapters, this ending seems logical. See Keener (2020: 620-622).
[154] Seneca, *Ad Helviam* 6.2; Balsdon (1979: 13); Hanciles (2021: 163).
[155] Killgrove & Montgomery (2016: 2), who identify several immigrants based on isotope analysis; De Jonge (2022: 10-11); De Ligt & Tacoma (2016: 5-6).

looking for work or wealth, there were also many Greek-speaking intellectuals among them, like Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Strabo.[156] If one sought to be successful with his writings, Rome, as the cultural and social centre of that time, was *the* place to be.

And there is more to be discovered. In Augustus' time, several literary accounts on the origins of Rome appear. While Dionysius argues Rome is entirely Greek and sees this as positive, Virgil's *Aeneid* indicates that it originated from both Trojans and Greek Arcadians.[157] Still, they have one thing in common: the first Romans are presented as migrants – just like the (spiritual) ancestors in Stephen's speech.[158] In Imperial times, the Romans were 'migrating' out of Rome too, moving from their homes to fight, trade or rule elsewhere, unquestionably dealing with the in-betweenness and ambiguity characteristic of each such movement.[159] So Rome is not just a city of people of *migrant origin*, both in the beginning and in Imperial times, but also of *migrants*. Rome's literature, with authors like Cicero and Tacitus discussing the alien topos, reflects the experiences, status and purpose of migrants in many ways.[160] By going to Rome, the Christians could join in this debate.[161]

Migration: interacting with Rome

If the Gospel was to spread to the ends of the world (1:8), Rome was where it should go first. Seen no longer as the ends of the earth but as the centre, the city enables the Gospel to spread further. But Luke is not just interacting with Rome in the final chapters. His protagonists can move through the Roman Empire using the Roman infrastructure and social structures, and Paul's Roman citizenship benefits him in dealings with the – generally portrayed positively – Roman rulers (e.g. 22:25-29).[162] And we have already seen some other things: the 'migration' of the Gospel to the Gentiles (10-11) makes being Christian possible for Romans, Stephen's speech (7) shows God will also be with them outside of Jerusalem and Paul widens the horizon by debating with the Athenians (17). The various conversations about migration even mirror similar discussions in Rome.

Rome becomes the main character in the last eight chapters. When Paul travels back to Jerusalem, the Jews accuse him of opposing everything they believe in (21:28). Only his arrest by a Roman army unit and the involvement of a Roman commander saves him from a certain death by the Jews, *thrice* (21:30-36; 23:10; 23:30). Paul is then brought to Antonius Felix, the procurator of Judea, with whom he speaks frequently (24:26) in his detention, sharing the Gospel. When Felix is succeeded by Porcius Festus and the Jews try again to have Paul killed, he appeals to the emperor (25:9-12). He is not forced by the Romans to go to Rome but does so willingly, as God already told him he would spread the Gospel there (23:11). This migration is his best option anyway: even if he was released (a possibility, according to 26:32), his life would be in danger from the Jews. By letting Paul rescue his Roman travel companions at sea (27), Luke shows that the *Mare* '*nostrum*' is in fact God's, while recognising the dangers of migration.

Migration: seeking the spotlight

As we said above, Rome, in the centre of the Empire, is the climax of and the final destination in this migration narrative, where the journey of Paul, representing the universal nature of Christ by his own mixed identity, ends. As Kahl describes it, 'the narrative describes in particular a move from the margins of the Roman Empire to its center, ending with Paul's house arrest in Rome.'[163] And not just in a literal sense: Luke argues that the entire early Christian community has now changed from a merely local sect

[156] De Jonge (2022: 11).
[157] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 1.5.1, 1.89.1.
[158] De Jonge (2008: 18-19).
[159] Dunning (2009: 33).
[160] Dunning (2009: 25-45).
[161] Dunning (2009: 44-45).
[162] The relationship between Acts/early Christianity and the Roman Empire is well studied, but beyond the scope of this thesis.
[163] Kahl (2014: 75).

to a much larger, universal movement. The spotlight is no longer directed at Jerusalem, the holy city, but at the broader Mediterranean world, to the Gentiles, taking the Christian movement with it. Luke wants these Christians to be *there*, at the centre of the stage, from where they can make an even bigger impact. Rome can serve as a new base for Christianity to reach the ends of the earth. After all, the migrant status of many inhabitants of Rome would have made Luke's message of a stranger-loving God easier for them to understand (as we see in 1 Peter). A religion both of and for migrants would certainly flourish in a city of migrants – yet another reason why Rome is not a strange choice to evangelise in.

Conclusion

In the first half of this chapter, we have analysed the context of Acts and of Acts 7 in particular. We have seen that Acts is full of migration references. Realising this, we have first focused on Acts 7, which is a retelling of Israel's history seen through the eye of migration. Stephen's speech on the one hand shows that God has no fixed abode, but 'dwells' everywhere where His servants worship Him. He follows his believers to wherever they live as 'strangers'. On the other hand, it provides a framework for the dispersed early Christians, who could fall back on the rejected and estranged heroes from the past. Migration is not something new for the Christians – it is just how it should be. This idea is continued in the rest of Acts, where we have seen that the early Christian movement becomes bigger by migration and by navigating the unknown as far as Rome. Rome is then claimed as the final destination of Acts and the place where these Christians should be, at the centre of the world, but still as migrants. Migration and mobility have brought them there, in a metropolis of migrants, as the climax of Luke's work.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

> μετὰ σοῦ κύριος ὁ θεός σου εἰς πάντα, οὗ ἐὰν πορεύῃ.
>
> The Lord, your God, is with you in all places, wherever you go.
>
> Joshua 1:9

Migration in early Christian narratives is often left out of modern scholarship on the (Greco-)Roman version of the subject, and vice versa, even though these texts interact equally well with their contexts. After all, migrants, people on the move now or in the past, are always 'in-between' strangers, navigating the world around them. Although much research has already been done on migration in 1 Peter and Acts, they remain the most interesting early Christian texts to consider in this aspect, as their focus on the subject is apparent but not always recognised in secondary literature. How do these texts reflect on migration experiences and interpret them? And how did they involve the broader Mediterranean world in their reflections?

Using these questions, defined as 'How do the early Christians use 'migration', as seen in 1 Peter and Acts, to find and define their place in the vast and dynamic Mediterranean world?', we began seeking answers within 1 Peter. Presented as written by a migrant writer, like Acts, this letter teaches its predominantly (Diaspora) Jewish audience to cope with their suffering in Christ. To do so, Peter engages the migrant and diaspora vocabulary his readers are familiar with and gives it a new, metaphorical meaning, to help them realise their strangeness in the world, its positive side – being in God's οἶκος – and how they should behave themselves consequently. With the Jewish Diaspora as their framework on one side and their unique, migrant identity on the other, Peter claims a new identity for these Christians.

Afterwards, we looked at Acts and Stephen's speech. Taking an entirely different approach than Peter, Luke uses his historiographical account to widen the horizon of his already culturally knowledgeable readers. He presents suffering as normal and migration not as something to cope with but as an ideal. Therefore, he can claim in Acts 7 that since God is universal, Christians are never homeless, whatever the Jews may suggest. Moreover, migration is essential to the Gospel. Migrants are loved by God and help to spread the Gospel to the centre of the Empire: Rome. By bringing the Gospel there, Luke enables it to spread to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), as Rome is a migrant city in multiple ways. Portraying interacting with Rome as the ultimate success, Luke claims a leading role for the Christians.

Taking those two chapters together, we can see two attitudes toward migration: either coping with it (1 Peter) or celebrating it (Acts). In each case, migration is crucial in understanding the text properly. And there are more similarities between the texts, apart from those we have named in the summary: they both engage a broader perspective to formulate their (new) sense of belonging, and in both cases, the Christians belong with God, Who never leaves them. Moreover, they are both taking up their position in these 'strange' worlds, reformulating its ideas to fit their own thinking.

So, in conclusion, what can we say about the role of migration and mobility in early Christian positioning? First, we have shown that the authors of these texts rely on these concepts, which serve as the method for delivering their message, though their strategies differ. Second, that they use migration experiences, those of the Diaspora and of travelling to Rome, to create a new place for the early Christians as well as integrate this new identity into the familiar. They give 'strangeness' a new meaning by reinterpreting and recreating the 'old'. And finally, that they, by doing this, participate in the existing debates.

Though our case studies are probably not entirely representative for early Christianity, they show that each text deals with migration differently. Other texts (like the Epistle to the Hebrews and of Diognetus) may have other tactics than we have seen here, but they will likely indicate early Christian positioning using migration as well. This study hopes to prompt further research, and to provide a foundation and example for that: we have already seen suffering strangers and wandering witnesses. Where will the journey lead from here?

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Images

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