

Banished from the City: The Exilic Ecclesiology of Luke-Acts

by

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ABSTRACT

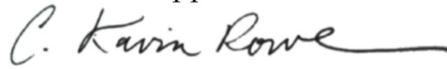
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Abstract

This dissertation examines those scenes in Acts where members of the church are banished, exiled, or displaced from the city, such as Acts 8:1, 13:50, and 16:35-39. It argues that Luke-Acts presents the church as a community of political exiles who have been exiled or banished from the cities of the Roman Empire. This narrative displacement prompts a response or solution, which in Luke-Acts is found in the community itself. Unlike other early Christian texts, which spoke of the church in exile from heaven or awaiting a city to come, Luke-Acts portrays the church itself as this “new city” that becomes a refuge for the displaced believers. Furthermore, exile or homelessness in Luke-Acts is not a problem requiring an otherworldly solution, but a part of the new way of life engendered by the proclamation of the gospel—it is a core part of following the way of Jesus, who himself is exiled from Nazareth in the gospel of Luke.

The primary methodology I employ is literary criticism, by which I mean a careful, contextualized reading of Luke-Acts that attends to the form and content of the entire narrative. My reading of Acts is also a *contextualized* reading, by which I mean a reading that seeks to understand Acts in its late first-century context. This is especially important when talking about exile, since the study of exile in the New Testament has primarily focused on Israel’s exile without an adequate understanding of the socio-historical and literary reality of exile in the first century. To remedy this, I primarily read Luke-Acts alongside the consolatory literature of Plutarch, Musonius Rufus, and Favorinus. These texts address the problem of exile from different perspectives, but they all address the common themes of the loss of one’s homeland, the loss of possessions, and the loss of free speech or *παρρησία*. By reading Acts alongside these texts, which provide their own alternative visions of political belonging in the face of exile, I show how

Luke-Acts envisions a new form of political belonging in local communities centered around the gospel.

Dedication

To Esther—Thank you for being my partner in this adventure of faith. I love you.

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Above all, I thank my wife, Esther, who endured multiple moves as I pursued this calling of biblical scholarship. Behind all my ideas and writings are the many sacrifices you have made as you have supported me on this journey. I dedicate this work to you.

Introduction

But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their region.¹

Οἱ δὲ Ἰουδαῖοι παρώτρυναν τὰς σεβομένας γυναῖκας τὰς εὐσχήμονας καὶ τοὺς πρώτους τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἐπήγειραν διωγμὸν ἐπὶ τὸν Παῦλον καὶ Βαρναβᾶν καὶ ἐξέβαλον αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν ὁρίων αὐτῶν. (Acts 13:50)

This dissertation began as a study of the phenomenon narrated in the verse above.

Specifically, what does it mean for someone to drive out, or literally *throw out* (ἐκβάλλειν) someone from a region in the first century? What are the legal precedents for this, if any? Given that this happens more than once in Acts and at key points in the narrative, what significance does this have for Luke-Acts as a whole? As I delved further into the literature on Acts and the nature of this act in its first-century context, I discovered that what is depicted here is an act of *exile* or *banishment*; Paul and Barnabas are banished from Pisidian Antioch as threats to the welfare of the city. This act—which becomes a *pattern* in the narrative—coheres with similar statements in Christian and non-Christian texts from the period.

Indeed, Christians and others, both in ancient times and continuing today, have often conceptualized their existence using the language of exile or displacement. John Chrysostom, twice exiled from Constantinople, writes in *No Man Can Be Harmed*² to those displaced from their homelands that “thou hast not here a fatherland”; instead, they should “regard the whole world as a strange country” (NPNF 1/9:274). Plutarch, writing

¹ All English translations of the Bible are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.

² The full title is *No One Can Harm the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself*, or *Quod nemo laeditur nisi a se ipso*.

in *On Exile* to someone exiled from Sardis, writes that exile is not an evil, since “the soul is an exile and a wanderer,” whose true home is Heaven (*Exil.* 607e).

Situations of exile forced ancient authors to rethink traditional forms of civic life—how could one survive outside of one’s πόλις? What was one’s identity outside of one’s homeland? The situation of exile or displacement led to a proliferation of what Jan Felix Gaertner calls the “discourse of displacement,” in which exiles reimagined their social and civic identities in light of their removal from a πόλις.³

Because civic life was bound up with life in a πόλις, these literary depictions of exile demanded a response or implied some sort of return. As Simon Goldhill writes concerning Nietzsche’s notion of *Heimweh* or homesickness, “In all definitions of exile a sense of return is implicit ... return is structurally integral to the potentialities of exile.”⁴ This “return” is narrated in various ways in the ancient literature—according to the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the one thrown out of the city need only look to the coming city (50:1); in Chariton’s *Callirhoe*, the main character, displaced from her home and family, bemoans her fate as an exile in a foreign land (3.8), only to return home in the end. Tim Whitmarsh contends that “the primary association of exile [in Greek literature] is with the pain of separation from home and beloved, a pain that provokes in readers both a sympathetic engagement and a prospective anticipation of ultimate reunion.”⁵ Indeed, as we will see later when we examine the consolations written to exiles in the first century, a

³ Jan Felix Gaertner, ed., *Writing Exile: The Discourse of Displacement in Greco-Roman Antiquity and Beyond* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

⁴ Simon Goldhill, “Whose Antiquity? Whose Modernity? The ‘Rainbow Bridges’ of Exile,” *Antike und Abendland* 46 (2000): 4.

⁵ Tim Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity in the Ancient Greek Novel: Returning Romance, Greek Culture in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 222.

basic assumption of these writings was that exile or the loss of one's home required a solution or some sort of return to cope with the loss.

In this study, I examine those places in Acts where members of the fledgling movement are either banished or forced to flee—both forms of exile in the first century. When read in light of the broader narrative of Luke-Acts and the contemporaneous literature on exile, I argue that the author presents the church as a community of political exiles who face rejection from the cities of the Roman Empire.⁶ This narrative displacement prompts a response or solution, which in Luke-Acts is found in the community itself. Unlike other early Christian texts, which spoke of the church in exile from heaven or awaiting a city to come, Luke-Acts portrays the church itself as this “new city” that becomes a refuge for the displaced believers. Furthermore, exile or homelessness in Luke-Acts is not a problem requiring an otherworldly solution, but a part of the new way of life engendered by the proclamation of the gospel—it is a core part of following the way of Jesus, who himself is exiled from Nazareth in the gospel of Luke.

Methodology

The primary methodology to be employed is literary criticism. By that, I mean a careful, contextualized reading of Luke-Acts that attends to the form and content of the entire narrative. Because Luke-Acts is—before anything else—a narrative, understanding its theology (specifically its *ecclesiology*) will require attending to its narrative shape and development. Unlike other studies that focus on one aspect of Acts (e.g., the speeches) to

⁶ Throughout this work, I refer to the writer of Luke-Acts as “the author” or “Luke.” I do so for the sake of convenience without making any claim regarding the author's identity.

uncover its theology, I will argue—along the lines of Beverly Gaventa in her article “Towards a Theology of Acts”—that the theology of Acts cannot be understood apart from the narrative itself.⁷ While literary theory will not stand at the forefront of the study, I will comment more explicitly on literary theory when doing so provides clarity. For example, I may highlight the difference between narrative scenes and narrative summaries when considering the verses where Paul is banished from a city. Also, the importance of place or setting in a narrative will play a role in my reading of Jesus’ exile from Nazareth in Luke 4.

This reading of Acts will be a *contextualized* reading, by which I mean a reading that seeks to understand Acts in its late first-century context. This is especially important when talking about exile since the study of exile in the New Testament has primarily focused on Israel’s exile without an adequate understanding of the socio-historical and literary reality of exile in the first century. I will primarily read Acts alongside the consolatory literature of Dio Chrysostom, Plutarch, Musonius Rufus, and Favorinus. These texts address the problem of exile from different perspectives, but they all address the common themes of the loss of one’s homeland, the loss of possessions, and the loss of free speech or *παρρησία*. These common themes will frame our discussion of the solution to exile presented through the narrative. Before I present an outline of my study, I will answer a basic question that is fundamental to this work: What is exile?

For the purposes of this study, I use the term “exile” to denote either the act of banishment, forced displacement, or flight for political reasons, *or* a person who is

⁷ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, “Toward a Theology of Acts: Reading and Rereading,” *Union Seminary Review* 42.2 (1988): 146–57, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002096438804200204>.

banished, displaced, or forced to flee. In Greek, the verbs ἐκβάλλειν, ἐλαύνειν, ἐξορίζειν, ὀρίζειν, and their variants mean to throw out, banish, or expel someone from a place. In political contexts, they are often used with the genitive τῆς πόλεως or ἐκ τῆς πόλεως to mean banishment from a city.⁸ The verb φεύγειν and its cognates mean “to flee,”⁹ and are related to the noun φυγή, which means “flight” or “exile.”¹⁰

In the next chapter, I explain how my study examines the phenomenon of exile as a *political* act in the text of Acts, and not as a theological idea arising out of Israel’s exile. Much of the scholarship on exile in New Testament studies focuses on exile as an ongoing reality in the minds of Second Temple Jews.¹¹ While scholars debate the merits of this interpretive lens,¹² my study focuses instead on exile as banishment or displacement from a city for being a perceived threat to the city’s welfare.

Outline of Chapters

To show how the author presents the church as a community of political exiles who find their home in the church, my study proceeds as follows: In chapter 1, I begin by defining the term “political exile.” This helps differentiate my approach from scholars who use the notion of an “ongoing exile” as an interpretive lens for the NT. By showing how exile from a city has a long interpretive history in Greco-Roman literature as a

⁸ Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.81, which recounts how the Jews during Tiberius’s day “were banished from the city” (ἠελαύνοντο τῆς πόλεως).

⁹ BDAG, s.v. “φεύγω.”

¹⁰ LSJ, s.v. “φυγή.”

¹¹ Cf. Nicholas G. Piotrowski, “The Concept of Exile in Late Second Temple Judaism: A Review of Recent Scholarship,” *CurBR* 15.2 (2017): 214–47 for an overview of the scholarship.

¹² Perhaps no other scholar has done as much as N. T. Wright to popularize the idea of an ongoing exile as an interpretive lens for the NT. For critical engagement with Wright’s thesis, cf. the essays in James M. Scott, ed., *Exile: A Conversation with N.T. Wright* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017).

significant political act, I can prepare the way for our reading of exile in Acts. I also expound on the consolatory literature on exile written contemporaneous to Acts to underscore the ways philosophers offered various solutions to the trauma of exile.

In chapter 2, I consider what Second Temple Jewish and early Christian authors wrote about exile and displacement. By examining the terms used in Greek and Hebrew, I highlight how the language used for the Babylonian and Assyrian exiles differs from the political exile which is my focus. I further demonstrate how both Jewish and early Christian authors conceptualized their identity in light of the loss of their home in exile. Related to this, I discuss the issue of citizenship in Philo's works to show the kinds of strategies some groups used to imagine new forms of belonging in situations of displacement.

In chapter 3, I turn to the book of Acts and examine the scenes where members of the church are exiled or forced to flee because of their message. By analyzing the language used in these scenes, I argue that this exile becomes a pattern which characterizes the church in Acts. Furthermore, I show from Stephen's speech in Acts 7:1–53 how the identity of God's people as exiles and migrants is rooted in the experience of the patriarchs, such as Abraham and Moses.

The identity of the church as a community of exiles leads to the question—where then does the church find its home? What answer does the narrative provide for the trauma of exile? In chapter 4, I begin to answer these questions by arguing that in Luke-Acts, this exilic way of life which characterizes the church in Acts is a form of discipleship in the way of Jesus. I do this by showing how the Lukan Jesus is also exiled from his hometown in Luke 4:29 before beginning his journey to Jerusalem. Along the

way, he calls on those who would follow him to leave their families and promises a new family for those oriented around the word of God (8:21).

The fulfilment of this promise brings us back to Acts in chapter 5, where I show how exile is not only a form of discipleship, but entrance into a new form of political community. I contend that the author depicts the church as a new πόλις for the displaced believers by comparing the depiction of the early Christian community in Acts 2 and 4 with extrabiblical speeches addressed to cities. The church thus becomes a new home for the believers when what is lost in exile—possessions, family, friends, etc.—is regained in the concrete Christian communities spread across the Mediterranean. This is especially clear from Acts 20–21, where Paul finds refuge, hospitality, and friendship among the churches of the Aegean. Finally, in the conclusion I summarize my findings and offer some implications and avenues for further research.

1. Exile in Greece and Rome¹

Toward the end of the first century CE,² the citizens of Tarsus were facing a crisis. The city was in a state of discord, with the council set against the assembly, and the youth at odds with the elders. The situation worsened to such an extent that Dio Chrysostom wrote that “if one were to run through the entire list of citizens, I believe he would not discover even two men in Tarsus who think alike” (*Or.* 34.20). The citizens of the city blamed their situation on a guild of linen-workers, whom they regarded as “outside the constitution” (ἔξωθεν τῆς πολιτείας, 34.21). Dio writes that if these linen-workers are indeed the cause of insurrection and confusion (στάσεως ... καὶ παραχῆς), the citizens should “expel them (ἀπελάσαι) altogether and not admit them to [their] popular assemblies (ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις).” As non-citizens, these linen-workers were regarded as outsiders, and thus stood aloof from the common interest of the city (τοῦ κοινῆ συμφέροντος). According to Dio, nothing greater than this situation could raise strife (στάσιν) and disagreement (διαφοράν, 34.22) in the city.

Dio’s speech to the Tarsians, one among many that addressed the problem of στάσις in a city, highlights a common problem in the cities of the Roman Empire.³

Various solutions were offered, including the exile or banishment of political

¹ Parts of this chapter are excerpted from an article I published in *New Testament Studies*. It is reprinted with permission by Cambridge University Press. Jeong, M. (2021). The Collapse of Society in Luke 23: A Thucydidean Take on Jesus’ Passion. *New Testament Studies*, 67(3), 317-335. © The Author(s), 2021. Published by Cambridge University Press.

² The dating of this oration is uncertain. See Anthony R. R. Sheppard, “Dio Chrysostom: The Bithynian Years,” *L’Antiquité Classique* 53 (1984): 172–73; Christopher Prestige Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom*, Loeb Classical Monographs (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 136, for a chronology.

³ While we only have four speeches of Dio’s written on ὁμόνοια or concord (the opposite of στάσις), C. P. Jones writes that “Dio’s four speeches on concord are the fullest evidence that survives for the meaning of a word central to Greek political life. They presumably resemble hundreds of addresses on the same topic now lost, or never written down, for every right-thinking politician was expected to strive for harmony within and between cities.” Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom*, 94.

troublemakers. In this chapter, my aim is to clarify what it means to be a political exile in the first century. To do so, I will first clarify what I mean by “political” by providing an overview of the goal of politics in the first century before situating the phenomenon of exile within this broader field of ancient politics. Then, I will show how exile—a means to ensure the welfare of a city—also became a means by which philosophers reimagined a new form of political belonging or community.

1.1 The Goal of Politics

Contemporary discussions about “politics” in the New Testament tend to focus on the relationship between the church and Rome—is the church innocent or guilty before the Roman Empire? Do the New Testament writings, particularly Acts, evince a pro or anti-Rome stance?⁴ These questions, while worthy of study in their own right, are far from the concerns of those engaged in politics in the first century.

In his *Precepts of Statecraft*, Plutarch writes that “the greatest and noblest function of what may be called the art of statesmanship” is “to see to it in advance that factional discord shall never arise (μηδέποτε στασιάζωσι) among [competing factions in a city]” (824C) and for the statesman “always to instill concord (ὁμόνοιαν) and friendship (φιλίαν) in those who dwell together with him and to remove strifes, discords, and all enmity” (824D). In this passage, Plutarch is echoing what other philosophers before him held to be true of politics—The goal of politics is the well-being of the πόλις, which

⁴ For a summary of views on Luke’s politics, see Steve Walton, “The State They Were In: Luke’s View of the Roman Empire,” in *Reading Acts in the Discourses of Masculinity and Politics*, ed. Eric D. Barreto, Matthew L. Skinner, and Steve Walton, LNTS 559 (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 75–106.

above all means the attainment of *ὁμόνοια* or “concord” and the removal of *στάσις* or “civil strife.”

These two concepts—*ὁμόνοια* and *στάσις*—were held to be polar opposites throughout much of Greek history; one was the greatest good, and the other the greatest evil. In a speech addressing the civic unrest between the cities of Nicomedia and Nicaea in Bithynia, Dio Chrysostom writes, “But I want to break up my address, and first of all to speak about concord (*ὁμονοίας*) itself in general, telling both whence it comes and what it achieves, and then over against that to set off strife (*στάσιν*) and hatred (*ἔχθραν*) in contradistinction to friendship (*φιλίαν*)” (*Or.* 38.8). He goes on to say that “concord (*ὁμόνοιαν*) has been lauded by all men always in both speech and writing. Not only are the works of poets and philosophers alike full of its praises, but also all who have published their histories (*ἱστορίας*) to provide a pattern for practical application have shown concord to be the greatest of human blessings” (38.10). When Dio mentions the poets and philosophers, he is alluding to the rich tradition of Greek reflection on *ὁμόνοια* and *στάσις*. Indeed, to understand these concepts, which were ubiquitous in the cities of the Roman Empire, requires that we briefly consider their history in Greek political thought.

1.1.1 Homonoia as the Greatest Good

A. R. R. Sheppard writes that since the 5th/4th centuries BCE, “*homonoia* (concord) was seen as having two complementary aims: the avoidance of the evils of civil strife (*stasis*) and the preservation of national solidarity in the face of any external

threat.”⁵ In a speech delivered to the citizens of Prusa in the first century CE, Dio Chrysostom writes concerning *homonioia*,

For truly it is a fine thing and profitable for one and all alike to have a city show itself of one mind (ὁμογνώμονα ὀρᾶσθαι), on terms of friendship with itself and one in feeling (συμπαθῆ), united in conferring both censure and praise, bearing for both classes, the good and the bad, a testimony in which each can have confidence. Yes, it is a fine thing, just as it is with a well-trained chorus, for men to sing together (συνᾶδειν) one and the same tune, and not, like a bad musical instrument, to be discordant, emitting two kinds of notes and sounds as a result of twofold and varied natures. (48.6–7)

When a group exhibited ὁμόνοια, its members were not only of the same mind, but also worked together (note the multiple συν- words). Another aspect of ὁμόνοια which we find repeated in the literature was the recognition of shared possessions or having things in common. In a speech delivered to the cities of Nicomedia and Nicaea, whose leaders were fighting over petty titles, Dio Chrysostom writes that the attainment of ὁμόνοια entails “sharing in things which are good (κοινωνίαν ἀγαθῶν), unity of heart and mind (ὁμοφροσύνην), rejoicing of both peoples in the same things” (*Or.* 38.43). Addressing the men of Nicomedia, he says, “Nicaea can be yours and your possessions theirs” (38.44).

This connection between ὁμόνοια, common possessions, and the welfare of a city goes back to Plato’s vision of the ideal city in his *Republic*. At the end of book 1 of the *Republic*, Plato’s Socrates asks Thrasymachus whether a city or any other group intent on injustice could achieve anything if they wronged one another. Thrasymachus agrees that they could not, and Socrates goes on to explain that “injustice surely breeds hatred, dissension (στάσεις), and fighting among people, whereas justice brings concord

⁵ Anthony R. R. Sheppard, “‘Homonioia’ in the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire,” *Ancient Society* 15 (1984): 229.

(ὁμόνοιαν) and friendship (φιλίαν)” (351d). Socrates is arguing here that part of the nature of injustice is disharmony or the inability to cooperate, whereas justice entails ὁμόνοια. Socrates’s solution to the problem of στάσις involves a society in which the guardians will have wives and children “as something shared with their friends” (423e). He goes on to say that “these women shall all be the common property of all the men ... Their children too shall be held in common and no parent will know his or her offspring, nor any child his or her parent” (457d). The point of this system is to limit competition between the members of the city, and whatever the merits of his vision, the rhetoric of “common property” became closely connected with ὁμόνοια.⁶ As Aelius Aristides says to the *Koinon* or general assembly of Asia gathered at Pergamum, “But where men believe that possessions belong to all in common, they also have a common point of view about them” (23.65).

This emphasis on ὁμόνοια or unity hearkens back to a Classical Greek civic ideal which viewed the πόλις as a body. This body politic, in order to be a good πόλις, must maintain an organic unity. Benjamin Gray writes that such a πόλις was understood to be “a community of participatory, virtuous citizens, united in solidarity and political friendship through civic education, shared civic ideals, and collective civic practices and laws.”⁷ Within this paradigm, “the good citizen should ... devote himself to the welfare of his polis and its institutions and culture.”⁸

⁶ The relevance of this notion for my thesis will become clear when we survey the passages in Acts where the early Christian community had all things in common.

⁷ Benjamin D. Gray, *Stasis and Stability: Exile, the Polis, and Political Thought, c. 404–146 BC*, Oxford Classical Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 22.

⁸ Gray, *Stasis and Stability*, 22.

In the first century, while the politics of the city had undergone significant change with the arrival of the Roman Empire, the rhetoric of ὁμόνοια and civic unity remained an important part of the political life of cities throughout the empire. Writing on the similarities and differences between the political life and culture of the classical and imperial periods, Giovanni Salmeri explains,

the bywords in political debate were no longer so much *eunomia* and *isonomia*, featuring the concept of equality, as *homonoia* and *eutaxia*. These are terms more suited to serve political prospects of containment rather than expansion, and they seem perfectly appropriate to the need the notables had to maintain order in their centres and avoid Roman intervention.⁹

Indeed, the notion of ὁμόνοια was ubiquitous in the first few centuries CE. Not only do the speeches of Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides attest to its centrality to political life, but also the abundance of ὁμόνοια coins minted after the end of a conflict points to the reach of the rhetoric around this political virtue.¹⁰ Cities that reached an agreement often held ὁμόνοια festivals to celebrate their close relationship.¹¹

1.1.3 *Stasis as the Greatest Evil*

If ὁμόνοια was lauded as the greatest good, στάσις was condemned as the greatest evil that could befall a city. Στάσις is an important theme in Luke-Acts, but one that remains understudied. The word is used 7x in Luke-Acts and only 2x elsewhere in the

⁹ Giovanni Salmeri, “Reconstructing the Political Life and Culture of the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire,” in *Political Culture in the Greek City after the Classical Age*, ed. Onno M. van Nijf and Richard Alston, Groningen-Royal Holloway Studies on the Greek City after the Classical Age (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 208.

¹⁰ Cf. Ursula Kampmann, “Homonoia Politics in Asia Minor: The Example of Pergamon,” in *Pergamon Citadel of the Gods: Archaeological Record, Literary Description, and Religious Development*, ed. Helmut Koester, Harvard Theological Studies 46 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 373–93, for a survey of some of the *homonoia* coins minted after the resolution of a conflict between cities such as Pergamon and Sardis.

¹¹ Kampmann, “Homonoia Politics in Asia Minor: The Example of Pergamon,” 389.

NT.¹² Most NT scholars translate στάσις as “sedition” or “insurrection” by connecting it to the Latin *seditio*.¹³ While *seditio* and στάσις overlap in some respects, scholars who connect στάσις with *seditio* often look to Roman law to pinpoint the exact charge against the Christians. By doing so, they overlook the rich philosophical reflection on στάσις in Greek political thought.¹⁴ Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that στάσις in a πόλις was the primary political issue addressed by philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle¹⁵ and historians such as Thucydides and Josephus.¹⁶

Because of the long history of Greek commentary on στάσις, most studies of στάσις recognize the difficulties of translating the word into English. Kostas Kalimtzis writes,

The events that *stasis* was used to describe were very diverse, from the slaughter of political opponents and their families, to political disputes of every variety and shade of expression. Like so many other words that had profound meaning for

¹² Mark 15:7 and Heb 9:8.

¹³ Craig S. Keener, “Paul and Sedition: Pauline Apologetic in Acts,” *BBR* 22.2 (2012): 209, who equates στάσις with *seditio* and says, “No clear line of demarcation separated treason [*maiestas*] from sedition, and they might share the same penalties.” So also C. F. Evans, *Saint Luke* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 857, who says στάσις is “a technical term for revolt.”

¹⁴ The literature on στάσις is vast. See the now classic study by Hans-Joachim Gehrke, *Stasis: Untersuchungen zu den inneren Kriegen in den griechischen Staaten des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (München: Beck, 1985). 8/31/23 9:25:00 AM On the continuing significance of στάσις in Greek cities under the Roman Empire, see Henning Börm, “Hellenistische Poleis und römischer Bürgerkrieg: Stasis im griechischen Osten nach den Iden des März (44 bis 39 v. Chr.),” in *Civil war in ancient Greece and Rome: contexts of disintegration and reintegration*, ed. Henning Börm, Marco Mattheis, and Johannes Wienand, Habes 58 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016), 99–125.

¹⁵ Cf. Sean McConnell, “Lucretius and Civil Strife,” *Phoenix* 66.1/2 (2012): 97–98, who says “Civil strife or στάσις was not only a subject of social, political, and historical significance in the ancient world; it was also an integral topic in ethics and political philosophy, with a rich tradition going back to the pre-Socratics, and expressed most clearly in Plato’s Republic (e.g., 351d-352a, 443d-444e, 462a-e, 545c-549d, 556e) and the fifth book of Aristotle’s Politics (1301a19–1316b28).”

¹⁶ On στάσις in Thucydides, cf. Jonathan J. Price, *Thucydides and Internal War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Nicole Loraux, “Thucydides and Sedition among Words,” in *Thucydides*, ed. Jeffrey S Rusten (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 261–92; Lydia Spielberg, “Language, Stasis and the Role of the Historian in Thucydides, Sallust and Tacitus,” *AJP* 138.2 (2017): 331–73; On στάσις in Josephus, cf. Gottfried Mader, *Josephus and the Politics of Historiography: Apologetic and Impression Management in the Bellum Judaicum* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Jonathan J. Price, “Josephus’ Reading of Thucydides: A Test Case in the *Bellum Judaicum*,” in *Thucydides, a Violent Teacher?: History and Its Representations*, ed. Georg Rechenauer and Vassiliki Pothou (Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2011), 79–98; On how a Thucydidean understanding of στάσις helps us read Luke’s passion narrative, cf. Mark Jeong, “The Collapse of Society in Luke 23: A Thucydidean Take on Jesus’ Passion,” *NTS* 67.3 (2021): 317–35.

Hellenic culture, we have no direct counterpart for the range of experiences to which these Greek terms referred.¹⁷

This problem is magnified when we consider how words like “insurrection” and “rebellion” have taken on meanings from our recent history that are quite distant from their ancient counterparts.¹⁸ In his now classic study on στάσις in the 5th and 4th century BCE, Hans-Joachim Gehrke says, “Diese Definitionsfrage ist deshalb nicht ganz einfach, weil sie genau auf ein gerade in jüngster Zeit viel traktiertes Thema, den Revolutionsbegriff und die Frage seiner Anwendbarkeit auf die Antike, führt.”¹⁹

Plato offers a common view of στάσις in his day through the mouth of Socrates in *Republic* 5.470b: “It seems to me that just as we have two terms: πόλεμος and στάσις, so there are two terms which correspond to differences between the two. I mean the words ‘own’ and ‘family’ on the one hand, and ‘someone else’s’ and ‘foreign’ on the other. The word στάσις is applied to one’s personal enemy, and πόλεμος to an outsider.” He continues in 470d:

Greeks fighting foreigners and foreigners fighting Greeks both treat each other as enemies and are naturally enemies, and this kind of hostility is to be termed war (πόλεμον). But whenever Greeks do this sort of thing to Greeks, although they are naturally friendly, in such a case Greece is sick and in a state of civil conflict (στασιάζειν), and this kind of hostility is to be termed faction (στάσις).

¹⁷ Kostas Kalimtzis, *Aristotle on Political Enmity and Disease: An Inquiry into Stasis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 3.

¹⁸ Merriam-Webster defines “insurrection” as “an act or instance of revolting against civil authority or an established government.” (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. “insurrection.”)

¹⁹ Gehrke, *Stasis*, 6. He goes on to say, “Dieses Wort ... war auch als politischer Begriff nicht eindeutig, weil es nicht nur den Konflikt, sondern auch – neben Menschenmengen allgemein – die im Konflikt existenten Gruppen, also die Parteiungen, bezeichnen konnte und ohnehin auch für einen im legalen Rahmen bleibenden oder überhaupt unpolitischen Streit verwendet wurde” (6–7).

Plato contrasts στάσις with war, and says the main difference is that the former takes place between one's "own" (τὸ οἰκεῖον) or one's "family" (τὸ συγγενές), while the latter is a conflict with an external force. Jonathan Price writes that this understanding of στάσις as an internal conflict in contrast to "war" (πόλεμος) was a common view in Plato's day.²⁰ Στάσις was at its core a violent *internal* conflict, which by the sixth century became closely associated with the health of a πόλις.²¹ Despite admitting the challenge of defining the word, Gehrke says, "Die geläufigste Bedeutung im politischen Kontext war doch die, welche wir als <<inneren Krieg>> mit der o.a. Definition wiedergeben würden."²²

Because στάσις is an internal conflict, translations such as "uprising," "rebellion," or "revolution" can be misleading. Indeed, Price argues that it "does not have the meaning 'insurrection' in any other historian writing in Greek after Thucydides ... until Cassius Dio."²³ As an internal conflict, στάσις occurs between competing but related factions within a single πόλις or other political body. When Claudius writes to the Jews and Greeks of Alexandria in 41 CE, he writes to address the στάσις that recently occurred in the city.²⁴ The στάσις he has in mind was not an uprising or insurrection by the Jews

²⁰ Price, *Thucydides and Internal War*, 70.

²¹ Cf. Price, *Thucydides and Internal War*, 31, for sources.

²² Gehrke, *Stasis*, 7.

²³ Price, "Josephus' Reading of Thucydides," 93. Price notes that Josephus diverges from its most common usage when he uses στάσις to mean something close to "insurrection" in some cases.

²⁴ Claudius says, "As for the question which party was responsible for the riots (ταραχῆς) and feud (στάσεως) (or rather, if the truth must be told, the war) with the Jews, although in confrontation with their opponents your ambassadors, and particularly Dionysius son of Theon, contended with great zeal, nevertheless I was unwilling to make a strict inquiry, though guarding within me a store of immutable indignation against whichever party renews the conflict." (*Letter of Claudius to the Alexandrians*, in *Select Papyri*, vol. II: *Public Documents* (ed. A. S. Hunt and C. C. Edgar; LCL 282; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934) 84–5).

against Rome, but the violent conflict that took place *within* the city between Jews and Greeks.

Just as significant as the parties involved in στάσις are its effects. Price says, “A *stasis* is characterized by the radical change and reuse, and eventually the breakdown, of social, political, legal and religious conventions, starting with language and family ties, and encompassing all communal decision-making apparatus and all areas designated inviolable by society’s norms.”²⁵ While one could win glory and honor through πόλεμος, στάσις led invariably to exile or death.²⁶ The disastrous effects of στάσις led to its being universally recognized as an evil by the Greeks. The chorus in Aeschylus’s *Eumenides* prays, “May *stasis*, insatiate of ill, ne’er raise her loud voice within this city.”²⁷ Dio Chrysostom says, “No one would hesitate to reply that these (πόλεμοι καὶ στάσεις καὶ νόσοι) are classed among the evils and that they not only are so but have been considered and are called evils” (*Or.* 38.13).

Suffice it to say, politicians aimed to avoid στάσις at all costs, not only to preserve the peace of a city but to avoid the wrath of Rome. In a speech delivered to the citizens of Rhodes, the 2nd century CE orator Aelius Aristides adjures his audience to pursue “concord (ὁμονοίας) ... the greatest good for cities” (24.4) and resolve the στάσις

²⁵ Price, *Thucydides and Internal War*, 71.

²⁶ Price, *Thucydides and Internal War*, 71, says, “Unlike *polemos*, *stasis* is almost always pursued to the very end, i.e., the total defeat or even annihilation of one side by the other, or the expulsion of the losing faction from the area of conflict.” Cf. also Nicole Loraux, “Thucydides and Sedition among Words,” in *Thucydides*, ed. Jeffrey S Rusten (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 267, who says, “The last word of *stasis*, hideously reduced to its factual brutality, is death.” On the connection between στάσις and exile more generally, see Gray, *Stasis and Stability*.

²⁷ From Aesch. *Eum.* 976–83 (trans. Smith), cited in Kalimtzis, *Aristotle on Political Enmity and Disease*, 3.

in which they “distrust one another, have taken sides, and are involved in disturbances unsuited to you” (24.3).²⁸ He declares that if they fail to do this, then,

Another will come who will forcibly save you, since, as a rule, rulers are neither ignorant of such behavior nor disregard it. Therefore if for no other reason, then for the sake of being free and doing what you wish, abandon this present conduct so that you may not suffer anxieties [sic] which will be as great as your present audacity, and so that you may not lose your ancient source of pride. (24.22)

The “another” here is clearly Rome, which Aristides saw as the harbinger of peace.

Elsewhere, he praises Rome as a unifying force that has brought an end to στάσις throughout the world. In his encomium to Rome, he says, “Now all of the Greek cities flourish under you” and “when you took charge, the confusion and faction (στάσεις) ceased and there entered in universal order and a glorious light in life and government and the laws came to the fore and the altars of the gods were believed in” (26.94). It’s important to highlight again how στάσις itself is not rebellion *against* Rome. Rather, the threat of Roman intervention looms in the background in Greek reflections on στάσις.

But how were local elites expected to resolve στάσις and avoid the wrath of Rome? Benjamin Kelly writes that in many authors who discuss riots, such as Dio Chrysostom, Aelius Aristides, and Cassius Dio, “The favoured *remedium* seems to have been for a great man to use his personal standing in the eyes of the crowd to convince it, either in person or by an edict or letter, to desist from its destructive behavior.”²⁹

Secondarily, local elites could arrest, try, and/or punish the troublemakers, often with exile or banishment, as Dio suggests in the vignette which opens this chapter.

²⁸ All translations of Aelius Aristides are from Charles Allison Behr, *The Complete Works*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1981).

²⁹ Benjamin Kelly, “Riot Control and Imperial Ideology in the Roman Empire,” *Phoenix* 61.1/2 (2007): 161.

1.2 Exile as Political Act

In fourth-century Athens, the expulsion of citizens was understood as a function of government to maintain the stability and welfare of a polis. Formal exile (φυγή) entailed the banishment of a citizen from their polis and often the confiscation of their property.³⁰ This punishment was applied by the Athenian courts and assembly for a variety of “crimes against the polis,”³¹ including subversive behavior, destroying an agreement concerning property rights, accepting citizenship in a foreign city, etc.³² What these various crimes had in common was that they were seen as a threat to civic order.³³

While exile was sometimes understood in individualistic terms as a means to remove political opponents, it was more often understood “as a pragmatic instrument in social regulation, useful in preventing unrest.”³⁴ Indeed, in Plato’s *Laws*, the Athenian speaker speaks about different kinds of “purgings” (διακαθάρσεων, 735d) that are necessary to preserve civic welfare. He distinguishes death and exile (θάνατον ἢ φυγήν, 735e) as the harshest forms, but the kind which “clears out the greatest criminals when they are incurable and cause serious damage to the State.”

The practice of exile continued through the Hellenistic period, even as the structures of governance changed for the once sovereign πόλεις. Various inscriptions

³⁰ Gray, *Stasis and Stability*, 110.

³¹ Gray, *Stasis and Stability*, 111.

³² For a more complete list, see Table 3.1 in Gray, *Stasis and Stability*, 112–13.

³³ Ernst Ludwig Grasmück, *Exilium: Untersuchungen zur Verbannung in der Antike* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1978), 17–18, includes “Blutschuld, und zwar als vorsätzliche, nicht in jedem Fall als unabsichtliche Tötung, der Hoch- oder Landesverrat, bestimmte Tatbestände sakralen Frevels, der Versuch, nach der Tyrannis zu streben oder die Tyrannis einführen zu wollen, und schließlich Delikte gegen grundlegende Einrichtungen des Staatswesens.”

³⁴ Gray, *Stasis and Stability*, 120.

attest to the use of exile beyond Athens to maintain political tranquility.³⁵ While no longer autonomous in an absolute sense, the πόλεις of the Hellenistic period maintained a measure of independence in their administration of justice, insofar as the judicial authority of the king would not intervene in decisions made by the citizens of a πόλις.³⁶ The examples of banishment in this period always pursue “eine politische Absicht, sei es die Sicherung der Herrschaft, sei es die Befriedung von Unruhen.”³⁷ Regarding the frequency of φυγή, Ernst Grasmück says,

Die Häufigkeit der φυγή als Verbannung und Emigration ist ein Kennzeichen für die von inneren Unruhen und auswärtigen Auseinandersetzungen erfüllte griechische Welt. Uneinigkeit im Innern, Bürgerkrieg (στάσις), wurde für schlimmer als ein Krieg (πόλεμος) gehalten. Deshalb galt ausdrücklich, daß der, der nach der Tyrannis strebe, aber auch der, der den Staat nicht vor der στάσις schütze, zum ἄτιμος zu erklären, d. h. als Feind des Staatswesens zu verbannen sei. Durch die ὁμόνοια allein ließ sich die στάσις, deren Wurzel der φθόνος war, vermeiden oder überwinden. Diese Auffassung, von verschiedenen philosophischen Richtungen vertreten, beherrschte unter dem Einfluß der klassischen Dichtung weithin die ethische Vorstellung des bürgerlichen Lebens.³⁸

This concern to preserve ὁμόνοια or *concordia*, its Roman parallel, was a driving factor in the administration of exile in the Roman Republic. Gordon Kelly writes that “Roman exile was an outgrowth of the civic ideal of *concordia*, in that it served to promote the stability of the state.”³⁹ However, unlike in classical Athens or the Hellenistic kingdoms, exile or *exilium* in the Roman Republic was not a punishment in its

³⁵ Cf. the mid-3rd c. BCE inscription SEG 53.565, in which the citizens of Thebes wish to expel a certain Eurydamas for committing vicious crimes against the πόλις; cited in Gray, *Stasis and Stability*, 124.

³⁶ Grasmück, *Exilium: Untersuchungen Zur Verbannung in Der Antike*, 30.

³⁷ Grasmück, *Exilium: Untersuchungen Zur Verbannung in Der Antike*, 30.

³⁸ Grasmück, *Exilium: Untersuchungen Zur Verbannung in Der Antike*, 35–36.

³⁹ Gordon P. Kelly, *A History of Exile in the Roman Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 13.

own right, but a voluntary flight away from one's homeland to avoid punishment.⁴⁰

Usually, that punishment was the death penalty, and so exile became associated with death. A measure known as *aquae et ignis interdictio* (the interdiction of fire and water) developed to keep exiles from returning to Rome.⁴¹

A change took place in the transition from the Republic to the Empire. While originally a measure used by aristocrats to *avoid* punishment, Roman exile became a punishment in its own right.⁴² Much of our evidence concerning the administration of exile in the first century CE is scattered and often found in isolated summary remarks or brief narrative accounts, which makes it challenging to describe this phenomenon in great detail.⁴³ Nevertheless, based on the Roman jurists of the second and third centuries, we can conclude the following.

There were two main forms of banishment known as *relegatio* and *deportatio*. The form *relegatio* “could be temporary or permanent, could involve the retention or the forfeiture of property, usually preserved Roman citizenship and its attendant rights, might exclude the victim from a general area or place him at a specific one, and probably did not affect a person's rank.”⁴⁴ Scholars generally understand *relegatio* as the more moderate form compared to *deportatio*, which “was permanent, involved a loss of property as well as of Roman citizenship, probably sent the victim to a specific locale,

⁴⁰ Daniel A. Washburn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284–476 CE*, Routledge Studies in Ancient History 5 (New York: Routledge, 2012), 5.

⁴¹ Washburn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284–476 CE*, 5.

⁴² Grasmück, *Exilium: Untersuchungen zur Verbannung in der Antike*, 147.

⁴³ Cf. Washburn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284–476 CE*, 8–15 for more on the challenges of wading through the various legal sources to produce a coherent picture on banishment in the Roman Empire.

⁴⁴ Washburn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284–476 CE*, 19.

and canceled out the exile's *dignitas*.”⁴⁵ While there was overlap between the two, the difference is that *relegatio* was more flexible, while *deportatio* was necessarily more severe. In *relegatio*, for example, one *might* lose their property, though in *deportatio* this was almost always the case.

There were also cases in which banishment or exile was enforced without any criminal proceedings. A Roman magistrate could use *coercitio*—the “prerogative to quash unruly elements in order to maintain the rule of law”⁴⁶—to banish troublemakers who threatened the peace of a city. This measure was used more against those of lower social status. Writing in the late second or early third century, the Roman jurist Callistratus says that governors should punish such troublemakers, “who generally call themselves ‘hooligans’ [*iuvenes*, literally, “youngsters”], first with a beating and a prohibition from public games and then, if they still did not desist, with *exilium*.”⁴⁷ This is likely what we observe in Acts 16, where Paul is beaten with rods before being asked to leave Roman Philippi.

Aside from a provincial governor, exile could be administered by the Emperor, the Prefect of the Praetorian Guard, or by the Prefect of a city.⁴⁸ However, officials had few resources to ensure that an exile wouldn't return. Regarding expulsions from Rome, Balsdon notes, “Foreigners had no passports and Romans no identity cards; there was no police force of any effectiveness, no C.I.D. The state must have depended on the common

⁴⁵ Washburn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284–476 CE*, 19–20.

⁴⁶ Washburn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284–476 CE*, 32.

⁴⁷ D. 48.19.28.3, cited in Washburn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284–476 CE*, 33.

⁴⁸ J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 104.

informer, the keen young prosecutor.”⁴⁹ Tertullian writes that soldiers in North Africa kept a list of troublemakers, which may have included some consigned to *exilium*.⁵⁰ Regarding the imperial period, Washburn writes that “it is hard to see how else [aside from keeping a list of banished individuals], short of resorting to branding, officials could have enforced even loose compliance.”⁵¹ In other words, aside from the strictest forms of exile that sent a victim to a specific place, such as an island, the banished could often return, though the threat of more severe punishment hung in the air.

For all its differences, one of the commonalities of the punishment of exile throughout these different periods is the severing of social ties between the exile and their community. As we will see in the next section, consolations to exiles addressed the pain of losing one’s family and friends. Roman society was largely determined by social connections and patronage, and banishment removed a person from his or her sphere of influence.⁵² This served to limit the cause of civic unrest or *στάσις* by removing one’s *παρησιία* or ability to speak openly in a particular city.

Another effect of exile on the *πόλις* was the strengthening of solidarity between the governing officials and the body politic. Removing someone from a *πόλις* was a visible declaration of the governing officials’ concern for the peace and welfare of the community. Quelling unrest was a constant concern of Roman officials. It was often impractical to banish entire groups en masse, but expelling a few key leaders of a

⁴⁹ Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens*, 98.

⁵⁰ Tertullian, *On Flight in Persecution* 13, cited in Washburn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284–476 CE*, 33 n 106.

⁵¹ Washburn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284–476 CE*, 33.

⁵² Washburn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284–476 CE*, 36.

movement or crowd could have a restorative effect on the area. In classical Athens, the act of exile “could often have had the incidental benefit of reinforcing the polis’ physical and conceptual borders,” since it “represented the unmitigated removal from civic life of a deviant from civic ethical standards.”⁵³ In the Roman Empire, “the particular nature of banishment meant that this unspoken objective [of communal cohesion] was made explicit by the movement of the offender away from the community offended.”⁵⁴ In one example, the urban prefect Leontius quelled a riot in Rome over a wine shortage by flogging and banishing the ringleader of the unrest, a certain Peter Valuomeres.⁵⁵ By making an example of the ringleader, Leontius was able to disperse the entire crowd, the actual target of his actions. In Acts (as we will see later), the expulsion of a few key leaders of the Way demonstrates the governing officials’ rejection of the broader movement’s way of life, and their desire to uphold or restore *ὁμόνοια*, the greatest political virtue.

1.3 Reimagining a New Kind of Politics

“Man is by nature a political animal, and a man that is by nature and not merely by fortune *citiless* (*ἄπολις*) is either low in the scale of humanity or above it,” says Aristotle in his *Politics*.⁵⁶ He is echoing what other Greeks held to be true in his day—that one’s identity was closely tied to one’s *πόλις*, and that removal from one’s *πόλις* was

⁵³ Gray, *Stasis and Stability*, 156.

⁵⁴ Washburn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284–476 CE*, 36.

⁵⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, *History* 15.7.1–5, cited in Washburn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284–476 CE*, 36.

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a1–4.

akin to losing one's identity, or "a form of social or political death."⁵⁷ Indeed, because exile was an alternative to the death penalty, philosophers often connected exile with death.⁵⁸

Situations of exile forced ancient authors to rethink traditional forms of civic life—how could one survive outside of one's πόλις? What was one's identity outside of one's homeland? The situation of exile or displacement led to a proliferation of what Jan Felix Gaertner calls the "discourse of displacement," in which exiles reimagined their social and civic identities in light of their removal from a πόλις.⁵⁹

In this section, I will consider how three authors from the imperial period address the horrors of exile and argue from different perspectives that exile is in fact not an evil. Writing at different times and from different places, these authors all participate in a literary tradition that addresses an exile's plight. While not a genre per se, this literary tradition includes many of the same topoi, such as how to deal with the loss of freedom of speech. They all draw from, and often respond to the classical tradition, even as they reconfigure "the relationship between the self and polis in terms more appropriate to the enormous world-empire of the Roman principate."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Gray, *Stasis and Stability*, 156.

⁵⁸ Jo-Marie Claassen, *Displaced Persons: The Literature of Exile from Cicero to Boethius* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 20.

⁵⁹ Gaertner, *Writing Exile*.

⁶⁰ Tim Whitmarsh, "Greece Is the World: Exile and Identity in the Second Sophistic," in *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire*, ed. Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 271.

1.3.1 Musonius Rufus

Because we lack a clear biographical account of Musonius Rufus's life, we must piece together his background from various sources. Gaius Musonius Rufus was born before 30 CE into an Etruscan family in Volsinii.⁶¹ He was a member of the equestrian order, and renowned as a Stoic philosopher. His many students included Dio Chrysostom of Prusa and Epictetus. Clement of Alexandria was also influenced by his philosophy and adapted his teachings in his *Paedagogus*. Though Musonius never wrote anything that survives today, his teachings were written down by a certain Lucius, likely a pupil of Musonius.

While much of what has been written about his life is apocryphal, what is clear is that, while he was a teacher of philosophy, he lived a public life and was involved in civic affairs. He was first exiled by Nero to the island of Gyara around 65–66 CE after the Pisonian conspiracy, a plot to assassinate the emperor. He was recalled to Rome after Nero's death by Galba, and then banished a second time by Vespasian, who banished all philosophers from Rome in 71 CE.⁶² He was again recalled from exile by Titus.

Musonius Rufus's consolation on exile, titled "That Exile is Not an Evil" (ὅτι οὐ κακὸν ἡ φυγή), includes many of the *topoi* found in exilic literature. Musonius addresses several common complaints about the exile's plight, including the loss of one's homeland or πατρίς. He says,

⁶¹ The following brief biography of Musonius Rufus is dependent on the summary in Cora E. Lutz, *Musonius Rufus, "The Roman Socrates"* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1947), 14–30. The English translation and Greek text of Musonius is also from Lutz, who depends on the critical text edited by Otto Hense, reprinted in Gaius Musonius Rufus, *C. Musonii Rufi Reliquiae*, ed. Otto Hense, Reprint; Reprint der Orig.-Ausg. von 1905., *Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010).

⁶² Musonius was first exempted from this banishment, though he was eventually exiled for uncertain reasons.

Tell me, is not the universe (κόσμος) the common fatherland (κοινή πατρίς) of all men, as Socrates held? Well, then, you must not consider it really being banished from your fatherland if you go from where you were born and reared, but only being exiled from a certain city, that is if you claim to be a reasonable person.⁶³

Musonius here adopts a cosmopolitan viewpoint that envisions the entire universe as one's homeland.

Musonius also relativizes the importance of the place where one lives when he says that what matters for happiness is not one's location, but that "he makes the whole matter depend upon himself and considers himself a citizen of the city of God (τῆς τοῦ Διὸς πόλεως) which is made up of men and gods."⁶⁴ Like other Stoic thinkers, Musonius emphasizes the importance of one's *attitude* towards one's life circumstances, rather than the cause or effects of the circumstances themselves.

Regarding the loss of one's possessions, exiles don't lack what they need, says Musonius, for "energetic and hard working and intelligent men, no matter where they go, fare well and live without want."⁶⁵ Of course, he speaks as an elite man with the networks of support and the means to recover from exile. He goes so far as to say that some have even amassed wealth in exile. He uses the example of Odysseus, who was "able to enrich himself abundantly" though he was "in worse plight than any exile."⁶⁶ Musonius uses Odysseus as an example even though his situation differs from the political banishments of Musonius and others in the first century CE. This demonstrates the flexibility of the

⁶³ Lutz, *Musonius Rufus*, "The Roman Socrates," 69. There is no standardized numbering system for Musonius in Hense's edition, so the references refer to the pages in Lutz.

⁶⁴ Lutz, *Musonius Rufus*, "The Roman Socrates," 69.

⁶⁵ Lutz, *Musonius Rufus*, "The Roman Socrates," 71.

⁶⁶ Lutz, *Musonius Rufus*, "The Roman Socrates," 73.

term φυγή for exile, and how philosophers and others who suffered from a specific form of exile drew their inspiration from figures “exiled” for a variety of reasons.

Finally, he quotes from Euripides, *Phoenissae* 391–392, where Jocasta asks Polynices her son about the misfortunes of exile. He says,

Polynices: “One greatest of all, that he has not freedom of speech (παρρησίαν).”
Jocasta: “You name the plight of a slave, not to be able to say what one thinks.”⁶⁷

Polynices’s complaint about the lack of παρρησία for an exile is repeated in the various consolations to exiles written during this period. In Classical Athens, παρρησία was the right of a citizen to speak in the democratic assembly.⁶⁸ Musonius redefines the term to mean “a moral imperative to speak what one thinks when one *should* speak.”⁶⁹ Musonius quotes from Euripides to reject the notion that exile deprives one of παρρησία. He says in response,

You are right, Euripides, when you say that it is the condition of a slave not to say what one thinks when one ought to speak, for it is not always, nor everywhere, nor before everyone that we should say what we think. But that one point, it seems to me, is not well-taken, that exiles do not have freedom of speech, if to you freedom of speech means not suppressing whatever one chances to think. For it is not as exiles that men fear to say what they think, but as men afraid lest from speaking pain or death or punishment or some such other thing shall befall them. Fear is the cause of this, not exile. For to many people, nay to most, even though dwelling safely in their native city, fear of what seem to them dire consequences of free speech is present.⁷⁰

Outside of one’s city, how could an exile exhibit free speech? Musonius’s response interprets παρρησία as an ethical imperative, rather than a civic right. The ability to speak one’s mind is not limited to one’s participation in the assembly of one’s city, but depends

⁶⁷ Lutz, *Musonius Rufus*, “*The Roman Socrates*,” 73.

⁶⁸ Whitmarsh, “Greece Is the World: Exile and Identity in the Second Sophistic,” 278.

⁶⁹ Whitmarsh, “Greece Is the World: Exile and Identity in the Second Sophistic,” 278. Emphasis original.

⁷⁰ Lutz, *Musonius Rufus*, “*The Roman Socrates*,” 73, 75.

on the initiative and courage of an exile to exhibit *παρρησία* even in the face of punishment. What matters is not whether one is at home or in exile, but one's courage to speak one's mind.

Musonius's reflections on the ills of exile reflect his Stoic outlook on life. Banishment becomes an opportunity for Musonius to reflect on what really matters—not possessions, nor political participation, nor a particular place on the earth, but virtue. As one concerned to instill virtue in his students, Musonius does not see exile as an evil, as long as “the virtues are present in you which are most able to help and to sustain you,” which include courage, justice, self-control, and understanding.⁷¹

Another common complaint about exile was that separation from one's home meant separation from one's family and friends. Musonius briefly addresses this when he says that “even now in exile we may associate with our friends.”⁷² He clarifies this by saying that exile will reveal who one's true friends are, since one's true friends would never abandon them. If they turn out not to be true friends, it is better to be separated from them through exile than to be with them at home.

1.3.2 Plutarch

Towards the end of the first century CE, Plutarch writes to a distressed friend recently exiled from Sardis. He argues that while “the multitude declare in speech and song” (599F) that exile is an evil, his friend should take his advice by mixing the

⁷¹ Lutz, *Musonius Rufus*, “*The Roman Socrates*,” 75.

⁷² Lutz, *Musonius Rufus*, “*The Roman Socrates*,” 69.

hardships of exile with the pleasures of travel. Furthermore, the loss of his homeland is no true loss, since now with the whole world before him, “no one is either exile or foreigner or alien” (601A). For the exile, “every city at once becomes a native city” (601F).

Plutarch’s counsel reflects not only the social realities of exile, but also the sorts of philosophical commitments required to understand how the whole world could be one’s native land. Though Plutarch himself never went into exile, he wrote a consolation to a friend who had run into trouble with the Roman governor. The recipient of this consolation was possibly Menemachus of Sardis, the same recipient of Plutarch’s *Precepts of Statecraft*.⁷³ Van Hoof says the reasons are not given, but that it likely had to do with his political activity. Also, unlike other consolations, this one deals with the exile of a politician, not a philosopher.⁷⁴ This consolation, titled Περὶ Φυγῆς, treads little new ground when read alongside the exilic literature tradition on which it is built.⁷⁵ While uninteresting as a piece of literature, it serves our purpose by presenting in summary form many of the typical complaints (and their responses) to exile.

Plutarch’s consolation begins by considering whether exile is an evil by nature (φύσει) or by our judgment (τὴν ἡμετέραν κρίσιν, 599D). To answer this question, he introduces Polynices from Euripides’s *Phoenissae* (like Musonius before him), who, on being asked, “What is the loss of country?”, responds, “The greatest; and no words can

⁷³ Jan Opsomer, “Is a Planet Happier than a Star? Cosmopolitanism in Plutarch’s On Exile,” in *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98–117 A.D.)*, ed. Philip A. Stadter and Luc Van der Stockt (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 286.

⁷⁴ Lieve Van Hoof, *Plutarch’s Practical Ethics: The Social Dynamics of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 120.

⁷⁵ Opsomer, “Cosmopolitanism in Plutarch’s On Exile,” 283 notes that the reader of this work “is almost inevitably struck by the traditional and indeed sometimes trivial character of much of [Plutarch’s] arguments.”

do it justice” (Euripides, *Phoenissae*, 388F). He then goes on to quote the lyric poet Alcman, whose “opinion has made the same event (exile) useful” (Plutarch, *On Exile* 599F). Thus, he begins his consolation by relativizing the evil of exile by removing it from the *nature* of the event, and making it dependent rather on one’s opinion. These two authors, both exiled, offer competing opinions on whether exile is an evil.

Nevertheless, he grants for the sake of argument “that exile is a calamity, as the multitude declare in speech and song” (599F). The way to alleviate the sting of exile is through mixing the loss suffered in exile with what is useful—“wealth, friends, freedom from politics, and lack of none of the necessities of life” (600A).

Addressing the recipient of his consolation, he again says that “there is no such thing as a native land” by nature, since he has only been removed from his “supposed” (νομιζομένης) home (600E). Here, he begins to introduce various philosophers who argued for a form of cosmopolitanism. He refers to a saying of Socrates that he was not an Athenian or Greek but a “Cosmian” (Κόσμιος, 600F). In a variety of ways, Plutarch is addressing the common complaint that exile deprives one of one’s native city. Plutarch says that “wherever a man happens to find a moderate provision for his livelihood, there that man lacks neither city nor hearth nor is an alien” (601F). He says that every city can be one’s native city as long as the exile makes use of it. Whether this is a loss (again) depends on oneself. While this argument resembles what we find in Stoic and Cynic writings, Plutarch adds his own Platonic twist.

For Plutarch, one’s true home is not a community of humans understood in ethical terms as it was for the Stoics, but a transcendent city. In other words, all people are exiles

here on earth, because our true home is in Heaven. Plutarch concludes his consolation by considering the words of Empedocles, who said that he was a “wanderer and exile from heaven” (607C). Quoting from Plato’s *Phaedrus*, he says that the soul is an exile from Heaven while imprisoned in the body, such that moving from one place to another on earth is of little consequence. This strategy differs also from some of Plutarch’s Cynic predecessors, such as Teles. Nesselrath writes,

It is interesting how the Cynic Teles and the Platonist Plutarch arrive at the same destination—the negation of exile as a condition of suffering—by choosing quite different roads: the Cynic tries to fortify the individual as much as possible by reducing him to his strictly rational, thinking (but in no way feeling) self and stripping away all ties to the outward world; the Platonist tries to raise man’s awareness to another world by comparison to which this earthly one shrinks to an insignificant temporary abode where such a thing as individual exile loses all importance.⁷⁶

Plutarch then moves to consider the complaint that banishment removes one from the field of politics and civic service. Van Hoof argues that Plutarch lists absence from politics as one of the primary causes of suffering in exile, unlike others before him.⁷⁷ Unlike Teles, for example, who relativizes the importance of participation in politics, Plutarch writes elsewhere that anyone of noble birth should pursue city politics and not abandon one’s native city for a career in Roman administration.⁷⁸ This is perhaps because the recipient of this consolation is likely the same person to whom Plutarch addresses his *Precepts of Statecraft*.

⁷⁶ Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, “Later Greek Voices on the Predicament of Exile: From Teles to Plutarch and Favorinus,” in *Writing Exile: The Discourse of Displacement in Greco-Roman Antiquity and Beyond*, ed. Jan Felix Gaertner (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 98–99.

⁷⁷ Van Hoof, *Plutarch’s Practical Ethics: The Social Dynamics of Philosophy*, 119.

⁷⁸ Van Hoof, *Plutarch’s Practical Ethics: The Social Dynamics of Philosophy*, 123, who cites Plutarch *Precepts of Statecraft* 798B.

While participation in politics is a civic duty, Plutarch says that the loss of this privilege must be balanced with the freedom one enjoys in exile from the hardships of politics: “I am not involved in faction (οὐ στασιάζομεν); I am not exhausting my fortune; I wait upon no governor; I care not now who has obtained the province” (604B). Indeed, Plutarch argues that exile provides leisure and freedom, especially to practice philosophy.

Like Musonius, he goes on to quote from Euripides *Phoenissae* 388–393, and says, “Many are stirred by the words of Euripides” (605F). As we noted above, this passage from Euripides was often quoted to highlight how the loss of *παρρησία* was seen as one of the greatest evils of exile. Plutarch responds that “these initial assumptions are wrong and untrue,” since wisdom often calls for “silence and restraint of speech” (606A). Plutarch’s argument depends on the flexibility of the term *παρρησία*, which in Euripides’ context means the right of a citizen to speak in the democratic assembly. Of course, *παρρησία* can more generally refer to speaking openly and freely, and this is how Plutarch uses the word in his response; exile does not make anyone like a slave, since any man with sense (νοῦν ἔχοντος ἀνδρός, 606A) will sometimes remain silent and show restraint in speech.

1.3.3 Favorinus

Favorinus was an orator who was banished to the island of Chios by Hadrian for unknown reasons.⁷⁹ He was a student of Dio Chrysostom who, like his teacher, wrote a

⁷⁹ Grasmück, *Exilium: Untersuchungen zur Verbannung in der Antike*, 142. Some doubt the historicity of Favorinus’s exile.

consolation to exile, which only survives in a single papyrus and is badly mangled in many places. Though the historical details of his exile (if veridical) are murky, if he was exiled by Hadrian then this speech was likely written between 130 and 138.⁸⁰ Throughout his consolation, Favorinus references various figures from Greek literature to make his point that exile is not an evil. Beginning in chapter 6, he addresses the following “adversaries” that one must face in exile:

First, then, is [... love of one’s fatherland ...] Second is strong affection for one’s kin and familiar companionship. Third would no doubt be, what is apparently not granted to most people, enjoyment of wealth, property and private possessions. Along with this comes what the majority affect to despise, but in truth lust after: an appetite for honours and reputation in one’s own land, and, related to it, a horror of ill-repute and a bad name amongst the people. In addition to all these, and (as it were) waiting on the byline, is the mightiest and most alluring figure: liberty (ἐλευθερία), much coveted, consisting of freedom of action and in the use of property.⁸¹

Favorinus compares exile to an athletic contest and says that an exile is like an athlete entering a stadium, who must ignore the jeers and clapping of the crowds. This exile, like an athlete, must overcome this hardship “in the stadium of virtue. The contest is one of deeds, and not of words” (6.3). The rest of his consolation addresses each adversary one by one.

In chapter 7, he discusses the loss of one’s fatherland, and directly addresses Polynices in Euripides’ *Phoenissae* 367–70, who mourns the loss of his fatherland. Favorinus says that if someone is driven and harried (ἀπελασθέντα δὲ [καὶ] διωχθέντα)

⁸⁰ Whitmarsh, “Greece Is the World: Exile and Identity in the Second Sophistic,” 296.

⁸¹ The English translation of Favorinus, *On Exile* is from Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 302–24. Whitmarsh’s translation follows the Greek text and chapter numbering of Adelmo Barigazzi, *Favorino di Arelate, Opere: Introduzione, Testo Critico e Commento* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1966).

from their homeland, “he should endure his necessity manfully, and accept his circumstances” (7.2). After all, an exile can find the same things of one’s fatherland wherever they go: “There are ‘altars of the gods’ in Argos too, and also, the most sacred element in those altars, the gods themselves ... The gymnasia there are beautiful. So too is the water of the Lerna” (7.3). Favorinus views exile as a test of one’s virtue and mindset, and he relativizes the location in which this contest takes place, since the gods “are likely to heed a wretched, unjust man nowhere” (8.1), while they “will pay heed everywhere to a good and pious man” (8.2). The experience of exile, then, is an ethical trial more than a physical one involving one’s political circumstances. Victory consists in virtue and piety.

Throughout his work, Favorinus displays a dynamic relationship with the past⁸² when he rejects the ideology of “autochthony,” which imagined that citizens had a genetic relationship to their fatherland. In chapter 10, he says that though he loves his fatherland, “it is nothing other than the land in which my forebears settled or resided ... many people, though born elsewhere, regard another land as their fatherland.”

According to Tim Whitmarsh, this rejection of autochthony entails “an overhaul of the entire democratic ideology of citizenship.”⁸³ By comparing Favorinus’ speech with Demosthenes’ funeral speech,⁸⁴ Whitmarsh shows how Favorinus argues that “all people everywhere are foreigners and exiles” (10.3), since one’s fatherland is simply the place to which one has become accustomed. This differs from Demosthenes, who connects citizenship with a genetic relationship with one’s πατρίς. Whether one belongs to a place

⁸² Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire*, 172, says, “The resources of the past are, for Favorinus, open to appropriation and transfiguration, and not simply inert replication.”

⁸³ Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire*, 177.

⁸⁴ Specifically, Demosthenes, *Oration* 60.4.

and can claim it as their fatherland depends not on some genetic relationship, but on one's actions and will. Favorinus says, "If some of the locals will consider me a foreigner and a stranger, well, I shall treat them as my fellow citizens, and this land as my fatherland, both in what I say and in what I do" (14.1). Favorinus reimagines what it means to "belong" to a place or to be "indigenous" by rejecting the Classical notion of autochthony as a "narrative fiction"⁸⁵—if we look back far enough in time, we will find that we are all exiles who migrated to our fatherlands from elsewhere.

In chapter 15, Favorinus begins to address the second adversary—attachment to friends and family. According to Favorinus, longing for friends and family at home,

Reminds one of one's birth, and of one's common upbringing since childhood, assailing one with trips together to school, time shared together in gymnasia and pleasurable meetings with contemporaries and those who were enrolled at the same time, drugs and lures (as it were for the soul). (15.1)

Favorinus paints an idyllic picture of life in one's homeland, lived amongst family and friends. While the loss of family and friends may seem like a great misfortune, Favorinus argues that exile reveals who one's true friends are, since true friends will follow someone even into exile. Favorinus says,

Whoever wishes to be his friend is his friend; and if he truly is a friend, and understands the secret of friendship, and remains his partner, sharing in every kind of reputation, enterprise and fate, will he hesitate, when he has travelled abroad for a few days, to provide himself with the sight which is the fairest of pageants and spectacles, that of a friend? Will he hesitate, on his part, to lighten the misfortune for his friend? (15.3)

⁸⁵ Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire*, 178.

He goes on to use the example of Jason, whose friends “rejoiced to follow him from their various homes to Colchis as he journeyed abroad” (16.1).⁸⁶ Indeed, misfortune becomes a test of true friendship, for “the surest friend and companion is he who accompanies one who is down on his luck” (17.4). This is similar to what we find in Musonius, who also sees exile as a test that reveals one’s true friends.

In chapter 19, Favorinus begins to address the third adversary, the loss of wealth and reputation. He compares the loss of wealth and possessions to the previous adversaries, and says that while the previous adversaries are outside of one’s control, this third adversary is under one’s control, at least one’s “ability not to crave these things” (19.1). Favorinus adopts a Stoic attitude towards the loss of possessions, much like Musonius, who argues that what matters is not one’s circumstances but one’s attitude towards whatever happens, or like Plutarch who says that the evil of exile does not lie in the nature of the event but depends on one’s opinion. Favorinus says that “it is not exile and remaining at home, nor loss of honour and honour . . . nor wealth and poverty that are good and bad, but the proper handling of these things is good and the improper bad” (24.4).

Finally, he addresses in chapter 28 what he considers the greatest of the adversaries faced in exile—the loss of “liberty” (ἐλευθερία). Much of this section of the papyrus is mangled, but in what remains we find that Favorinus claims to have been exiled to an island. He says that “a good man’s soul” cannot be restrained by the sea, nor by jail, nor by anything else (28.2). Rather, one’s liberty is again determined by one’s

⁸⁶ As we will see later, this is parallel to Paul’s travel companions in Acts, who follow him wherever he goes, even by sea.

will, and in the very place where one is constrained the soul remains “ever indestructible, unconstrained, unchained” (28.2). Nesselrath notes how Favorinus, like Plutarch, takes the traditional answers to exile and reformulates them in a more Platonic way, with more emphasis on the transcendent realm, “which is quite in keeping with the general tendencies of Later Antiquity to seek help for human life and its many problems from the gods and what they may have in store for us.” (108)

1.4 Conclusion

To summarize, I return to the vignette with which I opened this chapter. Tarsus was facing a crisis in which the citizens were blaming a group of linen-workers who didn’t have citizenship as the cause of *στάσις*.⁸⁷ According to Dio, the citizens wavered in their opinion of this group, sometimes asserting “that they are a useless rabble and responsible for the tumult (*θορύβου*) and disorder (*ἀταξία*)” in the city, and at other times regarding “them as a part of the city and hold[ing] the opposite opinion of them” (*Or.* 34.21). The crux of the matter, then, was whether this group *belonged* in this city—were they a part of the city (*μέρος τῆς πόλεως*, 34.21), or were they the cause of *στάσις*, and therefore a threat to the city’s well-being?

Dio’s reasoning aligns with what we’ve seen generally concerning the rhetoric of *στάσις* and exile. He says, “If you believe them to be detrimental to you and instigators of insurrection (*στάσις*) and confusion (*ταραχῆς*), you should expel them (*ἀπελάσαι*)

⁸⁷ These linen-workers likely represented a professional guild, like the silversmiths at Ephesus in Acts 19. Cf. Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom*, 80–81.

altogether and not admit them to your popular assemblies” (34.21). If the Tarsians follow this advice, the linen-workers will become political exiles—forced to leave the city because they are a threat to the πόλις. Dio says that they should expel them “altogether” (ὅλως), because they are already in a sense seen as outsiders of the body politic, not only as non-citizens but also as the scapegoats of the city’s problems.⁸⁸ The use of ὅλως hints at the current liminal status of the linen-workers—though residing in the city, they are not a part of it.

Indeed, Dio notes how these linen workers “necessarily (ἐξ ἀνάγκης) stand aloof in sentiment from the common interest, reviled (ὀνειδιζόμενοι) as they are and viewed as outsiders (δοκοῦντες ἀλλότριον)” (34.22). They stand aloof from the city’s interests “ἐξ ἀνάγκης,” implying that this is something forced upon them. They are reviled and viewed as outsiders, or ἀλλότριον, strangers or those who belong to another place.

While Dio claims that exile is the right course of action if they are indeed harmful to the city and instigators of στάσις, if they are instead “in some measure citizens (τρόπον τινὰ πολιτίας), not only because they are resident in Tarsus, but also because in most instances they were born here and know no other city, then surely it is not fitting to disfranchise them or to cut them off from association with you” (34.21). The cause of στάσις, therefore, lies not with the linen-workers but with the Tarsian citizens who revile these linen workers and view them as outsiders. Indeed, Dio says that “there is nothing more harmful to a city than such conditions,” meaning the condition of forcing (ἐξ

⁸⁸ As an adverb, ὅλως means “pert. to being really so, with implication of being generally known, *actually, in fact*,” BDAG, s.v. “ὅλως.”

ἀνάγκης) the linen-workers to stand apart from the city. There is “nothing more conducive to strife (στάσιν) and disagreement (διαφοράν, 34.22).”

The Tarsians themselves recognized the force of the rhetoric of στάσις and ὁμόνοια; to accuse a particular group as instigators of στάσις was to bring forth charges leading to exile.⁸⁹ Dio, however, believes the right course of action here is not to expel them, but to fully accept them. He says, “I bid you enroll them all as citizens — yes, I do — and just as deserving as yourselves, and not to reproach them or cast them off (ἀπορρίπτειν), but rather to regard them as members of your body politic, as in fact they are” (34.23). Dio argues that the real reason the Tarsians revile the linen-workers is because they despise their occupation, for they believe a linen-worker “is inferior to his neighbor and deserves to have his occupation cast in his teeth and to be reviled for it” (34.23). But because not only the linen-workers, but also their fathers and forefathers were born in Tarsus, they have every right, says Dio, to be accepted as citizens.

This vignette highlights the complex politics of στάσις, ὁμόνοια, and φυγή at work in a Greek city of the first century. Exile was essentially a punishment against an outsider to a city’s interests. The various ways in which exiles reimagined a new form of politics involved answering the question—where do I belong? Some looked outside their πατρίς to the entire world as their fatherland, while others looked to the Sky as their true home. Dio argues here that these linen-workers need not look (or go) elsewhere, but should consider Tarsus their rightful fatherland (ἡγεῖσθαι πατρίδα, 34.23). As we look towards Acts, we will see how another group occupying a liminal space in the cities of

⁸⁹ Dio implies this when he says, “You *should* (ἐχρήν) expel them altogether” (*Or.* 34.21), emphasis mine.

the Roman Empire were reviled as instigators of στάσις, and thus were forced to flee from their cities. Like some philosophers, they too reimagined new forms of political belonging when banished from the city.

2. Exile in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity

In this chapter, I show how the theme of exile and displacement is represented in Second Temple Jewish and early Christian literature. To do so, I will first examine the terminology of exile to show how the Babylonian and Assyrian exiles differ from the political exile discussed in chapter 1. Second, I will consider some Second Temple Jewish texts that use the same terms and concepts of banishment or exile. By doing so, I will highlight not only how some Jewish authors reflected on the topos in relation to Jewish identity, but also how they reflected on the social marginalization faced by some Jews in the Diaspora. Finally, I will show how exile, displacement, and social marginalization played a role in shaping early Christian identity by considering some texts both inside and outside the NT. This broad survey of how various authors reflected on exile will help situate Acts within the discourse of its day.

2.1 Exile in the Hebrew Bible and Septuagint

As we saw in the introduction, the terminology for political exile is diverse but mainly centers on various cognates of the noun φυγή or various verbs that mean “to throw out” (ἐκβάλλειν) or “to drive out” (ἐξελαύνειν). In the Hebrew Bible, the word used for the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles is the noun **גלות** and its cognates. So, in Jer 29:1, the prophet writes, “These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles (**גלות**), and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile (**גלות**) from Jerusalem to Babylon.” The verb **גלו**, used above in its hiphil form, means to “go into

exile” or more generally “to depart.”¹ 2 Kings 17:23 states “the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had foretold through all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled (לָגַן) from their own land to Assyria until this day.”

In the Septuagint (LXX), these words are translated, not with φυγή or its cognates as we might expect, but with language used for emigration or colonization and the language of captivity. To cite the same texts as above, the LXX of Jer 29:1 says, “And these are the words of the book, which Ieremias sent from Ierousalem to the elders of the exile (ἀποικίας) and to the priests and to the pseudo-prophets, as a letter to the exile (ἀποικία) in Babylon and to all the people” (Jer 36:1 LXX).² 2 Kings 17:23b LXX states, “And Israel was exiled (ἀποκίσθη) from upon its own land to the Assyrians until this day.” The word ἀποικία and its cognates (e.g., ἀποικίζειν, ἀποικεσία) denote a colony or colonization. Plato distinguishes this from φυγή in his *Laws*, when his Athenian speaker describes the various kinds of “civic purgings” (καθαρμοὺς πόλεως, 735D) that are necessary to ensure the welfare of a city. Among the various options available to a lawmaker are death or exile (θάνατον ἢ φυγὴν, 735E), which “as a rule, clears out the greatest criminals when they are incurable and cause serious damage to the State.” A milder option would be for a lawgiver to take those who are “a plague inherent in the body politic” and to ship “them abroad as gently as possible, giving the euphemistic title of ‘emigration’ (ἀποικίαν) to their evacuation” (736A).

The distinction which Plato makes between φυγή and ἀποικία is belied by the single word “exile” used for both in English translations of Greek texts. In fact, the word

¹ BDB, s.v. “לָגַן.”

² All translations from the LXX are from NETS unless otherwise noted.

φυγή is never used in the LXX as a translation of *הִלָּךְ*, nor are its cognates such as *φυγαδεύειν*, *φεύγειν*, or *φυγάς*. Therefore, while there may be some conceptual similarities between these two kinds of displacement, they are philologically distinct.

This is true not only of the LXX, but also Second Temple texts such as the writings of Philo. A famous passage in Philo's writings that some believe points to Philo's hope for an end to Israel's continuing exile is *Praem.* 117, where he states, "God with a single call may easily gather together from the ends of the earth to any place that He wills the exiles (*ἀποικισμένους*) dwelling in the utmost parts of the earth."³ The word used for "exiles" is *ἀποικίζειν*, the same word used in 2 Kgs 17:23b LXX above for *הִלָּךְ*.

Other words used in the LXX for exile include *μετοικεσία* and *αἰχμαλωσία*. In Ezek 12:8–11 LXX, a word of the LORD comes to the prophet concerning Judah's exile which says,

Son of man, did not the house of Israel, the embittering house, say to you, "What are you doing?" Say to them, "This is what the Lord says: The ruler and the leader are in Ierousalem and in all the house of Israel, who are in their midst." Say: "I am making signs in its midst. As I have done, so shall it be for them; they shall go in exile (*μετοικεσία*) and in captivity (*αἰχμαλωσία*)."

The word *μετοικεσία*, which means "removal to another place of habitation, deportation,"⁴ is a translation of *הִלָּךְ* and is also used in Matt 1:11 for the deportation to Babylon. The word *αἰχμαλωσία* is used more broadly for a "state of captivity" or for "prisoners of war, captives."⁵ In Ezek 12:11 LXX, it translates the word *בְּשָׁרֵי*, which

³ Cited in Louis H. Feldman, "The Concept of Exile in Josephus," in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions*, ed. James M. Scott, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 56 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 146.

⁴ BDAG, s.v. "μετοικεσία."

⁵ BDAG, s.v. "αἰχμαλωσία."

means “captivity” or “captives,”⁶ though *αἰχμαλωσία* elsewhere translates *הָלָל*, such as in Amos 1:15, which states, “Then their king shall go into exile (*הָלָל* / *ἐν αἰχμαλωσίᾳ*), he and his officials together, says the LORD.”

These examples highlight the importance of clarity when it comes to discussions of exile between Greek and Hebrew sources. When NT scholars speak of the concept of exile in the OT, NT, Second Temple Jewish, and early Christian sources, they most often refer to the national exiles of Israel and Judah, without making distinctions between the various kinds of “exiles” discussed in these texts. James Scott notes that in recent years, some Hebrew Bible scholars have moved away from the language of “exile” to “forced migration” as a translation of *הָלָל*. He says, “The basis for this change of term is the observation that the Hebrew word *golah*, commonly translated as ‘exile’ or ‘captivity,’ can in fact be translated as ‘emigration.’”⁷ John Ahn’s study of the sociological and literary dimensions of the kingdom of Judah’s exile suggests that the popularity of the translation “exile” for *הָלָל* has left the translation “emigration” unnoticed.⁸ His study considers *הָלָל* as “forced migration” instead of as “exile” in order to read the Old Testament texts on Judah’s forced migration alongside sociological studies of forced migrations in the modern world. James Scott notes that this move towards “forced

⁶ BDB, s.v. “*הָלָל*.”

⁷ James M. Scott, “N. T. Wright’s Hypothesis of an ‘Ongoing Exile’: Issues and Answers,” in *Exile: A Conversation with N.T. Wright*, ed. James M. Scott (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 5n2.

⁸ John J. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations: A Sociological, Literary, and Theological Approach on the Displacement and Resettlement of the Southern Kingdom of Judah*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 0934–2575 417 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 34.

migration” also “moves the discussion away from exile as punishment for sins and toward a more constructive approach to the subject.”⁹

Indeed, one of the main differences between exile as φυγή and exile as ἀποικία is that the former is most often a punishment for a crime, while the latter is not a punishment.¹⁰ Philo is aware of this distinction, since in *Abr.* 14.64 he writes of the lawmakers “who have appointed banishment (φυγήν) as the penalty second only to death for those who have been convicted of the greatest crimes, though indeed, in my opinion, it is not second to death ... but rather a far heavier punishment.” When Philo uses ἀποικίζειν, as we saw above in *Praem.* 117, there is no connotation of punishment.

While φυγή is never used in the OT for the forced migration of Israel, some of its cognates are used to describe the cities of refuge reserved for people who kill others without intent or by accident. The words φυγαδεῖον and φυγαδευτήριον—used to translate עִיר־מִלִּנְחָה—are used for these cities and are only found in the LXX among Greek texts before the first century.¹¹ In Num 35:11–12 LXX the Lord says to Moses,

And you shall set aside for yourselves cities; they shall be places of refuge (φυγαδευτήρια) for you for the murderer to flee (φυγεῖν) there, everyone who strikes a soul unintentionally. And the cities shall be for you places of refuge (φυγαδευτήρια) from one doing the relative’s blood duty, and the one that commits murder will not die until he stands before the congregation for judgment.

The kind of “flight” envisioned here bears greater similarity to what we’ve seen in our Greco-Roman sources in chapter 1 than the forced migration of Israel. The cities of refuge were places where murderers could flee from potential retaliation. As I noted in

⁹ Scott, “N. T. Wright’s Hypothesis of an ‘Ongoing Exile’: Issues and Answers,” 5n2.

¹⁰ Feldman, “The Concept of Exile in Josephus,” 146.

¹¹ Philo refers to these cities of refuge using these terms (see below), but the absence of these words in other contexts makes it likely that the LXX translators coined these terms as translations of עִיר־מִלִּנְחָה. In the LXX, φυγαδεῖον is used in Num 35:15; φυγαδευτήριον in Num 35:6, 11, 15, 25, 32; Josh 20:2; 21:13, 21, 38; 1 Chr 6:42, 52; 1 Macc 1:53.

chapter 1, exile as φυγή in the Greco-Roman world referred not only to banishment from one's home, but also to one's "voluntary" flight from danger. As with those fleeing punishment into these cities of refuge (φυγαδευτήρια), exile in the Roman Republic was a voluntary flight away from one's homeland to avoid punishment. This changed in the imperial period when exile became a punishment in its own right, but there are parallels throughout these periods. Indeed, as we will see below, Philo relates these cities of refuge to the phenomenon of exile in his day.

In summary, my survey of the terms used for exile in the Hebrew Bible and Septuagint shows that the English word is used to translate a variety of Greek and Hebrew terms. The kind of exile I'm considering differs from the national exile of Israel which is the focus of most NT studies on exile. Whatever the merits of reading the NT through the lens of an "end of exile" theology, I have shown how clarity regarding the terminology for exile helps distinguish the *political* exile discussed in chapter 1 with the broader concept of exile and return in NT theology. Indeed, confusion regarding the philological differences between exile as ἀποικία and exile as φυγή has led to a lacuna in NT studies—while exile as φυγή was an important concept in some Second Temple Jewish and early Christian writings, few studies have considered its relevance to the NT. To begin to fill this gap, I turn now to Philo's reflections on exile as φυγή.

2.2 Exile in Philo of Alexandria

Philo is familiar with exile as φυγή, both as a reality in his own day and from the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition. Many of the same themes we encountered in the

exilic literature surveyed above reappear in Philo's works. In his works interpreting the Bible, he understands various biblical figures as exemplars who faced banishment. In the survey that follows, I will show how Philo uses *φυγή* in his works and consider how Philo's writings contribute to our understanding of both the historical realities of exile *and* the discourse of exile in the first century. Philo's reflections on exile show us what one ancient author thought about exile and how he used the reality of exile to reflect on various topics.¹²

In *On Abraham*, Philo provides an encomium of Abraham as someone who overcame the hardships traditionally tied to exile. He refers to Abraham as one who was told by an oracle to "leave his country (*πατρίδα*) and kinsfolk (*συγγένειαν*) and seek a new home" (*Abr.* 62). Philo continues, "Yet who else would be likely to be so firm and unmoved of purpose as not to yield and succumb to the charms of kinsfolk (*συγγενῶν*) and country (*πατρίδος*)? The desire of these may be said to be born and grow with each of us and is a part of our nature as much as or even more than the parts which unite to make the whole" (63). The desire for family and country, some of the main things lost in exile, is said to be part of our nature. Any person asked to leave their home would eventually be drawn back by "the charms of kinsfolk and country."

To prove that human nature is compelled by a desire for family and country, Philo writes,

¹² Though many of Philo's comments are found in his exegetical treatises, we should not therefore discount the value of these remarks for our study of exile in the first century. As David Runia notes in his study of the "city" in Philo's works, "It would be a mistake to try to compartmentalize his thought too much, i.e., to make a sharp distinction between historical-apologetic and exegetical-philosophical modes of thinking." (David T. Runia, "The Idea and the Reality of the City in the Thought of Philo of Alexandria," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61.3 (2000): 362, cited in Sung Soo Hong, "Epistolary Psychagogy in the Letter of James" (The University of Texas at Austin, Ph.D., 2020), 441.)

And this is attested by the legislators who have appointed banishment (φυγήν) as the penalty second only to death for those who have been convicted of the greatest crimes, though indeed, in my opinion, it is not second to death, if truth gives its verdict, but rather a far heavier punishment, since death ends our troubles but banishment (φυγή) is not the end but the beginning of other new misfortunes and entails in place of the one death which puts an end to pains a thousand deaths in which we do not lose sensation. (64)

For Philo, banishment is worse than death, which is the claim the exilic consolations sought to refute. The consolations argued that exile is no loss, since what is lost in exile can be regained outside of one's homeland. For example, Musonius Rufus wrote that some exiles amass considerable wealth in exile even after losing their possessions.¹³ Plutarch argued that exile provided leisure and freedom to practice philosophy (604B). Favorinus argued that while the loss of family and friends seems like a loss, exile reveals who one's true friends are (15.3).

However, Philo disagrees with Plutarch and Favorinus when he states,

Yet all these [who are exiled] are eager to see and salute their native soil, and to greet their familiars and to have the sweet and most desired enjoyment of beholding their kinsfolk and friends. And often when they find the business for which they left home protracting itself they abandon it, drawn by the constraining desire for their own belongings. (65)

The familiar triad of one's native land, family, and possessions reappears here as the things that draw one back to one's home.

In contrast to the exiles of these types of people, Abraham's migration "was one of soul rather than body, for the heavenly love overpowered his desire for mortal things" (66). Abraham took "no thought for anything, either for his fellow-clansmen, or wardsmen, or schoolmates, or comrades, or blood relations on father's or mother's side,

¹³ Lutz, *Musonius Rufus*, "The Roman Socrates," 73.

or country, or ancestral customs, or community of nurture or home life, all of them ties possessing a power to allure and attract which it is hard to throw off” (67). This contrasts with Favorinus, who wrote that one’s longing for friends and family at home “reminds one of one’s birth, and of one’s common upbringing since childhood, assailing one with trips together to school, time shared together in gymnasia and pleasurable meetings with contemporaries and those who were enrolled at the same time, drugs and lures (as it were for the soul)” (*On Exile*, 15.1). In this contest between nature and will, Abraham prevails as one who overcomes the natural inclination towards home and family.

Philo interprets Abraham’s migration allegorically. He writes that the migrations of Abraham are “made by a man of wisdom, but according to the laws of allegory by a virtue-loving soul in its search for the true God” (68). Philo then proceeds to interpret Abraham’s travels as his migration away from a Chaldean interpretation of the world, which likened the created world to the Creator.¹⁴ Abraham’s obedience to God’s command brings him into the light of the knowledge of God. Even Philo’s allegorical interpretation is similar to what we see in some of the philosophers; Abraham’s departure from his homeland and his kin paves the way for a philosophical transformation from ignorance to light.

In *On the Cherubim* 1–2, Philo allegorically interprets Adam’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden as an “eternal banishment” (ἀίδιον φυγήν, *Cher.* 2). He says that because the text says Adam was “cast forth” (ἐξέβαλε, Gen 3:24 LXX) and not just “sent forth” (ἐξάπεστείλεν) (as in Gen 3:23 LXX), Adam suffered the punishment of exile. He goes

¹⁴ Philo understands Abraham’s first migration in Gen 12:1 as a move from Chaldea to Haran.

on and says that Hagar, too, was banished. Philo notes that the first time Hagar departs from Sarah, this was not a banishment (οὐ φυγαδευθεῖσα, *Cher.* 3), since Gen 16:6 LXX says “she ran (ἀπέδρα) from her presence.” After Sarah bears a son, however, she asks Abraham, “Cast out (Ἐκβαλε) this slave-girl and her son” (21:10 LXX). Philo says that this second time “she is cast forth utterly (ἐκβάλλεται), never to return” (*Cher.* 3). The distinction Philo makes here between someone who is “cast out” (ἐκβάλλειν) and “sent forth” (ἐξαποστέλλειν) highlights how ἐκβάλλειν was commonly used for banishment or exile.

Philo interprets Hagar and her son Ishmael as instruction in preliminary learning and the sophist, respectively. In *Cher.* 10 Philo writes,

Since then the sophist, who is ever sophist, and his mother, the instruction in the preliminary learning, are expelled and banished by God from the presence of wisdom and the wise, on whom he confers the titles of Sarah and Abraham, can we wonder that he has cast forth Adam, that is the mind, which is sick with the incurable sickness of folly, from the dwelling-place of virtue for ever and permits him not to return?

In this allegorical reading, Adam represents the mind that is sick “with the incurable sickness of folly,” Ishmael represents “the sophist,” Hagar is “preliminary learning,” and all these are banished by God to make room for “wisdom and the wise,” represented by Sarah and Abraham.

Later in the same work, Philo says that every person is born into the world “as into a foreign city” (ὡσπερ εἰς ξένην πόλιν, *Cher.* 120). The only true citizen is God alone, Philo says, while “all created being is a sojourner and alien” (πάροικον δὲ καὶ ἐπήλυτον τὸ γεννητὸν ἅπαν, *Cher.* 121). He goes on to distinguish between God as the only citizen, the wise as aliens and sojourners, and the fool who is an “exile” (φυγάς,

Cher. 121). These distinctions are important, since the terms “alien,” “sojourner,” and “exile” each carry their own nuance. The exile which will be our focus in our study of Acts often involves flight from danger or expulsion for political reasons, which is different from a more general sojourning or alienation. They both, however, raise the question of belonging and home, and are sometimes used interchangeably in our sources. Runia notes, “I am hesitant to identify migration and flight completely. It seems to me that flight involves greater urgency, a stronger pressure of circumstances. The separation and alienation that it assumes is more profound. This is particularly the case when flight and exile are the result of expulsion.”¹⁵

Philo devotes much of his treatise, *On Flight and Finding* (περὶ φυγῆς καὶ εὐρέσεως), to an allegorical exegesis of the flights (φυγαί) of various biblical figures, and an exposition on the “cities of refuge” mentioned above. He begins his treatise with the example of Hagar, which he also treats briefly in *On the Cherubim* above. He says in *Fug.* 2 that he will treat the subject of fugitives (φυγάδων) in this work, and that Hagar is one example since “she ran away (ἀπέδρα) from the face of her mistress.” He goes on to say there are three motives for φυγή: “hatred, fear, and shame” (*Fug.* 3). He gives examples of others who fled for these reasons: Jacob fled from Laban out of hatred and from Esau out of fear. Hagar fled out of shame. Like various philosophers of his day, Philo looks to figures in his tradition as examples of fugitives or exiles.¹⁶

¹⁵ David T. Runia, “The Theme of Flight and Exile in the Allegorical Thought-World of Philo of Alexandria,” *SPhiloA* 21 (2009): 21.

¹⁶ This is comparable to Greek philosophers such as Musonius Rufus, who considered Odysseus a prototypical exile.

In a later section of the same work, Philo discusses the “cities of refuge” (φυγαδευτήρια) and explains why he believes they were chosen from the cities assigned to the Levites. He says, “The direction to fly (φεύγειν) to the cities allotted to Levites only is wholly appropriate, for the Levites too are in a certain sense fugitives (φυγάδες), having, for the sake of being well-pleasing to God, forsaken parents and children and brothers and all their mortal kindred (συγγένειαν)” (*Fug.* 88). Here we see repeated the connection between losing one’s family (συγγένεια) and exile. He says, “And a flight that is real exile (ἀψευδής φυγή) is loss of our nearest and dearest. It is on the ground, then, of a similarity in their doings that the Lawgiver commits fugitives to the keeping of fugitives, that they may obtain an amnesty for what they had done” (*Fug.* 89). By the “keeping of fugitives” he means watching over “him who has slain a man,” upon whom “the law has pronounced the sentence of banishment (φυγήν, *Spec.* 3.123).”

Aside from his more allegorical interpretations of exile, Philo also provides insight into some common opinions of exile in his day. In his treatise *Every Good Man is Free*, Philo argues for the truth of various Stoic paradoxes, first of all the paradox that “every man of worth is free” (*Prob.* 1). He introduces various concepts that people untrained in philosophy—the “common herd”—cannot grasp, such as the idea that someone living in a city could be an exile. “The common herd” refers to the majority who are “unable to discern the conceptual light through the weakness of the soul’s eye” (*Prob.* 5). His argument here is that philosophy rises “above the opinions of the common herd” (*Prob.* 3). He says,

“Surely it is an absurdity,” they think, “a mere showman’s trick, to apply names in this way, to give the name of exile (φυγάδας) to men who not only spend their days in the heart of the city, but also sit as councillors, jurymen, and members of

assembly (ἐκκλησιάζοντας), and sometimes undertake the burden of administering the market, or managing the gymnasium and the other public services: to call those citizens (πολίτας) who have either never been placed on the burgess rolls or have been condemned to disfranchisement (ἀτιμία) or banishment (φυγή), men chased (ἐληλαμένους) beyond the frontiers, unable not only to set foot in the country but even to get a distant view of their ancestral soil, unless hounded thither by some kind of avenging furies they come courting death. For when they return there are numberless ministers of punishment waiting for them, spurred to vengeance by their personal feelings and also ready to do service to the commands of the law.” (*Prob.* 6–7)

The opinions represented in this section are “the opinions of the common herd” (δόξας δ’ ἀγελαίους, *Prob.* 3).¹⁷ Most people would find it absurd to think that one could be an active member of a city and still consider oneself an “exile.” Philo is arguing that it is possible to grasp how this could be true only through the study of philosophy.

Likewise, how can someone claim to be a citizen when chased beyond the frontiers of their city? Some stoic philosophers would argue precisely this point when they claimed that in exile they were citizens, though citizens of the whole κόσμος. It’s important here to note how Philo reasons in the same way as do the philosophers in chapter 1. Indeed, the exilic consolations commonly argue, contrary to common opinion, that exile is not an evil, and that an exile can remain a citizen.

Another important point to take away from Philo’s comment in *Prob.* 6–7 is the connection between civic involvement and exile. The opinion of the masses is that exile means not only leaving the physical space of a city, but being excluded from participation in civic activities, such as local governance or public services. Plutarch lists this as one of the primary causes of suffering in exile, when he writes that some exiles complain that “I

¹⁷ Plutarch would agree, as he says that “the multitude declare in speech and song” (599F) that exile is an evil, a point which he sets out to refute.

do not hold office or sit in the council or preside at games” (604C). Plutarch answers that this should be seen as a benefit of exile, since freedom from civic duties leaves more time for leisure. While the exilic consolations (such as Plutarch’s) are written for an “elite” audience, Philo’s comment here suggests that the *majority* saw exile as a punishment that deprived someone of a place in the city, both in a literal and figurative sense. Philo also says that the exile who tries to return comes “courting death” since there are many waiting to punish them according to the law (*Prob.* 7). This accords with the earlier Roman practice of *aquae et ignis interdictio*, in which an exile could not return to Rome because of the threat of death “by fire and water.”¹⁸

Later in the treatise, Philo gives examples of how the “wise” (σοφοῖς ἀνδράσιν, *Prob.* 144) should respond to the menacing threats of others. He writes, “If one threatens him [a wise person] with banishment (φυγήν), he can say ‘Every land is my native country’” (*Prob.* 145). This phrase—πᾶσα γῆ μοι πατρίς—is a common saying in Stoic writings.

In addition to Philo’s reading of banishment from the Old Testament and his philosophical reflections on exile, he also narrates the exile of various people in his more historical works. In *Flacc.* 151, Philo recounts how the Roman governor of Egypt, Aulus Avilius Flaccus, was punished for his involvement in the cruelty against the Jews during the riots in Alexandria. According to Philo, Flaccus was deprived of his property (*Flacc.* 148) and sentenced to banishment (κατέγνωστο αὐτοῦ φυγή, 151), “not only from the whole continent ... but also from every one of the islands in which life can prosper.” He

¹⁸ As mentioned above, in practice there were few resources to actually ensure that exiles were forbidden from returning.

was exiled (διώκεσθαι) to Andros, an island in the Aegean. In Philo's dramatic account, Flaccus, on seeing the island from afar, says,

Oh my guards and escort, it is for this fine land of Andros, this unblest island that I exchange happy Italy, I, Flaccus, who was born and reared and educated in sovereign Rome, the school-mate and familiar associate of the grandsons of Augustus, chosen at the court of Tiberius to be among his foremost friends, entrusted for six years with the charge of Egypt the greatest of his possessions? This great reversal what does it mean? A night in daytime as in an eclipse has taken possession of my life. This petty island what shall I call it? My home of exile (φυγαδευτήριον), or a new fatherland (πατρίδα καινήν), a hapless haven and refuge? (158–159)

Unlike the “wise” (including Abraham), Philo's Flaccus exhibits great sadness over leaving his homeland. Some of the familiar themes are present here, including the loss of possessions and the loss of one's homeland. Flaccus's monologue exemplifies the “opinion of the masses” described above, which is fitting considering the negative depiction of Flaccus throughout the work. Philo's Flaccus also uses the term φυγαδευτήριον, which is used in the LXX for the cities of refuge. Philo also states that “it seemed to [Flaccus] that a death by violence in his native land would be the lighter evil, or rather in comparison with his present plight a welcome boon” (162). Greek and Roman sources often compared exile with death, and argued that exile was worse than death, as Philo does here. Many of the consolations argue against this claim.

In summary, we see many of the same topoi surrounding exile reappear in Philo's works, such as the connection between civic life and exile, the yearning for home, family, and possessions, and exile as entry into philosophy. Philo's understanding of exile was shaped by both Greco-Roman philosophical traditions and the realities of exile in his context. While my summary has not focused on his allegorical method or the possible meanings of his varied use of the exile motif, I have aimed to show how Philo understood

the significance of exile in his reading of the OT, particularly in its connection to the city and the loss of family and home.¹⁹

2.3 Exile in Josephus

Like Philo, Josephus never uses φυγή or like terms for the national exiles of Israel. Instead, he uses the language of colonization or migration. When Josephus recounts how Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, he writes that “when the general of the Babylonian king had demolished Jerusalem and removed (μεταναστήσας) the people, he took captive the high priest Saraios and Sepsenias” (*Ant.* 10.149).²⁰ In the same section, Josephus uses the noun form μετανάστασις for the “migration” of the Jewish people from Egypt (*Ant.* 10.147). Later, when Josephus recounts Cyrus’ decree declaring that the Jews can return to their land from Babylon, he states that “this was the seventieth year from the time when our people were fated to migrate (μετανασθῆναι) from their own land to Babylon” (*Ant.* 11.1).²¹ The word μετανάστασις is used in Greek sources for the migration of peoples and does not imply a punishment.²² Josephus also uses the language of colonization when he describes how Nebuchadnezzar, when he became ruler over his father’s vast empire, “gave orders to allot to the captives (αἰχμαλώτοις), on their arrival, settlements (ἀποικίας) in the most suitable districts of Babylonia” (*Ag. Ap.* 1.138).²³ By using the language of migration, captivity, and colonization when speaking of Israel’s

¹⁹ For a detailed examination of Philo’s allegorical method as it relates to exile and migration, see Runia, “The Theme of Flight and Exile in the Allegorical Thought-World of Philo of Alexandria.”

²⁰ Cited in Feldman, “The Concept of Exile in Josephus,” 147.

²¹ Cited in Feldman, “The Concept of Exile in Josephus,” 147.

²² LSJ, s.v. “μετανάστασις.” Cf. Xenophon, *Mem.* 3.5.12 on the many migrations in Greece.

²³ Cited in Feldman, “The Concept of Exile in Josephus,” 148.

exile, Josephus uses the language of the Septuagint, which renders the Hebrew *גלות* in these terms. Feldman argues that Josephus doesn't use the language of *φυγή* because he doesn't want to present the exile as a punishment.²⁴ According to Feldman, Josephus held a positive view of the diaspora, which we see in his interpretation of biblical texts. Unlike Philo, for example, who interpreted Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden in exilic terms, Josephus writes, "Having imposed these penalties upon them, God removed (*μετοικίζει*) Adam and Eve from the garden to another place" (*Ant.* 1.51). This paraphrase implies that their expulsion from the Garden (or "movement" in Josephus' terms) was not one of the penalties for their sin.

When Josephus uses *φυγή* and its cognates, he generally refers to punishment for a crime, flight from danger, the cities of refuge, or for fugitives. When Josephus narrates the expulsion or banishment of someone for a crime, not many details are given concerning the judicial proceedings. This is typical of narrative scenes of exile, which are often brief. In *Ant.* 10.23, Josephus writes concerning the sons of Sennacherib who are driven away (*φυγαδευθέντες*) by the citizens of Nineveh because they murdered their father. In *J.W.* 1.432–3, Josephus describes the "discord" (*στασιασθῆναι*) that arose in Herod's house after he sent away his first wife, Doris, and married Mariamne. Herod then "banished from the capital" (*ἐφυγάδευσεν τῆς πόλεως*, 433) Antipater, the son of Doris, for the sake of his children by Mariamne. Later, this same Antipater was condemned to death by Caesar for plotting to murder his father, though Caesar left it to Herod to decide "either to banish him (*φυγάδα ἐλαύνειν*) or to take away his life" (*Ant.* 17.182).

²⁴ Feldman, "The Concept of Exile in Josephus," 154.

Some of the banishments recounted in Josephus' works are due to στάσις. In *J.W.* 2.245, the emperor Claudius banishes Cumanus because of a violent conflict between the Jews and Samaritans. When a Galilean is murdered in Samaria on the way to a festival in Jerusalem, the masses are stirred to unrest and dash off to Samaria. The notables urge Cumanus, the procurator of Judea, to punish those responsible, but his inaction leads to further discord and violence. Concerning Cumanus' sentencing, Josephus states,

At Rome Caesar gave his hearing to Cumanus and the Samaritans in the presence of Agrippa, who made a spirited defence on behalf of the Jews, while Cumanus on his side was supported by many eminent persons. The emperor condemned the Samaritans, ordered three of their most prominent men to be executed, and banished Cumanus (ἐφυγάδευσεν, *J.W.* 2.245).

This is an example of exile as a punishment for στάσις. Because Cumanus failed in his duties to preserve the welfare of his territories, he was banished. Similarly, after the end of the proem to the *Jewish War*, Josephus begins his work with the στάσις for power that arose among the Jewish nobles. He writes, "Onias, one of the chief priests, gaining the upper hand, expelled the sons of Tobias from the city" (ἐξέβαλε τῆς πόλεως, *J.W.* 1.31).

Elsewhere, Josephus provides accounts of *deportatio*, in which exiles would lose their possessions and be confined to a specific locale. In *Ant.* 18.252, Josephus writes concerning Herod's banishment to Gaul. He writes, "Gaius, regarding the accusations of revolt as confirmed, relieved [Herod] of his tetrarchy and added it to the kingdom of Agrippa. He likewise gave Herod's property to Agrippa and condemned Herod to perpetual exile (φυγῆ ἀδίω), assigning him as his residence Lyons, a city in Gaul." In this brief account, Josephus describes how Herod's possessions were confiscated and he was exiled to a specific place, which is typical of *deportatio*, the harshest form of exile. Beginning in *Ant.* 17.342, Josephus recounts how the Jews and Samaritans brought

charges to Augustus against the ethnarch Archelaus, who had dealt cruelly with them. In response, Augustus summoned Archelaus to Rome and “gave a hearing to some of his accusers, and also let him speak, and then sent him into exile (φυγάδα ἐλαύνει), assigning him a residence in Vienna, a city in Gaul, and confiscating his property” (*Ant.* 17.344).

Josephus also employs exilic terminology for more general flights from danger. In *Ant.* 6–8, David’s flight from Saul is called a φυγή. When David confronts Saul and reveals how he spared him though he had the chance to kill him in his sleep, Josephus writes,

[Saul] was now persuaded that he did not love his own self so well as he was loved by David, seeing that he had pursued this man who might have been his safeguard and who had given many proofs of his loyalty, and that he had forced him to live so long in exile (φυγή), in terror of his life, bereft of friends and of kindred (φύλων καὶ συγγενῶν), while he himself had been repeatedly spared by him and had received at his hands a life clearly marked for destruction. (*Ant.* 6.317)

The familiar theme of friends and family lost in exile reappears here in Josephus’ retelling of David’s flight from Saul.

Like Philo, Josephus also refers to the “cities of refuge” to which a person could flee after involuntary manslaughter. For such persons, Josephus says that Moses “ordained that the term of their exile (φυγή) should be the lifetime of the high-priest in office when the manslayer fled” (*Ant.* 4.172). While both Josephus and Philo mention these cities in their works, Josephus does not reflect on *why* these cities were chosen for this purpose. Philo, on the other hand, connects the exile of the manslayer to the fact that Levites are themselves exiles, because they have forsaken their family (*Fug.* 88). Unlike Philo, Josephus rarely reflects on the significance of φυγή. While Josephus provides many examples of exile, we don’t find the sort of philosophical reflection on the nature of

exile as we do in Philo's works, whether that be the subject of what is lost in exile, the causes of exile, or how one recovers from exile. These differences are likely due to differences in genre, in their purposes for writing, and perhaps their knowledge of Greco-Roman philosophical reflection on an exile's condition.

2.4 Citizenship among Diaspora Jews

We ended the previous chapter with a vignette in which Dio Chrysostom addresses a στάσις in Tarsus. The scene highlights the rhetoric of στάσις and exile by showing how a group of linen-workers were ostracized as threats to civic welfare. Banishing them from the city would confirm what was already true of their status—they stood “outside the constitution” (ἔξωθεν τῆς πολιτείας, *Or.* 34.21). The Jews of Alexandria faced a similar situation in 38 CE when a στάσις threatened their place in the city. Philo recounts this crisis and its aftermath in his *Flaccus* and *Embassy to Gaius*, and it's worth considering how this conflict points to the broader displacement and ostracism the Jews faced in this period, along with the strategies they used to understand their place in the city.

2.4.1 Στάσις in Alexandria

Flaccus Avillius became prefect of Alexandria and the surrounding regions in 32/33 CE after the death of Iberus his predecessor (*Flacc.* 2). While he initially established good order throughout the city (*Flacc.* 5) while Tiberius Caesar was alive, things turned for the worse when Gaius became emperor. Flaccus feared Gaius, and some

Greek leaders in the city exploited his insecurity by pressuring him to make Alexandria itself an intercessor between him and Gaius “by surrendering and sacrificing the Jews” (*Flacc.* 23). When the Jewish king, Agrippa, visited Alexandria on his way to Rome in 38 CE, the instigators found their opportunity and stirred up Flaccus by provoking his jealousy. A mob gathered and forced a known lunatic, named “Carabas,” into the gymnasium and dressed him up as a king. They proceeded to salute him and shout “Marin,” meaning “lord” in Aramaic. Philo writes that instead of bringing an end to this mocking of Agrippa, Flaccus gave free reign to the mob, which rushed into the theater at dawn and called for the installation of images in the Jewish meeting houses (προσευχαῖς, *Flacc.* 41). Flaccus, instead of recognizing that this was against the law and would set a dangerous precedent throughout Egypt, permitted the installation of images as an attack against the Jews’ “ancestral customs” (ἔθνη πάτρια, *Flacc.* 43). Flaccus then proceeded to “the destruction of our [the Jews’] citizenship (τῆς ἡμετέρας πολιτείας), so that when our ancestral customs and our participation in political rights, the sole mooring on which our life was secured, had been cut away, we might undergo the worst misfortunes with no cable to cling to for safety” (*Flacc.* 53). Flaccus’s edict declared that the Jews, who regarded Alexandria as their homeland (*Flacc.* 46), were “foreigners and aliens” (ξένους καὶ ἐπήλυδας, *Flacc.* 54).

All these events led to a great στάσις that enveloped the city. Philo recounts in dramatic detail the violence that ensued against the Jews—synagogues were burned, houses were pillaged, and many were killed by stoning, burning, or crucifixion. The Greeks also ejected (ἐξώκισαν) the Jews from four of the five districts of the city, drove them into a small part of one (*Flacc.* 55), and plundered their belongings. That Philo sees

this as a form of “banishment” is clear from his use of ἐξουκίζειν, a word he uses for banishment elsewhere.²⁵ In his *Embassy to Gaius*, he writes that the Jews were “rendered hearthless and homeless, outcasts and exiles from their own houses” (ἐξεωσμένους καὶ πεφυγαδευμένους τῶν ἰδίων οἰκιῶν, *Legat.* 123). The Jews were “driven to wander (φυγαδευθέντες) by those who seized their property” (*Flacc.* 94). The familiar connection between στάσις, loss of property, and exile reappears here. Bradley Ritter says this is “a classic example of confiscation (δήμευσις) familiar to episodes of *stasis*.”²⁶

After Flaccus is arrested, the Jews praise God who created the universe and say, “They are our only habitation, expelled (ἐληλαμένοι) as we are from all that men have wrought, robbed of our city (στερόμενοι πόλεως) and the buildings within its walls, public and private, alone of all men under the sun bereft of home (ἀπόλιδες—lit. “without a city”) and country through the malignancy of a governor” (*Flacc.* 123). Philo sees the plight of the Jewish community as a form of homelessness. Not only were some Jews literally expelled from their homes in the στάσις, but even for those who remained in their homes the removal of their political rights (τῆς ἡμετέρας πολιτείας, *Flacc.* 53) was equivalent to being robbed of their city, Alexandria, which they considered their πατρίς. The στάσις and the actions of Flaccus were a political expulsion—the Greeks were intent on removing the special privileges enjoyed by the Jews since Augustus, and Flaccus’s actions cast on the Jews the slur that they were “foreigners without civic rights” (*Flacc.* 172). In essence, the question at hand was whether the Jews belonged in the city and

²⁵ Cf. *Legat.* 157, cited in Bradley Ritter, *Judeans in the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire: Rights, Citizenship and Civil Discord* (Boston: Brill, 2015), 137.

²⁶ Ritter, *Judeans in the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire*, 137.

could lay claim to it as their homeland, or whether they were a threat to the city's welfare and needed to be removed. Flaccus had the Jews' homes searched for stocks of weapons, but Philo states that, far from being a threat, the Jews' way of life is "conducive to good order (εὐνομίαν) and stability (εὐστάθειαν) in the State" (*Flacc.* 94). Εὐνομία or "good order"²⁷ was understood in Greek political thought to be the most important virtue of a good citizen.²⁸

2.4.2 Claudius's Letter to the Alexandrians

After Flaccus was arrested on Gaius's orders and sent into exile, he was succeeded by C. Vitrasius Pollio, who gave permission for two embassies to be sent to Rome in 38/39 CE to appeal to Gaius.²⁹ Philo led a five-man embassy representing the Jews, while the Greek embassy was led by Apion, a renowned Homeric scholar.³⁰ The mission to restore the Jews' rights was delayed by Gaius's inaction, and may have been prolonged indefinitely were it not for his assassination in 41 CE. The death of Gaius galvanized certain Jews of Alexandria, who took up arms against their Greek neighbors. This time, the renewed στάσις was quickly quelled by the prefect, and new delegations were sent to the new emperor Claudius. The results of this second embassy are most clearly represented by a papyrus copy of Claudius's letter to the Alexandrians.

²⁷ LSJ, s.v. "εὐνομία."

²⁸ Brad L. Cook, "Athenian Terms of Civic Praise in the 330s: Aeschines vs. Demosthenes," *GRBS* 49.1 (2010): 40.

²⁹ Ritter, *Judeans in the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire*, 140.

³⁰ John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE - 117 CE)* (University of California Press, 1996), 55.

In the letter, Claudius addresses the issues brought to him from the embassies. Towards the end, he addresses the στάσις in Alexandria. Claudius refuses to declare “which party was responsible for the riots and feud” (ταραχῆς καὶ στάσεως, line 73), though the Jewish and Greek ambassadors “contended with great zeal.” However, he issues a stern warning, saying “that unless you put a stop to this ruinous and obstinate enmity against each other, I shall be driven to show what a benevolent Prince can be when turned to righteous indignation” (lines 79–82). Claudius then commands the Alexandrians (Ἀλεξανδρεῖς) to act kindly towards the Jews “who for many years have dwelt in the same city” (τὴν αὐτὴν πόλιν... οἰκοῦσι, line 84) and to honor their religious customs (τῶν πρὸς θρησκείαν ... νενομισμένων, line 85) which were permitted since Augustus. These were the very rites that Flaccus had dissolved with his edict. Claudius turns to the Jews and commands them

not to agitate for more privileges than they formerly possessed, and not in the future to send out a separate embassy as though they lived in a separate city (a thing unprecedented), and not to force their way into gymnasiarchic or cosmetic games, while enjoying their own privileges and sharing a great abundance of advantages in a city not their own, and not to bring in or admit Jews who come down the river from Egypt or from Syria, a proceeding which will compel me to conceive serious suspicions. (lines 89–98)

Most scholars understand Claudius’s statement about agitating “for more privileges than they formerly possessed” to mean that some Jews were striving to attain citizenship.³¹

Claudius denies this request and says that they should be satisfied with the privileges they had since Augustus—namely, to practice their ancestral customs in a Jewish πολιτεύμα or

³¹ So Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 58; H. I. Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), 11; John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 120–21.

political body. He also says that they should not “force their way into gymnasiarchic or cosmetic games, while enjoying their own privileges and sharing a great abundance of advantages *in a city not their own*” (ἐν ἀλλοτρίᾳ πόλει, line 95).³² Some scholars understand the gymnasiarchic or cosmetic games as part of the ephebic training required for citizenship, and so they see this prohibition as further evidence that the Jews did not have and should not agitate for citizenship.³³ This is emphasized further by Claudius’s statement that they enjoy privileges “in a city not their own.” John Barclay says, “In that little phrase, ‘in a city not their own’, was sounded the death knell to their long and successful attempts to integrate into the social and political life of the city.”³⁴ H. I. Bell notes that if the Jews were in fact citizens, it’s unlikely that the Emperor would have written that they lived “in a city not their own” if his goal was to maintain the peace.³⁵

Philo says that Flaccus’s edict reduced the Jews to “foreigners without civic rights” (*Flacc.* 172), and this is implied not only by Claudius’s statement about living in a foreign city, but also the way he refers to the Greek embassy as οἱ Ἀλεξανδρεῖς and the Jewish embassy as οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (lines 82, 88). Bell sees this distinction as a clear indication “that in the eyes of Claudius the Jews were not Ἀλεξανδρεῖς, i.e. Alexandrian citizens.”³⁶ Even with the restoration of their ancestral rites, then, the Jews inhabited a liminal space in which they themselves claimed Alexandria as their πατρίς, and yet they

³² Emphasis added.

³³ So Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 59; Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt*, 15. Some, however, believe ephebic training and citizenship were independent, though ephebic training was a *social* expectation for citizens. Cf. Diana Delia, *Alexandrian Citizenship during the Roman Principate*, American Classical Studies 23 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991), 73; Ritter, *Judeans in the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire*, 145.

³⁴ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 60.

³⁵ Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt*, 14.

³⁶ Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt*, 14.

were seen as living in a city not their own. Their situation mirrors the situation of the non-citizen linen workers of Tarsus, who were also “viewed as outsiders” (δοκοῦντες ἄλλότριοι, Dio, *Or.* 34.22) and yet were “in some measure citizens” (τρόπον τινα πολίτας, 34.21) because they lived in Tarsus and were born there. Philo uses the same reasoning to argue why Alexandria can rightly be called the Jews’ πατρίς—despite holding Jerusalem to be their “mother city” (μετρόπολιν, *Flacc.* 46), the cities of the world where Jews dwell are their “fatherlands” (πατρίδας) because they are the places “in which they were born and reared.” Indeed, Philo elsewhere refers to the city as “our Alexandria” (ἡμετέραν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν, *Legat.* 150).³⁷

Despite the Jews’ claim to Alexandria, Claudius’s letter restored the status quo without granting Jews the right to citizenship.³⁸ What was the significance of this for the Jews’ place in Alexandria? In her study of multiple citizenship holders in the Greco-Roman world, Andreea Ștefan argues that citizenship was “the basic principle of political life” in the ancient world.³⁹ She continues, “The sense of belonging to a community and the attachment to one’s homeland, *patris* ... are called upon by *rhetores* to reinforce the social identity of the citizens as a group.”⁴⁰ In other words, as Philo writes in his *Embassy*, the Jews were “striving to show that we are Alexandrians” (*Legat.* 194).

³⁷ Cited in Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 422.

³⁸ This applies to the community as a whole. Some Jews likely had citizenship. Cf. E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 227.

³⁹ Andreea Ștefan, “The Case of Multiple Citizenship Holders in the Graeco-Roman East,” in *Citizens in the Graeco-Roman World: Aspects of Citizenship from the Archaic Period to AD 212*, ed. Lucia Cecchet and Anna Busetto (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 118, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004352612>, <https://brill.com/view/title/34928>.

⁴⁰ Ștefan, “The Case of Multiple Citizenship Holders in the Graeco-Roman East,” 119.

The Jews could again practice their ancestral customs without fear of persecution, but citizenship was off-limits, because the customs themselves were a barrier to full participation in the πόλις. The πόλις was a socio-political and religious community, and citizenship in the πόλις required enrollment in *demes*, which were connected with pagan cults.⁴¹ This is why Apion asks Josephus, “Why, then, if they are citizens, do they not worship the same gods as the Alexandrians?” (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.65).

Jews in the diaspora had several ways of adapting to their liminal situation as outsiders or “exiles.” First, because Augustus granted the Jews the right to practice their own customs, some considered themselves “dual-citizens”—in his *Embassy*, Philo writes that Jews in Rome in the time of Augustus practiced their own customs and met together in houses of prayer “yet nevertheless he neither ejected (ἐξώκισε) them from Rome nor deprived them of their Roman citizenship (τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν ... πολιτείαν) because they were careful to preserve their Jewish citizenship (τῆς Ἰουδαϊκῆς) also” (*Legat.* 157).⁴² In this section, Philo is juxtaposing Augustus with Gaius to compare the fair treatment the Jews received in Rome with the treatment the Jews received in Alexandria while Gaius was emperor. In Alexandria, the Jews *were* ejected (ἐξώκισαν, *Flacc.* 55) from their homes and deprived of their citizenship.

What does Philo mean by “Jewish citizenship?” Elsewhere in his *Embassy*, Philo says of the Jews,

Holding that the laws are oracles vouchsafed by God and having been trained in this doctrine from their earliest years, they carry the likenesses of the

⁴¹ Aryeh Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: The Struggle for Equal Rights*, Rev. English ed., *Texte Und Studien Zum Antiken Judentum* 7 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1985), 206.

⁴² Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 422.

commandments enshrined in their souls. Then as they contemplate their forms thus clearly represented they always think of them with awe. And those of other races who pay homage to them they welcome no less than their own countrymen (πολιτῶν) ... (*Legat.* 211)

These “countrymen” or “citizens” are those who revere and follow the commandments of God. Later, Gaius says to Agrippa that he and his “fellow-citizens” (πολιῖται, *Legat.* 265) are the only ones under heaven who don’t acknowledge him as a god. This “citizenship” or πολιτεία, then, is the Jewish way of life, or the practice of the ancestral ἔθη which were so problematic to the Alexandrians. Indeed, the meaning of πολιτεία can range from “citizenship” to “constitution” and “civic rights” to “way of life” depending on the context and its usage.⁴³ Aristotle defines the term in his discussion of citizenship as a “constitution”—“a constitution (πολιτεία) is the ordering of a state (πόλεως τάξις) in respect of its various magistracies, and especially the magistracy that is supreme over all matters” (*Politics* 1278b 10).

In certain cities like Alexandria, being a πολίτης of the Jewish πολιτεία also meant belonging to the Jewish πολίτευμα, an independent political body within the city with the right to practice its own customs. While the exact meaning of πολίτευμα is debated, Gert Lüderwitz says it “can stand for an institution within the political organisation of a Greek polis as well as for other groups of people – for example an organisation of aliens residing in a foreign city.”⁴⁴ His study looks at the usage of this word in literary sources and inscriptions, and he concludes that it is most analogous to a voluntary association within a πόλις. These voluntary associations or *collegia* functioned

⁴³ Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*, 359.

⁴⁴ Gert Lüderitz, “What Is the Politeuma?,” in *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy*, ed. J. W. van Henten and Pieter Willem van der Horst, AGJU 21 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 183.

as “a city ... within a city.”⁴⁵ As a *πολίτευμα*, not only could the Jews practice their own *πολιτεία* or way of life, but they also possessed their own notarial office, their own *γερουσία* or council of elders, and their own courts.⁴⁶ In other words, the Jews were able to maintain their own political existence as long as the right to practice their ancestral rights remained intact. While some Jews strived to attain citizenship, others were happy with the status quo of living within the city. Some were actively opposed to citizenship as a form of apostasy.⁴⁷

In summary, the crisis at Alexandria and its aftermath demonstrate the way some Jews in this period experienced alienation, both figuratively in their exclusion from citizenship along with the right to claim their home as their *πατρίς*, and literally through the confiscation of their property and banishment. This crisis highlights the strategies some Jews used to maintain a sense of belonging while holding to their traditions through a form of “dual citizenship” in which they claimed their city as their *πατρίς* while practicing their customs in their associations or *πολίτευμα*.

2.5 Exile in Early Christianity

The themes of exile, displacement, and banishment are present not only in Second Temple Jewish writings, but also in early Christian texts. In this section, I will highlight how some early Christian writings spoke of displacement, exile, and banishment. We will consider also how exile relates to homeland in these writings, and how the eschatological

⁴⁵ Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt*, 16.

⁴⁶ Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt*, 12.

⁴⁷ This view is reflected in texts such as *3 Maccabees*, which tells the story of Jews who remained faithful to God by refusing the offer of citizenship.

outlook of these texts provides various solutions for the problem of exile. This survey will look broadly at various early Christian texts to prepare us to read Acts within this exilic discourse.

2.5.1 First Peter

Perhaps no other book of the New Testament has spurred as much discussion on exile or homelessness as 1 Peter. At least since John Elliott's *A Home for the Homeless*, scholars have pondered the letter's opening address "to the exiles (παρεπιδήμιος) of the Dispersion (διασπορᾶς)"—does this refer to political exiles or resident aliens living in a foreign land? Is the letter addressed to the Jews of the Babylonian dispersion? Is it a metaphorical designation for Gentile Christians living in a hostile society? All these options have been explored using a variety of scholarly methods. In what follows, I will briefly summarize the scholarly debate, highlight the relevant themes of exile and displacement, and conclude by connecting the potential relevance of 1 Peter to my project.

The letter of 1 Peter begins with an address "to the exiles (παρεπιδήμιος) of the Dispersion (διασπορᾶς)" (1:1). In 1:17, the author exhorts his audience to "live out your time as foreigners (τὸν τῆς παροικίας ὑμῶν χρόνον) here in reverent fear." Again, in chapter 2, the author addresses his audience "as foreigners and exiles" (ὡς παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμιους, 2:11). The debate centers around the two terms *παροίκος* and *παρεπίδημος* and their cognates, which have been variously translated into English. Besides the already quoted NRSV, the addressees in 2:11 are "sojourners and exiles"

(ESV), “aliens and strangers” (NASB), “strangers and pilgrims” (KJV), or “aliens in a foreign land” (NEB). Elliott’s study applied social-scientific methods to identify the character of the addressees more precisely. His conclusion was that the word *πάροικος* and its cognates refer to “being or living as a resident alien in a foreign environment or away from home.”⁴⁸ While the word can imply a general sense of “social separation, cultural alienation and a certain degree of personal deprivation,”⁴⁹ in 1 Peter the term refers to their “actual political and social condition.”⁵⁰ In other words, while Elliott doesn’t deny that the word can be used in a metaphorical sense, the addressees of 1 Peter are “a combination of displaced persons who are currently *aliens permanently residing in (paroikia, paroikoi)* or *strangers temporarily visiting or passing through (parepidēmoi)* the four provinces of Asia Minor named in the salutation (1:1).”⁵¹

Most scholars have not been convinced by Elliott’s argument that the addressees of 1 Peter were *literal* resident aliens in Asia Minor. Reinhard Feldmeier offers the opposite position of Elliott, and states that we should understand the language of “resident aliens” metaphorically. He argues that the meaning of *πάροικος* is broader than Elliott assumes, and that it should not be limited to a “schichtenspezifischer Terminus” (class-specific term) in the Roman Empire.⁵²

David Horrell provides further evidence that the terms should not be understood literally. Horrell looks at the LXX background to *πάροικος* and *παρεπίδημος* and

⁴⁸ John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1981), 35.

⁴⁹ Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 25.

⁵⁰ Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 35.

⁵¹ Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 48. Emphasis original.

⁵² Reinhard Feldmeier, *Die Christen als Fremde: Die Metapher der Fremde in der Antiken Welt, Im Urchristentum und im 1. Petrusbrief*, WUNT 64 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992), 207.

suggests that the pairing of the terms in 1 Pet 2:11 forms a *hendiadys* “which implies that the author is using the terms to convey something about the character of their experience rather than their literal socio-political status (in which case someone would be either a πάροικος or a παρεπίδημος).”⁵³ In the LXX, as Horrell shows, both terms are used to describe Abraham in Gen 23:4, who says, “Πάροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος ἐγὼ εἶμι μεθ’ ὑμῶν.”⁵⁴ Horrell argues that the use of these terms in 1 Peter reflects “their use in Jewish tradition to express the alienation and estrangement of God’s people from the world.”⁵⁵ While Horrell doesn’t believe the terms denote socio-political designations, he agrees with Elliott that they “depict a sense of social alienation, or estrangement from the world due to the hostility of the wider society.”⁵⁶ Unlike Elliott, who says, “1 Peter is a letter addressed to resident aliens and visiting strangers who, *since* their conversion to Christianity, still find themselves estranged from any place of belonging,”⁵⁷ Horrell argues that it is precisely *because* of their conversion to Christianity that the addressees are now experiencing social alienation.⁵⁸ Likewise, Feldmeier argues that the Christians’ alienation has more to do “mit der Besonderheit des christlichen Glaubens und seinen spezifischen Existenz- und Erscheinungsformen” than Elliott admits.⁵⁹

⁵³ David G. Horrell, “Aliens and Strangers? The Socio-Economic Location of the Addressees of 1 Peter,” in *Becoming Christian: Essays on 1 Peter and the Making of Christian Identity*, LNTS 394 (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 117.

⁵⁴ Cited in Horrell, “Aliens and Strangers?,” 117.

⁵⁵ Horrell, “Aliens and Strangers?,” 118.

⁵⁶ Horrell, “Aliens and Strangers?,” 118.

⁵⁷ Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 49. Emphasis added.

⁵⁸ David G. Horrell, “Between Conformity and Resistance: Beyond the Balch-Elliott Debate towards a Postcolonial Reading of 1 Peter,” in *Becoming Christian: Essays on 1 Peter and the Making of Christian Identity*, LNTS 394 (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 226.

⁵⁹ Feldmeier, *Die Christen als Fremde*, 207.

In addition to the terms just mentioned, the addressees are called “exiles of the *Dispersion* (διασποράς)” (1:1), and the letter closes by mentioning that the author is writing from “Babylon” (5:13), most likely a reference to Rome. Horrell notes how the opening and closing invoke the narrative of Israel’s exile by Babylon, and the rest of the letter spells out “the positive counterpart to the depiction of the addressees as strangers and aliens under Babylon’s rule” by pointing the readers to the salvation of God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ (1:2).⁶⁰ The author promises those living under “Babylon’s” rule an imperishable inheritance waiting for them in heaven (1:4).

While the addressees are promised a heavenly inheritance, the focus of the letter is not that their home is in heaven (as some early Christians argued, as well as Plutarch), but that their home is the new community which is the οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ (4:17), or the οἶκος πνευματικός (2:5) built by God. Elliott argues that “the response of 1 Peter cannot be seen as a consolation designed to remind ‘pilgrims here on earth’ of their ‘home in heaven.’”⁶¹ Rather, the community of πάροικοι becomes a new οἶκος which extends hospitality to one another (4:9) as a new brother/sisterhood (ἀδελφότης, 2:17; 5:9) which now invokes God as father (1:17). While I agree with most scholars that πάροικος is not a literal socio-political designation for the addressees (as Elliott supposes), but rather a metaphorical description of their alienation from society, its use in the letter nevertheless invites reflection on where the addressees can find their home. In Greco-Roman literature, family, friends, and kin are consistently invoked as some of the main goods

⁶⁰ Horrell, “Between Conformity and Resistance: Beyond the Balch-Elliott Debate towards a Postcolonial Reading of 1 Peter,” 227.

⁶¹ Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 225.

lost in exile. Elliott notes that the word οἶκος refers to “my house and home with all its personnel and property, my family and lineage, my ‘given identity,’ the place where I belong and exercise my personal and communal rights and responsibilities.”⁶² 1 Peter’s solution to the problem of social alienation or displacement is not to find one’s sense of belonging in a heavenly home, but rather to view the new community as one’s οἶκος.

It’s worth noting, however, that while these themes in 1 Peter resonate with some of the themes explored earlier regarding displacement, belonging, and home, they are not the same as “exile” properly speaking. While many English Bibles (such as the NRSV quoted above) translate the word πάροικος as “exile,” exile as banishment or flight for a crime is not in view in 1 Peter. Elliott notes this in his study, and it’s worth quoting his comments in full:

None of these terms employed by 1 Peter (*diaspora*, *paroikia*, *paroikoi*, *parepidēmoi*) specifically means “exiles” or “exiled persons.” Nor does the conventional Greek term *phygē* (cf. also *phygas* and the Latin equivalents *exsilium* and *deportatio*, *relegatio*) ever occur in 1 Peter. The addressees cannot be considered “exiles” in the conventional and then contemporary sense of that word. Aside from rarer instances of voluntary self-removal, exile or banishment “was a compulsory departure from the country if given as a punishment. Voluntary exile was tolerated in the case of a person sentenced to death in a criminal act, but in such cases there followed an administrative decree which outlawed the fugitive” and “deprived him of Roman citizenship (*captis deminutio media*) and his property.”⁶³ Exile was a habitual tool of the Roman emperors for ridding the city of Rome, the senate, or simply the air, of troublemakers, undesirables, contenders for power, and overzealous critics. There is no indication in 1 Peter that its addressees were exiles in this sense or the victims of such political or legal actions. To be sure, *diaspora* and *Babylōn*, when applied to a Christian situation, imply that the Christians view their condition as analogous to that of Israel of old. But the limitations of that analogy are obscured when the word *exile* or *exiles* is used as though it were clearly employed in the original text

⁶² Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 24.

⁶³ Adolf Berger, “Exilium (Exsilium),” *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law* 43:463.

of 1 Peter. Exiled persons might have been living as *paroikoi* and *parepidēmoi* in foreign territories, but not all strangers and resident aliens were exiles.⁶⁴

While both Israel’s exile and Roman banishment speak to displacement of *some kind*, an exile is a victim of “political or legal actions,” and a haphazard use of the word “exile” for all forms of displacement can obscure the distinctions between each word. A πάροικος, for example, is a resident alien, and 1 Peter’s use of this word (and not, say, φυγάς) connects the letter’s themes more directly to scenes in the Old Testament, such as where Abraham is called a πάροικος (Gen 23:4), as well as the idea of the church as an οἶκος πνευματικός (1 Pet 2:5). In 1 Peter, the addressees, and therefore the church as a whole, are πάροικοι, not because they are seen as threats to a city’s welfare, but because their practices and beliefs are “surprising” (ξενίζονται, 4:4)—the solution to their displacement is to recognize their new identity as the οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ and welcome one another as the family of God.

2.5.2 Hebrews

Apart from 1 Peter, the one other book in the NT that deals most prominently with themes of displacement and social alienation is Hebrews. Like 1 Peter, the book of Hebrews depicts its addressees as those who are alienated or marginalized by society. In chapter 10, the author speaks of the sufferings faced by the community, such as public exposure to abuse and persecution (ὄνειδισμοῖς τε καὶ θλίψεσιν θεατριζόμενοι, 10:33) and the plundering of their possessions (τὴν ἀρπαγὴν τῶν ὑπαρχόντων ὑμῶν, 10:34). He

⁶⁴ Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 46–47.

describes the community as “we who have taken refuge” (οἱ καταφυγόντες, 6:18), using the verb καταφυγεῖν, which is commonly used for refugees or fugitives. James Thompson argues that the identification of the readers as “fugitives” places Hebrews within the tradition of philosophical texts that spoke about exile from heaven. He writes, “The description of the readers as fugitives (καταφυγόντες, 6:19) is reminiscent of a common theme in the philosophical literature. Several philosophers and other writers, including Plutarch of Chaeronea and Philo of Alexandria, wrote books or speeches with the title Περὶ φυγῆς.”⁶⁵ Like these other writers, the author of Hebrews uses the imagery of flight and homelessness to compare the readers’ “transient life on earth” with their “transcendent homeland,”⁶⁶ a common idea in Middle Platonism.

However, while there are certainly themes and images in Hebrews that resonate with the language of Middle Platonism, the depiction of this community as a “wandering people” looking for a home and the solutions provided by the author are thoroughly embedded in Hebrews’ use of scripture and its Jewish context. Beginning in Heb 11:8, the author describes the faith which Abraham displayed by setting out for an unfamiliar land. The author says, “By faith he stayed (παρώκησεν) for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land (ὡς ἀλλοτρίαν), living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise” (11:9). The author’s use of the verb παροικεῖν alludes to Gen 17:8 in the LXX, where God makes a covenant with Abraham and promises him the land “in which you sojourn” (ἣν παροικεῖς), and Gen 23:4, where

⁶⁵ James W. Thompson, *Strangers on the Earth: Philosophy and Rhetoric in Hebrews* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 124.

⁶⁶ Thompson, *Strangers on the Earth*, 127.

Abraham describes himself as “a sojourner and a stranger” (Πάροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος) among the Hittites. As we saw above with regard to πάροικος in 1 Peter, παροικεῖν in Heb 11:9 points to the alienation faced by Abraham living in a foreign land. This “alien” topos is then broadened to include Isaac and Jacob, which implies that this alien identity crosses generations to include Isaac, Jacob, and all of Abraham’s descendants, including the readers.⁶⁷ Abraham is described as one who “looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (11:10), and the readers likewise are “looking for the city that is to come” (13:14). Abraham and his descendants “died in faith without having received the promises” though “they confessed (ὁμολογήσαντες) that they were strangers (ξένοι) and foreigners (παρεπίδημοι) on the earth” (11:13). The terms ξένοι and παρεπίδημοι “have a powerful outsider valence, one that the text invokes not just to tell a story but to point to a communal identity of marginality that its readers are meant to appropriate.”⁶⁸ This “confession” of their marginal identity connects with the community’s own “confession” (4:14; 10:23), further strengthening the link between these biblical characters and the readers.

One difference between 1 Peter and Hebrews is how the alien topos in Hebrews presents a more explicit dualism between heaven and earth. In Heb 11:13, the saints of the Old Testament were strangers and foreigners “on the earth” who desired “a better country, that is, a heavenly one” (κρείττονος ὀρέγονται, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν ἐπουρανίου, 11:16). The community likewise is waiting for a “heavenly Jerusalem” (13:22) as their home,

⁶⁷ Benjamin H. Dunning, *Aliens and Sojourners: Self as Other in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 50.

⁶⁸ Dunning, *Aliens and Sojourners: Self as Other in Early Christianity*, 52.

which is similar to some philosophical tropes that saw the soul's residence in the body as a temporary sojourn away from its heavenly home.⁶⁹ One key difference, however, is that within the eschatology of Hebrews the community is moving *towards* this heavenly city, even as the city is *coming* to them. Like the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, the community is exhorted to “make every effort to enter that rest” (4:11) while they are “looking for the city *that is to come*” (τὴν μέλλουσαν, 13:14). The land promise given to Abraham is broadened to encompass an eschatological homeland (πατρίς, 11:14).

The book of Hebrews offers various exhortations to its community of “refugees” (οἱ καταφυγόντες, 6:18) which address their state of homelessness. As mentioned above, the readers are exhorted to see themselves as part of a line of Old Testament saints who all lived by “faith” as they looked forward to the promise of an eschatological homeland. Their identity as πάροικοι in the present not only connects them to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but also to the Israelites who wandered in the wilderness. By incorporating the readers into the scriptural story of God's wandering people who lived by faith, the author encourages his readers to see their identity as part of their *calling*. Just as Israel was called to be holy and set apart from the surrounding nations, the author suggests “that marginalization is not the community's misfortune but its *calling*. The community's pilgrimage toward the heavenly κατάπαυσις is analogous to the patriarch's desire for the heavenly πόλις (11:10, 16) and πατρίς (11:14).”⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Dunning, *Aliens and Sojourners: Self as Other in Early Christianity*, 51.

⁷⁰ Thompson, *Strangers on the Earth*, 176–77.

The author further grounds this calling in the community's connection to Christ. According to Thompson, the ecclesiology of Hebrews is inseparable from its Christology.

Thompson writes,

Because Christ is seated at the right hand of God, the church may enter the heavenly *κατάπαυσις* (4:3–11). As refugees, they may grasp the hope that has been made available as an anchor of the soul (6:18), the new hope that has been made available by the exaltation. The entrance of Christ into the heavenly sanctuary opens the way for believers to “receive the promise” (9:15) that their ancestors never received. The church is thus a community of hope.⁷¹

Likewise, the author states that Jesus was one who suffered “outside the city gate” (13:12), which brings into focus Jesus’ own marginalized status. The final exhortation of the letter includes a call to “go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured” (13:13). This exhortation is grounded in the fact that “here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come” (13:14). Like the patriarchs before them who went out from their homelands into a foreign land, and Jesus who suffered outside the city gate but is now “seated at the right hand of God,” the church is called to accept its alienation from society as part of its calling while it awaits its entrance into its heavenly homeland.

2.5.3 *Shepherd of Hermas*

The *Shepherd of Hermas* is often regarded as an early Christian apocalypse written from Rome in the early to mid-second century.⁷² While outside of the biblical

⁷¹ Thompson, *Strangers on the Earth*, 173–74.

⁷² There are debates concerning the exact genre of *Hermas*, especially because of its seemingly composite nature. These discussions are tangential to my purpose here. For a summary of the genre debates, as well as a summary

canon, it was a popular text among early Christians and was frequently cited by early Christians such as Clement of Alexandria. In *Similitude* 1, the author presents a parable of two cities as part of a parenthesis on wealth and possessions. Carolyn Osiek says concerning this parable, “[This] is the author’s clearest articulation of his view of the Christian’s place in society.”⁷³ In this parable we find the same topos of alienation and exile that we’ve observed in the texts above.

The parable begins with an address that highlights this theme:

“You know that you slaves of God are living in a foreign land. For your own city is a long way from this one. If, then,” he said, “you know your own city, where you are about to live, why are you preparing fields, expensive furnishings, buildings, and pointless rooms for yourselves here?” (*Similitude* 1.1)⁷⁴

The parable begins with the fact that the readers know they are “living in a foreign land” (ἐπὶ ξένης κατοικεῖτε), because they have their own city in which they are “about to live.” Unlike Hebrews or 1 Peter, *Hermas* applies the “foreign” identity to the country where they live, and not to the people themselves. Similarly, *Hermas* doesn’t make their identity as foreigners a point of emphasis; instead, this parable assumes the Christians already know they are living in a foreign place to exhort them not to amass wealth which they can’t take with them to their own city.

Furthermore, in *Similitude* 1.2, the author argues that the one who “prepares these things in this city (ταύτην τὴν πόλιν), therefore, cannot return to his own city (τὴν ἰδίαν

of *Hermas*’s literary and historical character, see Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 1–28.

⁷³ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 158.

⁷⁴ The Greek text and English translation are from the LCL unless otherwise noted.

πόλιν).” There is a sense here and in 1.1 (“where you are *about to* live”) that their own city is understood eschatologically, though this idea isn’t developed in the rest of the parable. This future sense is connected to what will happen to them in “this city” where they currently reside. In 1.3, the author asks, “Do you not understand that all these things [fields, expensive furnishings, buildings, etc.] belong to another and are under someone else’s control? For the ruler of this city will say, ‘I do not want you living in my city; leave it (ἔξελαθε ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ταύτης), because you are not living by my laws.’” At some point in the future, the ruler of this city, whether the emperor or someone else, will expel the Christians, who will then have to choose between this city and their own city.⁷⁵ They will be expelled because they are not living by the laws of this city; when they leave, they will have to choose between their possessions or living in accordance with their own laws, the laws of their own city (1.5). The text later says, “For if you want to return to your own city, you will not be welcomed, because you have renounced its law; and you will be shut out of it” (1.5). While there remains some ambiguity as to the eschatology of “our own city,” it seems that this future city is, at least in the present time, the church which will welcome the banished believers if they follow the laws of their community. Osiek writes, “The emphasis of the argument is not on the evil of this city but on the contingency of Christians’ existence in it and the greater allegiance they owe to the other city which is their own—the eschatological one, represented now by the church.”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 158, says that whether the ruler (ὁ κύριος) is the Roman emperor or the devil “depends on whether a political critique is meant, which seems unlikely.”

⁷⁶ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 158.

The language used here is the language of exile and banishment. In 1.6, the author says, “And be ready, so that when the master of this city wants to banish you (ἐκβαλεῖν σε) for not adhering to his law, you can leave his city and go to your own, and live according to your own law gladly, suffering no mistreatment.” While *Hermas* doesn’t employ the language of πάροικος as do Hebrews and 1 Peter, the presence of ἐκβαλεῖν and the topos of being forced to leave one city for another resonates with the language of exile and banishment.

The parenthesis of the text, which focuses on building wealth in their own city, and not the foreign city where they currently live, also highlights that their true home or place of origin lies elsewhere. Instead of amassing wealth in this city, the author writes, “It is much better to purchase the fields, goods, and houses you find in your own city when you return to it” (1.9). This kind of wealth involves “purchasing” afflicted souls, caring for widows and orphans (1.8), and doing other “works of God” (1.7). This is similar to Jesus’ teaching in the gospels, where he says,

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matt 6:19–20)

Hermas does not explicitly name heaven as the place where their city lies, but the sense of “return” to their own city in the future points to a true home that is waiting for them once they depart “this city.” Osiek writes, “The story line about the hearers’ true citizenship requires that their city be their place of origin, to which they will someday wish to return. This is not to be allegorized into a Gnostic theology of heavenly origins,

but is rather an acknowledgment of the true home of Christians.”⁷⁷ Like the other texts we’ve seen thus far, Christians are understood as marginalized from society because of their customs (or “laws” in this passage). In *Hermas*, they are literally expelled from the city because they do not follow its laws, and this dichotomy between the city where they dwell now and the city to which they will return forms the basis for the parable’s teaching on wealth and possessions.

2.6 Conclusion

In the previous chapter, we saw how some Greek and Roman philosophers reflected on their own identities as exiles without a homeland. In this chapter, the same sorts of questions arose out of situations of homelessness, exile, and alienation, though the questions mostly concerned groups or communities and not individuals. The answers given by philosophers such as Philo point to the strategies used by authors to conceive of and actively shape community identity when what constitutes a community (i.e., family, home, customs) is lost through exile. For Jews in Alexandria, this meant holding to an alternative form of citizenship through practicing their ancestral customs. For the readers of Hebrews, this meant seeing their alienation as part of their calling in line with the Old Testament patriarchs. For the audience of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, this meant finding their true citizenship in the city of God as they forsake the wealth of “this city” in which they live. As we turn to the book of Acts, what we will find is that the narrative itself

⁷⁷ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 159.

poses the question of exile and displacement, and we will have to attend to the character of Acts as a narrative to see how the text solves the problem of exile.

3. The Church in Exile in Acts

In the 4th century CE, the bishop Athanasius was forced into exile multiple times from Alexandria.¹ While taking refuge in the desert, he sought to defend himself (and others who were banished) from the charge of cowardice by appealing to biblical characters who fled from danger. In his *Defense of his Flight*, he compares his own flight with Jacob fleeing from Esau, Moses fleeing into Midian from Pharaoh, and David fleeing from Saul. If his audience is unfamiliar with these figures, he says, then surely they are familiar with how “Paul, when he was sought after by the governor at Damascus, was let down from the wall in a basket, and so escaped his hands” (Athanasius, *Defense of his Flight* 11, *NPNF* 2/4:259). He alludes to the same event in his *Defense before Constantius*, where he writes, “I refused not, either to depart into the desert, or, if need were, to be let down from a wall in a basket” (*Defense before Constantius*, *NPNF* 2/4:252). Like other Christians exiled in the 4th and earlier centuries, Athanasius looked to figures like Paul as exemplars who fled into exile. This example points to a broader phenomenon in the narrative of Acts which involves not only Paul, but also his companions and others in the early Christian community who are banished or forced to flee from their cities. Indeed, in a study of the theme of migration and flight in Acts, Werner Kahl writes,

Die Formierung und Ausbreitung des Frühchristentums im ersten Jahrhundert ist unlöslich und wesentlich mit Erfahrungen von Flucht und Migration verknüpft. Dieser Sachverhalt wird in den Schriften des Neuen Testaments nirgends so stark reflektiert und narrativ entfaltet wie in der Apostelgeschichte des Lukas, auch

¹ The exact reasons for his many flights are disputed, because of the discrepancies in modern and ancient accounts. For a summary of the challenges of reconstructing his exile, see Jennifer Barry, *Bishops in Flight: Exile and Displacement in Late Antiquity* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019), 2–5.

wenn er sich mehr oder weniger deutlich auch sonst wo im Neuen Testament greifen lässt.²

Kahl also notes that “eine Re-Lektüre der Apostelgeschichte unter der Perspektive von Migration und Flucht stellt sich als so angemessen wie angeraten dar, zumal sie in der westlichen Exegese bislang recht unterbelichtet geblieben ist.”³

In this chapter, I will show how the author of Acts portrays the church as a community of political exiles who are banished or forced to flee from danger. Whereas texts such as Hebrews or 1 Peter plainly state that their readers are aliens or refugees, the book of Acts lends itself to a different reading strategy. Because Acts is a narrative, its description of the church or its ecclesiology becomes clear only through a close reading of the whole story. The author never directly refers to the community as “exiles” (φυγάδες) or “resident aliens” (πάροικοι);⁴ instead, as I will demonstrate below, at key points in the narrative the author describes how the followers of the Way are either forced to flee or are legally banished from their cities. By considering the narrative context of these scenes of flight and banishment, including the reasons given for their exile, I will show how the author depicts these characters as political exiles who are seen as threats to the welfare of a city.

² Werner Kahl, “Migrationserfahrungen als *conditio sine qua non* für die transkulturelle Ausbreitung des Frühchristentums: eine Re-Lektüre der Apostelgeschichte,” *Interkulturelle Theologie* 41 (2015): 185.

³ Kahl, “Migrationserfahrungen,” 185. While this is generally true of studies on Acts, recent work on the missiology of Acts has begun to explore this theme. Cf. Meiken Antje Buchholz, “Considerations about the Theological Meaning of Migration in the Book of Acts,” *European Journal of Theology* 30.1 (2021): 87–117; Christopher M. Hays, “What is the Place of My Rest? Being Migrant People(s) of the God of All the Earth,” *Open Theology* 7.1 (2021): 150–68; Albert L. A. Hogeterp, “Reading Stephen’s Speech as a Counter-Cultural Discourse on Migration and Dislocation,” *Open Theology* 7.1 (2021): 289–316; Christoph Stenschke, “Migration and Mission. According to the Book of Acts,” *Missionalia* 44.2 (2016): 129–51.

⁴ However, Stephen describes the descendants of Abraham as *πάροικοι* who live in a foreign land, a reference to the Israelites in Egypt (Acts 7:6), and he uses the verb *φεύγω* to narrate Moses’s flight from Egypt (7:29). In an *indirect* way, as I will show below, these words describe the church.

This chapter will proceed as follows: first, I will consider the place of migration and flight in Stephen's speech and its relationship to the rest of Acts. Then, I will analyze each passage of Acts in which exile, whether as flight or banishment, takes place. Finally, I will offer a brief synthesis of our exegesis of these texts by considering what they say about the church's identity. The summary will be brief, because a full-orbed description of Luke's ecclesiology will have to wait until we've considered not only the problem of exile as depicted in Acts, but also the solution provided by the narrative.

3.1 Stephen's Speech in Acts 7:1–53

Acts 7 marks a turning point in the story of the church's beginnings. Until this point, most of the church's growth has happened in Judea, around Jerusalem, but Acts 7 is the juncture at which the rest of Jesus' commission—that the apostles would be his witnesses in Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)—begins to take shape. In this chapter, Stephen offers his defense before the Sanhedrin regarding the charges that he speaks against the temple and the law of Moses (6:13). His defense, which some argue does not actually address the charges, consists of a re-telling of Israel's history from Abraham to the Babylonian exile.⁵ As the longest speech in Acts, Stephen's defense has generated a mountain of secondary literature which addresses text-critical, literary, theological, and historical issues. Particularly prominent in these discussions is how Stephen's speech does (or does not) indicate a break between the early church and

⁵ The exile to Babylon is mentioned in Acts 7:42–43, where Stephen quotes from Amos 5:25–27 LXX. In the Septuagint text, the prophet says that God will remove (μετοικῶ) the people beyond Damascus, but Luke changes this to “beyond Babylon” (ἐπέκεινα Βαβυλῶνος).

Judaism. While these questions are worthy of study in their own right, my focus here is on how Stephen's speech depicts the people of God as a wandering people who have been persecuted throughout Israel's history. Within this history of persecution, God was always with his people, even when (or especially when) they were outside the Promised Land. This of course sets the stage for the persecution of chapter 8, and the dispersion of the believers away from Judea.

Stephen begins his speech with the story of Abraham, whom God commands to “leave (ἔξελθε) your country and your relatives and go to the land I will show you” (Acts 7:3 / Gen 12:1 LXX). As we saw in chapter 2, Philo refers to this passage in *Abr.* 62 when discussing how it is part of human nature to desire one's family and country. Abraham, however, overcomes his natural desire and embarks on a migration which “was one of soul rather than body, for the heavenly love overpowered his desire for mortal things” (*Abr.* 66). Hebrews 11:8 also alludes to this passage when the author writes that Abraham was called “to set out” (ἐξελθεῖν) for the place of his inheritance. According to Richard Pervo, “Abraham's call (v. 3) presages that of Jesus' disciples, who also left family and surroundings for an itinerant life. Neither God nor the people of God have a permanent residence.”⁶ According to Stephen, God eventually “had him move” (μετόκισεν αὐτόν) to the Promised Land, though he did not give it to him as a heritage or inheritance, “not even a foot's length” (7:5). This phrase—οὐδὲ βῆμα ποδός—is taken

⁶ Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia, ed. Harold W. Attridge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 180. Pervo notes how the similarity between the depiction of Abraham in Stephen's speech and the theme of the wandering people of God in Hebrews is “obvious.”

from Deut 2:5 LXX, which does not deal with Abraham at all.⁷ Luke’s reworking of Abraham’s narrative serves “to accentuate the patriarchs as strangers in a foreign land”⁸ who have no permanent residence.

After Abraham moves to the Promised Land, Stephen notes how “God spoke in these terms, that his descendants (σπέρμα) would be resident aliens (πάροικον) in a country belonging to others (ἐν γῆ ἀλλοτρίᾳ), who would enslave them and mistreat them during four hundred years” (Acts 7:6). This is a quotation from Gen 15:13 LXX, which is also alluded to in Heb 11:9, where the author writes that Abraham “stayed for a time (παρώκησεν) in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land (ὡς ἀλλοτρίαν).” As I noted in chapter 3, by including Isaac and Jacob here with Abraham as “heirs with him of the same promise” (Heb 11:9), the author portrays the entire community of OT patriarchs (and by extension, his audience) as πάροικοι who lived by faith. Stephen does something similar here as he continues the story of the people of God, who are πάροικοι in a foreign land (ἐν γῆ ἀλλοτρίᾳ), by focusing on Joseph’s and Moses’s experiences of displacement.

Stephen’s summary of Joseph’s story immediately begins with Joseph’s displacement in Egypt. Because of his brothers’ jealousy, he is sold into Egypt and spends the rest of his life there. In contrast, Joseph’s life in the Promised Land, including the favor he receives from Jacob, is not covered at all; instead, the re-telling of his story concentrates on how “God was with him” (7:9) during his time in a foreign land.⁹ Egypt

⁷ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, vol. 28A of *AB* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1985), 371.

⁸ Hogeterp, “Reading Stephen’s Speech as a Counter-Cultural Discourse on Migration and Dislocation,” 298.

⁹ Carl R. Holladay, *Acts: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 192, underlines the significance of the geography of Stephen’s speech; most of the action in Stephen’s speech takes place

is the place where “our fathers” (οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν, 7:12) find relief from a famine, and the place where Joseph and his family live until their death (7:15–16). Little mention is made of their time in the Promised Land, and instead the focus is on Egypt as the place of refuge from disaster.¹⁰

The next section, which is the longest, focuses on Moses. Like Joseph’s brothers who sold him into slavery in Egypt, away from the Promised Land, Moses’s brothers force Moses to “flee” (ἔφυγεν) and become a resident alien (πάροικος) in the land of Midian (7:29). This is a change from the LXX account of the story, in which Moses only “withdrew” (ἀνεχώρησεν, Exod 2:15 LXX) from Pharaoh.¹¹ Luke’s use of φεύγω here instead of ἀναχωρέω depicts Moses as an exile forced to flee from the threat of death. The significance of this re-telling comes into focus when we consider Philo’s reading of the same passage. Philo allegorically interprets Pharaoh as the leader of the passions and Midian as a place for him to consider whether he will return to wage war against the passions. Philo’s reading depends on a key difference between φεύγω and ἀναχωρέω. Philo says, “This is why Moses does not fly (οὐ φεύγει) from Pharaoh, for that would have been to run away and not return, but ... withdraws (ἀλλ’ ἀναχωρεῖ)” (*All. Leg.* 3.14). In Luke’s reading, Moses *does* flee from Pharaoh, and this interpretation contributes to his depiction of his community as exiles.

outside the Promised Land, in the diaspora. This prefigures the Christian story, in which the story begins in Jerusalem and Judea, but expands throughout the world.

¹⁰ Buchholz, “Considerations about the Theological Meaning of Migration in the Book of Acts,” 102.

¹¹ Pervo, *Acts*, 186 n116, thinks the D-Text, which has οὕτως καὶ Μωϋσῆς ἐφυγάδευσεν might be more original. In either case, the text of Exod 2:15 LXX is changed to emphasize Moses’s “flight.”

Craig Keener connects the use of φεύγω here to Luke’s use of καταφεύγω for the apostles’ flight from persecution in Acts 14:6.¹² In a sense, this becomes a narrative fulfilment of the promise given to Abraham by God, recounted earlier in Acts 7:6, where God promises that Abraham’s offspring will be πάροικοι in a foreign land where they would be enslaved. The irony here is that Moses becomes a πάροικος *away* from Egypt, where he was born, raised, and educated “in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (7:21–22). This narrative fulfilment relativizes the significance of the “land” referenced in the promise to Abraham; the focus becomes his offspring’s identity as πάροικοι, and not the location of the land where this would be true. The ensuing narrative, in which Stephen is forced out of Jerusalem and martyred and the believers are dispersed, becomes another fulfilment of this promise to Abraham, such that Luke depicts the members of the Way as a community of exiles like Moses and the patriarchs. The significance of this theme is further highlighted by the repeated use of οικ- words throughout Stephen’s speech.¹³

Words made up from the οικ- stem appear 16 times in Stephen’s speech, and act as a *leitmotif* which underscores the contrast between being a πάροικος who lives in a foreign land and a κάτοικος or one who resides (κατοικεῖν) in a particular place.¹⁴ Most of the uses are concentrated in the first part of Stephen’s speech, which focuses on Abraham. God appeared to Abraham before he lived (κατοικῆσαι) in Haran (7:2). In 7:4, Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and lived (κατόκησεν) in Haran. This stay was temporary, however, since God “moved him” (μετόκισεν) into the land where Stephen’s

¹² Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 2:1395.

¹³ vv. 2, 4 (3x), 6, 10, 20, 29, 42, 43, 46, 47 (2x), 48, 49 (twice) (textual dispute about v. 46).

¹⁴ Pervo, *Acts*, 180 n61, who calls attention to this *leitmotif* but does not expand on its significance.

audience (ὕμεῖς) now resides (κατοικεῖτε).¹⁵ The fact that God gave not even a foot's length of the land to Abraham underscores how, though he was "moved there" (μετόκησεν) by God, he did not reside there as Stephen's audience now does.¹⁶ Stephen also distances himself from his audience here, not only by using the second person pronoun ὑμεῖς, but by quoting from Gen 15:13 where God promises Abraham that his offspring would be πάροικοι. Just as Abraham was a πάροικος, so will his offspring be, unlike Stephen's audience who are κάτοικοι.¹⁷

In Acts 7:10, Stephen recounts how God rescued Joseph and made him ruler over Egypt and over all Pharaoh's household (οἶκον αὐτοῦ). Though Joseph gained favor and wisdom (χάριν καὶ σοφίαν), it was in a foreign house, or a house that belonged to another. Likewise, in Stephen's re-telling of the Moses story, Moses was brought up for three months in his father's house (ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τοῦ πατρὸς) before he was exposed and brought up by Pharaoh's daughter who adopted him. In the Septuagint, no mention is made of his father's house, though Exod 2:2 LXX says that his parents "hid him three months" (ἐσκέπασαν αὐτὸ μῆνας τρεῖς). Luke mentions his father's οἶκος to build on the *leitmotif* already established, and the contrast here is between the relatively short time (three months) spent in his own home compared with the rest of his childhood spent in Pharaoh's household, where Moses, like Joseph, gained the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). Indeed, Luke does not mention how it was actually Moses's own mother

¹⁵ The D-text includes καὶ οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν after κατοικεῖτε, which stresses how only the ancestors of Stephen's audience (ὕμῶν) resided here, while Stephen and his ancestors did not.

¹⁶ This is also consonant with Heb 11:9, which says that Abraham παρόκησεν in the Promised Land, unlike Stephen's audience which now dwells there (κατοικεῖτε).

¹⁷ Though the word κάτοικος (inhabitant, resident) is not used in the NT, it is used in the LXX for the residents of a land (e.g., οἱ κάτοικοι τῆς γῆς Χανάαν, Gen 50:11).

who raised him in the Exodus account, which further highlights Moses’s life in a foreign household.

Later, Moses is forced to flee and becomes a *πάροικος* in Midian, though his formative years were already spent in some sense as a *πάροικος* in Pharaoh’s house, and not in the *οἶκος* of his father. While Acts 7:29 says that Moses became a *πάροικος* in Midian, Exod 2:15 LXX says that Moses “settled” (*ἔκησεν*) in Midian, which implies a more permanent residence. Some manuscripts, including Codex Alexandrinus, use *κατόκησεν*, which is more starkly contrasted with *πάροικος*.¹⁸ Luke’s use of *πάροικος* emphasizes Moses’ alien status and connects him to the promise given to Abraham.

Luke builds on this *leitmotif* at the end of Stephen’s speech where *οἰκ-* words are used for the building of the temple. David found favor before God and asked to find a *σκήνωμα* or dwelling place for the “house of Jacob” (*τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰακώβ*, 7:46). There is a textual difficulty here, since some manuscripts have “God of Jacob” (*θεῷ Ἰακώβ*), which makes more sense as an antecedent for *αὐτῷ* in the next verse. However, “*οἴκῳ*” has stronger external support and is the more difficult reading. Several explanations have been proposed for the use of *οἶκος* here. Because the temple was the place where God’s people could come and be with God, it was deemed a dwelling place for the house of Jacob.¹⁹ If this is the correct reading, then in verse 47, Stephen says that “it was Solomon who built a house for [it] (*οἰκοδόμησεν αὐτῷ οἶκον*),” meaning a house for *Jacob*, and not God. The contrast with the following verse is more easily explained with this

¹⁸ The reading *κατόκησεν* is also what we find in Philo’s allegorical interpretation of this verse in *Leg. All.* 3.12. The reading *ἔκησεν* in Rahlfs’ edition of the Septuagint follows Codex Vaticanus.

¹⁹ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 272, who cites Ps 23:6; 24:6; 27:4; 52:8 where the psalmist speaks of dwelling in the house of the Lord.

translation. Stephen says, “ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὁ ὑψιστος ἐν χειροποιήτοις κατοικεῖ,” which many take to be a stark rejection of the temple *in toto*. By fronting the adversatives ἀλλ’ οὐχ immediately before ὁ ὑψιστος, we can understand this verse to mean “So it is not the Most High who dwells in [houses] made with hands, [but Jacob].”²⁰ This explains why Stephen would suddenly turn to polemic when speaking of the temple as χειροποίητος, even though he says in verse 46 that David “found favor with God” when he asked to build this σκῆνωμα. The problem is believing that the temple is where God himself dwells (κατοικεῖ); it is a place built for the house of Jacob to come and worship God, as we see earlier in Acts 2:46 and 3:1. Stephen indeed relativizes the significance of the temple with the use of χειροποίητος,²¹ but given the negative connotation of κατοικεῖν already established through the *leitmotif*, the emphasis falls on denying that God resides there, and not on the temple itself as a problem. Indeed, God’s people are πάροικοι, according to Stephen, and his persecutors are the ones who “reside” (κατοικεῖτε, 7:4) in Jerusalem, not God, who says, “What kind of house (ποῖον οἶκον) will you build (οικοδομήσετε) for me?” (7:49, citing Isa 66:1). Solomon already built a house for “αὐτῷ” in 7:47, but the referent in 7:47 should be Jacob, and not God.²² The οικ-*leitmotif* thus leads to the conclusion that just as God does not dwell (κατοικεῖν)

²⁰ Regarding this verse, Culy says, “The placement of the negativizer [οὐχ] here, rather than preceding the verb, focuses attention on ὁ ὑψιστος” (Martin M. Culy, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Josiah D. Hall, *Acts 1–14: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 of *BHGNT* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2022), 189.). My translation reflects this focus on “the Most High.” In contrast, the reading ὁ δὲ ὑψιστος οὐ κατοικεῖ (D(sy^p)) focuses attention on negating the verb.

²¹ C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 373, says that in the LXX this word has “a uniformly bad sense and is connected with idolatry,” citing Isa 2:8 and Ps 115:4

²² This solves the inconsistency between what appears at first to be a strong invective against the temple itself and the positive account of Solomon’s building the temple. The issue is not the temple, but presuming that God dwells there; it was built for *Jacob*, not God.

anywhere, since his throne is in heaven (7:49), so his people do not dwell in Jerusalem or anywhere else, since they are *πάροικοι*.

Finally, Stephen concludes his speech starting in verse 51 by saying that his audience is a “stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears” who oppose the Holy Spirit “just as *your* ancestors used to do.”²³ While some interpreters understand the switch here from “our ancestors” (*οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν*) throughout the speech to “your ancestors” (*οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν*) as Luke’s repudiation of a temple-focused Judaism, it’s more likely that Stephen is emphasizing the divide *within* Judaism between the patriarchs who were persecuted and their persecutors. A prominent theme in Stephen’s speech is the idea that the people of God, or those who belong to the Way, are a persecuted people, distinct from Stephen’s audience who belong to the persecutors. Stephen rebukes his audience as the ones who belong to the line of ancestors who persecuted (*ἐδίωξαν*) the prophets (7:52). There is a tradition of persecuting the prophets in the OT and later Jewish tradition,²⁴ but given Stephen’s speech until now, Joseph and Moses would have been in view.

In Acts 7:9, Joseph is persecuted and sold into Egypt by “the patriarchs” (*οἱ πατριάρχαι*), his own brothers. In Acts 7:27–29, Moses is forced to flee (*ἔφυγεν*) and become a resident alien (*πάροικος*) in Midian, not because of Pharaoh as stated in Exod 2:15, but because of his brothers (*ἀδελφοί*, 7:26).²⁵ In the LXX and MT, Moses does not

²³ Emphasis mine.

²⁴ Cf. Neh 9:26; 2 Chr 24:20–22; Jer 26:21–23; 1 Kgs 18:4, 13; Josephus *Ant.* 10.38; CD VII, 17–18; cited in Keener, *Acts*, 2:1426.

²⁵ Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp and Christopher R. Matthews, trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel, Hermeneia (Philadelphia:

refer to the ones striking each other as “brothers.” Instead, he says, “Why do you strike your neighbor (πλησίον/ἄλλο, Exod 2:13)?” The use of “brothers” here emphasizes that Moses is persecuted by his own family. Stephen, and thus Luke, highlights how there is a division *within* Israel between those who are πάροικοι/the persecuted, and those who are κάτοικοι/the persecutors. While scholars often point to the change in pronouns from ἡμεῖς throughout the speech to ὑμεῖς at the end, this division is present from the beginning when Stephen refers to the land promised to Abraham “where *you* are now living (ὑμεῖς νῦν κατοικεῖτε, Acts 7:4).”²⁶ Stephen is careful not to include himself or his community among those who “dwell” in the land since they are a community of πάροικοι.

This rift within the family of Abraham’s offspring is a sign of στάσις, which is a division within a family or group. As I discussed in chapter 1, στάσις was understood as a conflict within a single political body, whether that be groups within a single πόλις, such as the conflict in Alexandria between the Greeks and the Jews, or whether that be within a single ἔθνος, such as the many στάσεις between Jewish groups in Josephus’s *Jewish War*.²⁷ While Luke doesn’t use the word here, the circumstances surrounding Stephen’s arrest, trial, and persecution mirror what we see in other scenes where στάσις is used. Those who argue with Stephen “secretly instigate” (ὑπέβαλον, 6:11) some men to bring

Fortress Press, 1987), 53. In Exod 2:15 LXX, Pharaoh hears about what happened and seeks to kill Moses, forcing Moses to depart from Pharaoh’s presence (ἀνεχώρησεν δὲ Μωϋσῆς ἀπὸ προσώπου Φαραῶ).

²⁶ Emphasis added.

²⁷ Cf. Josephus, *War* 5.2, where Josephus writes of a στάσις that was revived in Jerusalem between three Jewish factions.

charges against him and they “stir up” (συνεκίνησαν, 6:12) the people before seizing him and bringing him before the council. This mirrors what happens in Acts 13 where Luke writes that “the Jews incited (παρώτρυναν) the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution (ἐπήγειραν διωγμόν) against Paul and Barnabas.” Later in Acts 19, a στάσις (19:40) erupts in the city of Ephesus, and the people “rushed together” (ῥομήσαν τε ὁμοθυμαδόν) to seize Paul’s travel companions, just as Stephen’s opponents “covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together (ῥομήσαν ὁμοθυμαδόν) against him” (7:57).²⁸ Because Stephen’s opponents belong to the group within Israel that persecuted (ἐδίωξαν, 7:52) the prophets, they persecute Stephen as well and raise up a persecution (διωγμός, 8:1) against the church, forcing them to flee. Again later, they raise up a persecution (ἐπήγειραν διωγμόν, 13:50) against Paul and Barnabas and banish them from the regions around Antioch. Stephen’s persecution thus becomes paradigmatic for the later scenes in Acts. As a paradigm, it prepares the reader to see the later scenes of flight and banishment as part of a broader pattern within God’s purposes. By rooting these experiences in the history of Israel, Stephen shows how these trials, specifically their flight and banishment, are fundamental to their identity as offspring of Abraham, who are πάροικοι. Not only do the persecutors continue to oppose the members of the Way, but those who are persecuted continue to face exile and banishment through the course of the narrative as basic to their identity.

The fact that the conflict between Stephen and his accusers reflects a στάσις within the Jewish community points to exile as a solution within the broader political

²⁸ Holladay, *Acts*, 202 notes how the crowd’s rushing towards Stephen “anticipates the Ephesians’ actions toward Paul.”

discourse of the first century. Some scholars have highlighted how Stephen’s speech portrays the early Christian community as migrants, but the language of migration or even being a *πάροικος* is related to but different from being a *φυγάς* or an exile. A *πάροικος* is not necessarily an exile—Joseph and Abraham are examples of *πάροικοι* who were not banished or forced to flee—but every exile is a *πάροικος* in some sense (Moses being the most pertinent example). As Runia notes in his study of flight and exile in Philo, “I am hesitant to identify migration and flight completely. It seems to me that flight involves greater urgency, a stronger pressure of circumstances. The separation and alienation that it assumes is more profound. This is particularly the case when flight and exile are the result of expulsion.”²⁹ Being a *πάροικος* encompasses a broader set of reasons for displacement, but Stephen’s speech (and the ensuing Acts narrative) identifies the community as *exiles* by highlighting Moses’ experience of displacement.

Indeed, among the OT patriarchs, Moses receives the most attention in the speech and exhibits the strongest typological connection to Christ. Luke makes clear from his retelling of the Moses story that he wishes to highlight Moses’ exile specifically, and not just his *departure* from Egypt, by depicting his flight (*ἔφυγεν*, 7:29) from danger. Why aren’t Abraham and Joseph depicted as exiles? The simple answer is that such a move

²⁹ Runia, “The Theme of Flight and Exile in the Allegorical Thought-World of Philo of Alexandria,” 21. John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1981), 46–47 also argues that *πάροικος* and *φυγάς* should be distinguished, since “exiled persons might have been living as *paroikoi* and *parepidēmoi* in foreign territories, but not all strangers and resident aliens were exiles.”

would require a completely different version of their stories, whereas Moses' flight from capital punishment coheres with contemporary practices of exile.³⁰

Stephen's fate is sealed when the crowds "throw him out of the city" (ἐκβαλόντες ἔξω τῆς πόλεως, 7:58) and stone him. The language of ἐκβαλεῖν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως may be a reference to regulations for stoning found in Lev 24:14 and Deut 17:2–5,³¹ but it is also the language used for banishment or expulsion. The same language is used for Jesus' expulsion from Nazareth in Luke 4:29.³² As we turn now to the rest of Acts, we will see how the pattern established in Stephen's speech and martyrdom continues through the narrative to portray the community as political exiles forced to flee the city.

3.2 Scenes of Exile in Acts

3.2.1 Acts 8:1 / Acts 11:19

Even as Stephen presents various *exempla* in his speech of Israel's heroes of old who were migrants or exiles of some sort, his own banishment and subsequent death continues the line of wandering members of the people of God, which is further developed in the persecution and dispersal of the Jerusalem church in Acts 8:1:

Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ διωγμὸς μέγας ἐπὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τὴν ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις· πάντες [δὲ] διεσπάρησαν κατὰ τὰς χώρας τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ Σαμαρίας πλὴν τῶν ἀποστόλων.

³⁰ In Philo's allegorical reading of Joseph's story, only if Joseph had reached perfection would he have fled from Egypt (φεύγων ὄχρετο, *Sobr.* 13); cited in Runia, "The Theme of Flight and Exile in the Allegorical Thought-World of Philo of Alexandria," 15.

³¹ Cited by Conzelmann, *Acts*, 57. The language used in Lev 24 and Deut 17 is not ἐκβαλεῖν, however, but ἐξάγειν and ἐξᾶραι, respectively.

³² In response to his preaching, the people of Nazareth rose up and "threw him out of the city" (ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως, Lk 4:29). Michal Beth Dinkler, "The Politics of Stephen's Storytelling: Narrative Rhetoric and Reflexivity in Acts 7:2–53," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche* 111.1 (2020): 62–63 notes how this phrase and other features of Stephen's martyrdom parallel Jesus' rejection in Luke 4:16–30. So also Holladay, *Acts*, 202, who connects this phrase not only with Luke 4:29 but also Acts 13:50 and 16:37.

The use of διωγμός here connects this experience with the ancestors of Stephen's opponents who "persecuted" (ἐδίωξαν, 7:52) the prophets, including Moses who was forced to flee from his brothers (7:29). The verb διώκω can mean "persecute" in a more general sense, but it often has the meaning of "drive away, drive out"³³ or sometimes "banish."³⁴ In Philo's account of Flaccus's life and death, Flaccus is "exiled" (διώκεσθαι) to the island of Andros after his property is taken from him and he is sentenced in court (*Flacc.* 151). In Favorinus's treatise on exile, he describes an exile as someone who is "driven and harried" (ἀπελασθέντα δὲ [καὶ] διωχθέντα) from their homeland (7.2). In Matt 10:23, Jesus says to his disciples, "When they persecute (διώκωσιν) you in one town (πόλει), flee (φεύγετε) to the next." In one of Jesus' "woes" in Matthew, he denounces the scribes and Pharisees who will "pursue from town to town" (διώξετε ἀπὸ πόλεως εἰς πόλιν, 23:34) the prophets, sages, and scribes sent by Jesus. The picture here parallels what we see in Acts 8:1, where Stephen's opponents "pursue" the Jerusalem church, forcing them to flee throughout Judea and Samaria, even as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (11:19).

The brief narrative summary in Acts 8:1 doesn't enumerate what this persecution and flight entailed.³⁵ Was their property confiscated? Were they officially banished? Most likely, these believers were not sentenced to official exile, but were forced to flee because of the threat of death and imprisonment. In Ernst Grasmück's study of exile in

³³ BDAG, s.v. "διώκω."

³⁴ LSJ, s.v. "διώκω."

³⁵ I will expand on the distinction between narrative summaries and narrative scenes in the conclusion, where I will highlight the significance of Luke's use of narrative summaries in his depiction of ecclesial life. For now, it is important to note that narrative summaries are shorter, more general statements than narrative scenes. Authors can use such summaries to highlight important themes in the narrative.

the Roman Empire, having considered various examples of expulsions in Jewish texts, he concludes that banishment from a synagogue was likely not a punitive norm, but a form of φυγή in the sense of “des freiwilligen Weggehens oder der erzwungenen Emigration.”³⁶ When Paul recounts his involvement in these persecutions, he says that he was “breathing threats and murder” (9:1) as he pursued those who belonged to the Way to face trial in Jerusalem. Later, he recounts how he “persecuted (ἐδίωξα) this Way up to the point of death by binding both men and women and putting them in prison” (22:4) so that they could stand before “the high priest and the whole council of elders” (22:5) as Stephen did. Those who were imprisoned faced the threat of death, as Paul details again later when he says, “I also cast my vote against them when they were being condemned to death” (26:10) and “I pursued (ἐδίωκον) them even to foreign cities” (26:11).

The discourse of first-century exile includes not only official sentences of banishment, but flight to avoid death. Though their exile may not have been an official expulsion, the believers who were “scattered” (διεσπάρησαν) were forced to flee from death, and their flight continued the tradition established by Moses’s exile (ἔφυγεν, 7:29) from Egypt. What Stephen expounds in his speech—that the offspring of Abraham are πάροικοι—is fulfilled in his own death and its aftermath when the Jerusalem believers are forced to flee “to foreign cities” (εἰς τὰς ἔξω πόλεις, 26:11), as Paul recounts.

In Acts 8:4, we read that “those who were scattered went from place to place (διηλθον), proclaiming the word.” The verb διέρχομαι is a favorite of Luke’s, used 31x in Luke-Acts for the movements of Jesus in the gospel and the members of the Way in Acts.

³⁶ Grasmück, *Exilium: Untersuchungen Zur Verbannung in Der Antike*, 61.

In Acts 10:38, Peter describes Jesus' ministry as one in which he "went about (*διήλθεν*) doing good and healing." Now, this verb is used to characterize "the main mode of Christian existence"³⁷ in which the believers wander about from place to place spreading the message of Jesus as Lord. The image evoked by this wandering is that they do not remain in a single place for long. Given what we've seen so far, this should come as no surprise, since the believers are *πάροικοι* now forced to flee from death.

3.2.2 Acts 9:23–30

The next scene of exile occurs in Acts 9:23–25 when Saul is forced to flee from Damascus. After Saul encounters Jesus on the road to Damascus, he stays with the disciples and begins to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues. But after some time, the Jews plot to kill him, and so the disciples "took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket" (9:25). This is the account of Paul's flight which Athanasius alludes to in his defense of his own exile. Paul himself recounts this experience in 2 Cor 11:33, where he says, "I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped (*ἐξέφυγον*) from his hands." Whereas the account in Acts says that the Jews (*οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι*) were watching the gates day and night to kill him (9:24), in 2 Corinthians Paul recounts how "the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me" (9:32).

While at first glance the two accounts seem incompatible, since the governor is not mentioned in the Acts account, Fitzmyer argues that this need not be the case, since

³⁷ Stenschke, "Migration and Mission," 138.

“Saul’s Jewish opponents might have convinced the ethnarch to side with them.”³⁸

Indeed, this would be consistent with later scenes in Acts, where Paul’s Jewish opponents stir up the local authorities to seize Paul and his companions (e.g., 13:50; 14:5; 17:5–6). Paul thus becomes an exile as he flees from the threat of death, like the believers he himself persecuted before his conversion.

After fleeing from Damascus, Paul comes to Jerusalem where Barnabas brings him before the apostles and explains how he had seen the Lord and “had spoken boldly” (ἐπαρρησιάσατο, 9:27) in the name of Jesus at Damascus. Paul then continues “speaking boldly” (παρρησιαζόμενος, 9:28), this time in Jerusalem to the Hellenists, who were non-Christian Greek-speaking Jews.³⁹ These Hellenists then attempt to kill Paul, who must flee again with the help of the believers, first to Caesarea and then to Tarsus (9:30).

These two vignettes from Damascus and Jerusalem share many parallels which highlight the paradigmatic nature of Paul’s experience.⁴⁰ In Damascus, Ananias hesitates to accept Paul (9:13–14), until the Lord reassures him (9:15–16), and he spends several days with them (9:19b). In Jerusalem, the disciples fear Paul (9:26), until Barnabas reassures them (9:27), and Paul goes “in and out among them” in Jerusalem (9:28). Finally, Paul speaks boldly (ἐπαρρησιάσατο, 9:27; cf. 9:20) in the synagogues of Damascus and is forced to flee (9:25), just as he was speaking boldly (παρρησιαζόμενος, 9:28) in Jerusalem before being forced to flee (9:30). These parallels “legitimize Paul’s

³⁸ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 31 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1998), 434. Cf. C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 1:466, who also identifies the two occasions.

³⁹ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 440.

⁴⁰ The following parallels are adapted from a table in David H. Gill, “Structure of Acts 9,” *Biblica* 55.4 (1974): 547–48.

mission” and repeat the pattern of preaching and persecution that will continue in the narrative.⁴¹ Furthermore, the use of *παρρησιάζομαι* to characterize Paul’s preaching in both Damascus and Jerusalem connects him with the apostles—who preached with *παρρησία* in the early chapters of Acts⁴²—and Paul’s later activity in Pisidian Antioch and Iconium. In both Antioch and Iconium, Paul and Barnabas “speak boldly” (*παρρησιασάμενοι*, 13:46; *παρρησιαζόμενοι*, 14:3), and S. C. Winter argues that “the formulaic, impersonal use of *παρρησιάζεσθαι* in 13:46 and 14:3 is appropriate to a ‘model journey,’”⁴³ which establishes a pattern for Paul’s missionary journeys. I would add that the repeated use of *παρρησιάζομαι* in 9:27 and 9:28 (another doublet) leads the reader to see such preaching (and its consequence of exile) as characteristic of Paul’s ministry. Wherever he goes, he exhibits *παρρησία* in his preaching. But what is *παρρησία* in Acts, and how does it relate to exile?

As discussed in chapter 1, *παρρησία* was one of the main things lost in exile according to the many consolations which sought to refute this fact. In Classical Athens, *παρρησία* was the right of a citizen to speak in the democratic assembly,⁴⁴ and exile naturally removed this right. In Hellenistic and Roman times, *παρρησία* was mainly understood as the moral imperative of a philosopher to speak freely and openly, though it was sometimes understood as the right or freedom to speak one’s mind more in line with

⁴¹ Gill, “Structure of Acts 9,” 548.

⁴² Acts 2:29; 4:13, 29, 31. Cf. 28:31

⁴³ S. C. Winter, “Παρρησία in Acts,” in *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World*, ed. John Fitzgerald, NovTSup 82 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 193 n 36.

⁴⁴ Stanley Morrow, “*Parrhēsia* and the New Testament,” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 433.

its classical usage.⁴⁵ A shift in the meaning of *παρρησία* ran parallel to a shift in exile as the right to flee from the death penalty to a punishment in its own right. Washburn, citing Grasmück, argues that exile's shift to a punishment in the Roman Empire was a consequence of "an increase of defenselessness and the silencing of [*παρρησία*], the forthright free speech philosophers used to address men of power."⁴⁶ Indeed, excessive *παρρησία* often led to exile, as we see in Lucian's account of the Cynic philosopher Peregrinus.

In his *Death of Peregrinus*, Lucian recounts how Peregrinus, a Cynic philosopher who for a time duped the Christians into accepting him as one of their own, set sail for Italy after he was rejected by them and chose instead the path of asceticism (17). In Italy (the precise location is not mentioned), Peregrinus gained a reputation for boldly speaking against the Emperor, until the city prefect "packed him off" (*ἀπέπεμψεν*) and he became famous "as the philosopher who had been banished (*ἐξέλαθείς*) for his frankness (*παρρησίαν*) and excessive freedom, so that in this respect he approached Musonius, Dio, Epictetus, and anyone else who has been in a similar predicament" (18). Then, he came to Greece where he stirred up trouble among the Greeks who "almost killed him with stones" until he "managed to escape death at the moment by fleeing (*καταφυγών*) to Zeus for sanctuary" (20). These two vignettes illustrate the connection between *παρρησία* and *φυγή*; as a measure used to ensure civic welfare, exile was enforced to remove someone

⁴⁵ Kyriakoula Papademetriou, "The Semantic Evolution of the Word *Παρρησία* through Its Pragmatic and Sociolinguistic Fields," in *The Vocabulary of the Septuagint and Its Hellenistic Background*, WUNT 2 496 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 117.

⁴⁶ Daniel A. Washburn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284–476 CE*, Routledge Studies in Ancient History 5 (New York: Routledge, 2012), 7, citing Grasmück, *Exilium: Untersuchungen zur Verbannung in der Antike*, 148.

who exhibited excessive *παρρησία*, either through legal action such as in Italy, or through the threat of death in Greece.

Like Peregrinus, Paul is forced to flee from Damascus and Jerusalem because of his *παρρησία*. Some scholars argue that *παρρησία* in Acts, especially in the early chapters, is used in its classical sense of “freedom of speech.”⁴⁷ However, others contend that the term in Acts (and the NT more broadly) takes on a distinctively Christian hue, in which *παρρησία* entails an openness towards speaking the gospel.⁴⁸ Given that *παρρησία* results in exile, both in 9:26–30 and later in 13:46 and 14:3, it’s likely that *παρρησία* (or *παρρησιάζομαι*) means frankness or boldness of speech, and not the right or freedom to speak. Merely exercising one’s right to speak was not enough to warrant exile, but when *παρρησία* threatened the interests of a community, exile was one way to remove a troublemaker from a city. However, in the narrative of Acts, Paul’s flight from danger does not quell his *παρρησία*; instead, it propels him to new places where he continues to speak boldly in the name of Jesus.

3.2.3 Acts 13:50

After Paul and Barnabas are commissioned by the church in Antioch on their first missionary journey (13:3), they travel to Cyprus, on to Perga, and then to Antioch in Pisidia. At Antioch, Paul preaches a sermon which recounts the history of Israel leading up to Jesus, and both “many Jews and devout converts to Judaism” urge Paul and Barnabas to return (13:42–43). On the next sabbath, “almost the whole city” (13:44) is

⁴⁷ Winter, “*Παρρησία* in Acts,” 191.

⁴⁸ Morrow, “*Parrhēsia* and the New Testament,” 446.

gathered to hear them preach, but Paul and Barnabas face opposition from the Jews. Paul and Barnabas speak boldly (παρρησιασάμενοι), responding, “Since you reject [the word of God] and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles” (13:46). This causes a split in the crowd (or “nearly the whole city”—σχεδὸν πᾶσα ἡ πόλις), and while the Gentiles rejoice and many become believers (13:48), the Jews are filled with jealousy and speak against Paul (13:45). This mixed reaction from the city is a sign of στάσις. Indeed, in the next section (14:1–7), in which Luke says, “The same thing occurred in Iconium” (14:1), we read that “the residents of the city were divided” (ἐσχίσθη δὲ τὸ πλῆθος τῆς πόλεως), which is a sign of στάσις or civic strife within a political body.

In response to Paul and Barnabas’s παρρησία,

the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their region.

οἱ δὲ Ἰουδαῖοι παρώτρυναν τὰς σεβομένας γυναῖκας τὰς εὐσχήμονας καὶ τοὺς πρώτους τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἐπήγειραν διωγμὸν ἐπὶ τὸν Παῦλον καὶ Βαρναβᾶν καὶ ἐξέβαλον αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν ὀρίων αὐτῶν. (13:50)

The consecutive καί’s link the three actions of inciting (παρώτρυναν) the women and the men of the city, stirring up (ἐπήγειραν) persecution, and banishing (ἐξέβαλον) them from the region. The καί’s which connect the three actions are “coordinating conjunctions,”⁴⁹ which means that unlike δέ, which would present “something new with regard to what has gone before,” the three actions are “closely tied together, part and parcel of the same

⁴⁹ Culy, Parsons, and Hall, *Acts 1–14*, 359–60.

larger event.”⁵⁰ Like much of the Acts narrative, the details of this event are condensed into one short verse. As readers, we’re left to fill in the details—how did the Jews incite these leaders? Did they bring their case to the local authorities? And who were the “devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city?”

Fitzmyer argues that the “devout women” were female gentile worshippers, or those who sympathized with the Jewish religion.⁵¹ Holladay writes that the women may have been wealthy gentile women, since the term εὐσχήμων means “of high standing” and denotes social prominence.⁵² Spicq notes that the term in the papyri refers to “a special class of citizens, the most well-thought-of and well-to-do in a town or city.”⁵³ Most likely, then, the women were socially prominent and influential gentiles who sympathized with the Jewish religion. The leading men, or πρῶτοι, may have been Roman magistrates,⁵⁴ though the term is vague and is used elsewhere to denote leading citizens, who may have come from prominent families who had a disproportionate influence on Roman authorities.⁵⁵ In other words, the Jews incited those in the city with the power to take legal action against Paul and Barnabas.

What does it mean that they stirred up persecution (ἐπήγειραν διωγμόν)? Διωγμός is used earlier in Acts 8:1 for the dispersal of the believers from Jerusalem. Its verb form, διώκω, also characterizes Stephen’s opponents who throw him out of the city and stone

⁵⁰ Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, “Acts,” in *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings*, ed. Todd A. Scacewater (Dallas, TX: Fontes, 2020), 167 cited in Culy, Parsons, and Hall, *Acts 1–14*, 5.

⁵¹ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 520.

⁵² Holladay, *Acts*, 303 n 70.

⁵³ Ceslas Spicq, “Εὐσχήμων,” *TLNT* 2:141, cited in Pervo, *Acts*, 343 n 123.

⁵⁴ Holladay, *Acts*, 303.

⁵⁵ Cf. Plutarch, *Precepts of Statecraft* 19, where Plutarch describes how the greed and contentiousness of the “foremost citizens” (οἱ πρῶτοι) often force the Romans to interfere in local affairs.

him (7:52). Both the parallel use of διωγμός/διώκω earlier in Acts and the use of καί (and not δέ) to link the actions of 13:50 leads us to understand this διωγμός as a (likely legal) form of banishment.⁵⁶ Pervo interprets it to mean “they demand legal action that results in the expulsion of the missionaries.”⁵⁷ A.N. Sherwin-White believes it may have been an official act of banishment, though he admits the action in Antioch (and Iconium) resembles “mob-movement more than a judicial proceeding.”⁵⁸ The language of ἐκβάλλω, however, with the Jews, the devout women, and the leading men of Antioch as the subjects adds agency to the expulsion unlike the two previous scenes of Paul’s flight in Acts 9. The events depicted include the initial incitement by the Jews, then the raising of persecution, and finally the banishment by all parties involved. As a Roman colony, the Jews would not have had the legal authority to banish Paul and Barnabas, which is why the prominent women and men were the ones who likely enacted this legal sentence. Keener notes that in a Roman colony such as Antioch, even if there were no official meeting of the *ordo* (the governing body), the governing officials could still have driven the apostles out “with the backing of crowds or with threats.”⁵⁹

The vignette here is reminiscent of Stephen’s expulsion before his death, where he is also “thrown out of the city” (ἐκβαλόντες ἔξω τῆς πόλεως, 7:58),⁶⁰ and Jesus’ early ministry, where he is banished from Nazareth (ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως, Luke 4:29). The expulsion of Paul and Barnabas is another piece of the broader pattern of exile

⁵⁶ Cf. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 522, who says, “The persecution takes the form of banishment of the two missionaries.”

⁵⁷ Pervo, *Acts*, 344.

⁵⁸ A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 97, <https://find.library.duke.edu/catalog/DUKE000046130>.

⁵⁹ Keener, *Acts*, 2:2104.

⁶⁰ Holladay, *Acts*, 203.

or flight that characterizes the members of the Way. This continues as they flee to Iconium.

3.2.4 Acts 14:1–7

Acts 14 begins with the comment that “the same thing occurred in Iconium” (ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν Ἰκονίῳ κατὰ τὸ αὐτό, 14:1). The phrase κατὰ τὸ αὐτό, which can also mean “together,” connects the events to follow with what happened in Antioch just prior.⁶¹ As in Antioch, so here in Iconium Paul and Barnabas enter the synagogue and lead both Jews and Gentiles (“Greeks” in 14:1) to faith.⁶² Likewise, the response mirrors what happened in Antioch—some “unbelieving” (ἀπειθήσαντες) Jews incite the Gentiles against the believers (14:2). As in 13:50, the text says that the Jews “stirred up” (ἐπήγειραν) something, though the object of the verb is not clear. In 13:50, they “stirred up persecution” (ἐπήγειραν διωγμόν), and as a transitive verb we expect an object in 14:2 as well, though none is given. The verb ἐπεγείρω means “to cause an activity to begin through provocation,”⁶³ and while some take τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἔθνῶν as the object of both ἐπήγειραν and ἐκάκωσαν,⁶⁴ given the parallel in 13:50 it is likely that it is a shortened

⁶¹ Holladay, *Acts*, 294.

⁶² Iconium, which was originally a Greek city, was re-founded as a Roman colony by Augustus. Dual identities (Roman and Greek) co-existed in Iconium, which may explain the use of Ἕλληνας in Acts 14:1, unlike in Antioch, where only τὰ ἔθνη are mentioned. Cf. Holladay, *Acts*, 294.

⁶³ BDAG, s.v. “ἐπεγείρω.”

⁶⁴ Barrett, *Acts*, 668.

form of ἐπήγειραν διωγμόν.⁶⁵ In other words, the same activity is envisioned here as in Antioch—the Jews seek to banish the apostles with the help of the Gentiles.

However, Paul and Barnabas respond by remaining a long time (ικανὸν μὲν οὖν χρόνον διέτριψαν) and “speaking boldly” (παρρησιαζόμενοι) for the Lord (14:3). Some interpreters find the transition to v. 3 awkward, since μὲν οὖν could indicate that Paul and Barnabas stayed longer as a result of the trouble stirred up by the Jews.⁶⁶ However, Douglas Sharp argues that μὲν οὖν, in addition to its common meaning of “therefore,” can also mean “nay rather” to modify or correct what has come before.⁶⁷ In that case, Luke’s point here is that despite the opposition they faced from the Jews and some Gentiles, Paul and Barnabas remained a long time and exhibited παρρησία for the Lord. This is also parallel to what happened in Antioch, where the apostles “spoke out boldly” (παρρησιασάμενοι) in response to the Jews.

The transition from v. 3 to v. 4 is abrupt—after recounting how Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly for the Lord, who granted signs and wonders to be done through them, Luke writes that “the residents (τὸ πλῆθος) of the city were divided (ἐσχίσθη)” (14:4). This split is a symptom of στάσις, a conflict within a political body. The two factions are those who sided with the Jews (οἱ μὲν ἦσαν σὺν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις) and those who sided with the apostles (οἱ δὲ σὺν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις). The πλῆθος here is not the same

⁶⁵ Culy, Parsons, and Hall, *Acts 1–14*, 363 lists this as one of the possibilities. Another possibility they give is that ἐπήγειραν καὶ ἐκάκωσαν may be a periphrastic construction meaning “to begin to mistreat.” Some scribes supplied διωγμόν here to harmonize it with Acts 13:50.

⁶⁶ Pervo, *Acts*, 349 says that the story would flow more smoothly if v. 2 and v. 3 were flipped. He attributes Luke’s “awkwardness” to his desire to present Paul and Barnabas’s successful work before the opposition.

⁶⁷ Douglas S. Sharp, “The Meaning of Μὲν Οὖν in Acts 14.3,” *ExpTim* 44.11 (1933): 528.

πλῆθος mentioned in 14:1 who became believers,⁶⁸ but a large part of the city.⁶⁹ It may also refer to the “popular assembly” of the city.⁷⁰ Keener notes that σχίζω is commonly used “in political and social bodies,”⁷¹ and indeed we find the same phrase—“ἐσχίσθη τὸ πλῆθος”—in Acts 23:7 where a “στάσις” occurs between the Pharisees and Sadducees. There too, Luke demarcates the two factions with a μέν ... δέ construction.

In response to this στάσις (or as a result of it), both Gentiles and Jews act with their rulers (σὺν τοῖς ἄρχουσιν) to stone Paul and Barnabas. Luke’s use of ὄρμη, which is more than an “attempt” as the NRSV has it,⁷² is reminiscent of how the Jewish leaders “rushed together” (ὄρμησαν ὁμοθυμαδόν, 7:57) against Stephen, and how the citizens of Ephesus “rushed together” (ὄρμησάν τε ὁμοθυμαδόν, 19:29) into the theater as a result of the στάσις caused by Paul’s preaching. The “rulers” are likely the rulers of the city,⁷³ and not the synagogue, so that what Luke depicts here is a violent reaction by the factions to get rid of this threat to their city. The “split” in the πλῆθος could have dangerous consequences for the residents of Iconium. Στάσις was widely recognized as one of the greatest evils that could befall a city, and politicians aimed to avoid it at all costs, not only to preserve the welfare of a city but to avert Roman intervention. The response of the Gentiles and Jews to mistreat and stone Paul and Barnabas would be familiar to Luke’s readers who were aware of the kind of mob violence that could befall a city

⁶⁸ Keener, *Acts*, 2:2125; Barrett, *Acts*, 670.

⁶⁹ Barrett, *Acts*, 670.

⁷⁰ Keener, *Acts*, 2:2125.

⁷¹ Keener, *Acts*, 2:2125.

⁷² Keener, *Acts*, 2:2127 defines it as “an impulse, strong desire, or beginning action to achieve something.”

⁷³ Culy, Parsons, and Hall, *Acts 1–14*, 365; Barrett, *Acts*, 672.

experiencing στάσις.⁷⁴ Pervo writes that readers of Acts “might infer that Iconium was troubled by the factionalism that beset many Greek cities.”⁷⁵

As I wrote in chapter 1, one of the main cures for στάσις was the banishment or expulsion of the guilty party, and while Paul and Barnabas are not banished here, they are forced to flee (κατέφυγον, 14:6) the city. The verb καταφεύγω reminds us of the flight of Moses recounted earlier in Stephen’s speech, where he “fled” (ἔφυγεν, 7:29) from his persecutors,⁷⁶ or even Jesus’ departure from Nazareth.⁷⁷ Paul and Barnabas’s flight thus continues the pattern that has come to characterize the members of the Way.

3.2.5 Acts 16:35–39

Our next scene occurs after the conclusion of the Jerusalem Council in chapter 15 and the split between Paul and Barnabas in 15:36–40. A new phase of Paul’s work (and Luke’s narrative) has begun, with Paul (now accompanied by Silas) commissioned by the believers in Antioch. They heed a divine call (16:9) and eventually arrive in Philippi, a Roman colony (κολωνία, 16:12) like Pisidian Antioch and Iconium. As in previous scenes, the believers face opposition from the city, though this time there is no incitement from Jewish leaders. Instead, Paul and Silas encounter a slave girl with a pythonic spirit (πνεῦμα πύθωνα) who brought much economic gain to her owners through her oracles (16:16). But when Paul and Silas cast out the spirit within her, her owners drag Paul and

⁷⁴ The violence of the στάσις in Alexandria in 38 CE, recounted in Philo’s *Flaccus* and *Embassy to Gaius*, is one pertinent example. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, 78 says, “The general atmosphere of the narrative recalls that of the riots between Jews and Hellenes at Alexandria.”

⁷⁵ Pervo, *Acts*, 350.

⁷⁶ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1395.

⁷⁷ So Pervo, *Acts*, 350. Though the verb φεύγω/καταφεύγω is not used in Luke 4:29–30, Jesus is thrown out of Nazareth and departs to avoid death.

Silas into the ἀγορά before the “rulers” (ἄρχοντας), who bring them before the “chief magistrates” (στρατηγοί) of the city.⁷⁸ The chief magistrates or *duoviri* were charged with maintaining public order, sometimes using *coercitio*, “the power to inflict punishment.”⁷⁹

The owners of the slave girl charge Paul and Silas with “disturbing” (ἐκταράσσουσιν) the city, which is another way of saying that they are disrupting the civic order or causing στάσις.⁸⁰ This is a serious charge, which sets a pattern we encounter later in Thessalonica (17:6) and Ephesus (19:40), where Paul and his companions are accused of disrupting or endangering civic welfare. This also signals a shift in the narrative, since until this point the disturbances always involved persecution from the Jews; here in Philippi, a στάσις erupts when *Gentile* opponents of Paul incite the crowds (16:22). The owners of the slave girl further accuse Paul and Silas of advocating customs (ἔθη) that are “not lawful” (οὐκ ἔξεστιν) for them to accept as Romans. It is unclear what is meant by this claim, since most scholars agree that while Roman conversion to Judaism was illegal in the late republic,⁸¹ punishment for such a crime “was rarely enforced in [the imperial period] except when such activity threatened public peace or welfare.”⁸² Paul’s exorcism of the pythonic spirit may indeed have been perceived as such a threat. Religious life was closely connected to economics in the ancient world, and so “the masters of the παιδίσκη perceive rightly that the power of the

⁷⁸ As a Roman colony, though the chief magistrates were technically called the *duoviri*, “στρατηγοί” was a popular term for them found on inscriptions. Cf. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 587.

⁷⁹ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 587.

⁸⁰ The verb ἐκταράσσω and its cognates were commonly associated with riots and social upheaval. In Claudius’s letter to the Alexandrians, he writes concerning “τῆς . . . ταραχῆς καὶ στάσεως” (*P. Lond.* 1912, 73).

⁸¹ Cf. Cicero, *De legibus* 2.8.19, cited in Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 587.

⁸² Keener, *Acts*, 2:2471. So also Holladay, *Acts*, 328; Pervo, *Acts*, 407.

name Jesus Christ extends beyond one man.”⁸³ In other words, Paul and Silas’s message threatens more than their own business; it signals “a tear in the basic fabric of pagan popular religion in that it demonstrates publicly the weakness of the pagan πνεῦμα in the face of the missionaries and their message.”⁸⁴ In response to this threat to their city, the authorities flog Paul and Silas with rods and throw them in prison. Flogging a Roman citizen was forbidden by law,⁸⁵ which adds to the irony of the owners’ charge that Paul and Silas advocate unlawful customs.

After a series of miraculous events involving an earthquake and the jailer’s conversion, the narrative returns to the prison where the magistrates send the police (ῥαβδοῦχοι) to release Paul and Silas. They not only wish to release them, but they also ask them to leave the city, as the jailer says, “Therefore, come out now and go in peace” (16:36). While this message on its own does not indicate an expulsion, Paul’s response clarifies the magistrates’ intent. Paul responds, “They have beaten us in public (δημοσίᾳ), uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they going to discharge us (ἐκβάλλουσιν) in secret? Certainly not! Let them come and take us out themselves” (16:37). The use of ἐκβάλλω here, a verb commonly used for banishment or exile as we saw above, points towards an official expulsion by the magistrates. Pervo translates verse 37 with Paul asking, “And now they want to kick us out of town secretly? Not a chance!”⁸⁶ Sherwin-White says that the language seems to

⁸³ C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 26.

⁸⁴ Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 26.

⁸⁵ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 589, who says, “The *Lex Porcia de provocatione* forbade under severe penalty the flogging of a Roman citizen.”

⁸⁶ Pervo, *Acts*, 399.

point to an official expulsion. He translates verse 37 thus: “Do they now secretly cast us out? Let them come in person and escort us out of the city.”⁸⁷ While the *duoviri* may not have had the power to expel someone without the governor’s approval, Sherwin-White notes that local magistrates sometimes exceeded their powers.⁸⁸ Grasmück argues,

Von dem Aufenthalt in Philippi kann mit einiger Sicherheit angenommen werden, daß es durch die entstandenen Unruhen zu der Strafe des Auspeitschens auf Grund der Anordnungen des Stadtmagistrats kam und daß Paulus mit seiner Begleitung aus der Stadt ausgewiesen wurde.⁸⁹

Based on what we have seen in the broader exilic discourse and the narrative of Acts up to this point, the welfare of the πόλις is at stake in the magistrates’ decision to secretly expel Paul and Silas from the city.

However, Paul and Silas refuse a secret expulsion and instead demand that the magistrates come and escort them out in public view. Paul had already endured the shame of a public beating, and now a secret dismissal “sustains and reinforces the social damage.”⁹⁰ According to Rapske, what Paul demands is nothing less than “a significant status transaction.” Those who witnessed the magistrates humbly leading out the prisoners would have understood this act as a revision of the earlier shameful status assigned to Paul and Silas. Indeed, while the magistrates first command Paul and Silas to leave (πορεύεσθε, 16:36), after Paul reveals their citizenship, the magistrates come and

⁸⁷ Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, 77.

⁸⁸ Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, 77.

⁸⁹ Grasmück, *Exilium: Untersuchungen zur Verbannung in der Antike*, 59–60. My translation: “From the stay in Philippi we can assume with some certainty that the unrest which arose led to the punishment of flogging based on the orders of the city magistrate and that Paul and his company were expelled from the city.”

⁹⁰ Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody*, *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting* 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 304.

exhort them (παρεκάλεσαν)⁹¹ and beg them (ἠρώτων, 16:39) to depart from the city. The use of the imperfect ἠρώτων implies a repeated asking,⁹² as the NASB translation has it: “And they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city.” Banishment brought shame, but in an ironic twist, the magistrates who expel Paul and Silas are the ones who are humbled as they force them to leave from fear of repercussions.

3.2.6 Acts 17:1–15

After Paul and Silas depart from Philippi, they arrive in Thessalonica and begin preaching at the local synagogue, “as was his custom” (κατὰ δὲ τὸ εἰωθός, 17:2). As we soon discover from the ensuing events, not only Paul’s preaching in the synagogue, but the response from the city and Paul’s flight from danger occur according to a custom or pattern already well-established.⁹³ Some of the Jews are persuaded and join Paul and Silas, including “a great many of the devout Greeks (τῶν τε σεβομένων Ἑλλήνων πλῆθος πολὺ) and not a few of the leading women (γυναικῶν τε τῶν πρώτων οὐκ ὀλίγαι)” (17:4). This description of the group mirrors “the devout women of high standing (τὰς σεβομένας γυναῖκας τὰς εὐσχήμονας) and the leading men (τοὺς πρώτους)” (13:50) of Pisidian Antioch, whom the Jews incited to expel Paul and Barnabas. Here in Thessalonica, we read that the Jews become jealous (ζηλώσαντες) and form a mob

⁹¹ Barrett, *Acts*, 803 says παρεκάλεσαν could be read as “urged” or “begged.”

⁹² Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, ZECNT 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 695.

⁹³ Paul’s preaching in the local synagogue, his rejection, and flight from danger also parallel Jesus’s preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth. There, too, Luke writes that Jesus entered the synagogue “as was his custom” (κατὰ τὸ εἰωθός αὐτοῦ, Luke 4:16).

(ὀχλοποιήσαντες) and “set the city in an uproar” (ἐθορύβουν τὴν πόλιν, 17:5). The jealousy of the Jews connects Paul to Joseph in Stephen’s speech, who was sold into Egypt because of the jealousy (ζηλώσαντες) of his brothers (7:9).⁹⁴ However, this jealousy or zeal also reveals the Jews’ awareness of the political implications of Jews and Greeks joining the Christians. As Rowe argues, the charges brought against the Christians highlight how the Jews understood “the potential for Christian practice to bring repercussion from the local authorities.”⁹⁵ An outsider would hardly have been able to distinguish between the Christians and the Jews, especially given that Paul preached in the synagogue for three weeks (17:2).

The language of θόρυβος was often used in situations of στάσις, which we witness here in Thessalonica as the Jews form a mob and seek to bring Paul and Silas before the δῆμος. They cannot find them and instead drag Jason and some believers before the authorities. They bring three charges against the believers: 1.) they are “turning the world upside down” (τὴν οἰκουμένην ἀναστατώσαντες, 17:6); 2.) they act against the decrees of Caesar; 3.) they claim Jesus as king. While many scholars remain puzzled at the exact nature of these charges, particularly which “decrees of Caesar” are in view, when we attend to the narrative itself instead of reading the text through a narrowly historicizing lens, it’s clear that the main charge which goes against the “decrees of Caesar” is the claim that Jesus is a rival king or emperor.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Keener, *Acts*, 2:2546; Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 93.

⁹⁵ Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 93.

⁹⁶ Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 97; Barrett, *Acts*, 816.

By bringing these charges, the Jews accuse Paul and Silas (and all the Christians in the city) of seditious behavior. The verb ἀναστατόω (17:6) is used with the same sense as in 21:38, where Paul is compared to “the Egyptian who recently stirred up (ἀναστατώσας) a revolt.” Luke’s narratorial comment, then, that the *Jews* “disturb” (ἐτάραξαν, 17:8) the city authorities and the mob is highly ironic, especially given that Paul and Silas were charged with “disturbing (ἐκταράσσουσιν) the city” in Philippi (16:20).

In response to the στάσις that has now erupted, the authorities take bail (λαβόντες τὸ ἱκανόν, 17:9) from Jason and the others. This measure was meant to prevent any further unrest by making Jason responsible should Paul and Silas return.⁹⁷ In order to prevent that, Jason and the other believers send Paul and Silas to Berea “by night” (διὰ νυκτός, 17:10). This flight during the night echoes Paul’s escape from Damascus through a basket “in the night” (νυκτός, 9:24), and thus becomes another part of the pattern of Paul’s flights from danger. The measure taken by the authorities was in effect a banishment, as Tajra argues,

Not only did Jason hurry the apostles to Beroea, where the jurisdiction of the Thessalonian Politarchs was not valid, but he also had to see to it that they did not come back to the Macedonian capital. The Politarchs’ main concern was to maintain public order and to calm the powerful passions aroused among the population. This was accomplished by Paul’s *banishment* which had the effect of putting an impassable chasm between the apostle and the newly-founded church at Thessalonica.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ H. W. Tajra, *The Trial of St. Paul: A Juridical Exegesis of the Second Half of the Acts of the Apostles*, WUNT 2 35 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989), 43.

⁹⁸ Tajra, *The Trial of St. Paul*, 43, emphasis original.

Though the believers immediately send Paul and Silas away, the Christians who are left remain in a tenuous situation. As readers of Acts, we are not meant to envision that the Christians stopped meeting together, or that the tribulations ceased once Paul and Silas moved to another city. Indeed, if Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians is any indication, they continued to face trouble of various kinds (1 Thess 2:14).⁹⁹ As Rowe argues, one cannot “conceive of Acts’ narration of cultural disruption—the political worries, for example, of the Romans and/or Jews—without the formation of concrete communities with noticeably different patterns of life.”¹⁰⁰ The kind of cultural disruption that results in exile for Paul and Silas is not limited to the leading figures of this movement (i.e., Paul and his many companions), but extends to the communities which live out this new way of life with Jesus as Lord. This means that even though these communities themselves are not cast out or forced to flee,¹⁰¹ they exist in a liminal state in which they remain—in the eyes of their neighbors—a threat to civic welfare. As such, their situation parallels that of the linen workers in Tarsus, who were seen by some as outside the constitution and not a part of the city. As we saw in chapter 1, Dio Chrysostom suggested that the citizens “expel them altogether (ὄλως)” (*Or.* 34.21) since they were already exiles in a sense. The same can be said of the Christians in Thessalonica, such as Jason and the other believers, who remain in the city even as Paul and Silas are forced to flee.

A parallel scene occurs in Berea, where Paul and Silas receive a warmer welcome than they did in Thessalonica. Luke writes that the Jews of Berea were εὐγενέστεροι than

⁹⁹ It’s worth noting that Paul mentions that it was the Jews who “drove us out” (ἡμᾶς ἐκδιωξάντων, 1 Thess 2:15), which may point to their expulsion from Thessalonica.

¹⁰⁰ Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 103.

¹⁰¹ Acts 8:1, however, is one instance in which a large part of the Jerusalem community (“all except the apostles”) were expelled from the city.

those in Thessalonica, which the NRSV translates as “more receptive,” but which is closer in meaning to “more noble.”¹⁰² This is not only because they receive their message and search the scriptures to examine whether it is true, but also because they do not stir up trouble for the believers. Not only many Jews, but also “not a few Greek women and men of high standing” (τῶν Ἑλληνίδων γυναικῶν τῶν εὐσχημόνων καὶ ἀνδρῶν οὐκ ὀλίγοι) believed (Acts 17:12). This description mirrors that of the Gentiles in Thessalonica, who included “a great many of the devout Greeks (τῶν τε σεβομένων Ἑλλήνων πλῆθος πολὺ) and not a few of the leading women (γυναικῶν τε τῶν πρώτων οὐκ ὀλίγαι)” (17:4), and also the Gentiles in Pisidian Antioch, who include “the devout women of high standing (τὰς σεβομένας γυναῖκας τὰς εὐσχήμονας) and the leading men (τοὺς πρώτους)” (13:50). Luke’s portrayal of Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica and Berea forms another “doublet” like the doublet of Pisidian Antioch and Iconium, not only in his description of the Gentile audience but also through the reaction to Paul’s message. While many of the Jews of Berea believe, when the Jews of Thessalonica hear that Paul has continued his ministry in Berea as well, they arrive “to stir up (σαλεύοντες) and incite (ταράσσοντες) the crowds” (17:13). This account of the crowd’s reaction is much more compressed than the description of the trouble in Thessalonica, where formal charges were brought forward. The use of *ταράσσω* again here invites the reader to read this alongside the Thessalonian episode, where a *στάσις* erupts because of Paul’s preaching. Readers are invited to imagine that the same Jews of Thessalonica brought similar charges here in Berea to “incite” the crowds, just as their charge that the Christians claim

¹⁰² BDAG, s.v. “εὐγενής,” which defines the word as “noble-minded.”

a rival emperor incited the crowds and officials (ἐτάραξαν δὲ τὸν ὄχλον καὶ τοὺς πολιτάρχας, 17:8) of Thessalonica.

As at Thessalonica, so too in Berea the believers “immediately sent Paul away” (17:14). Pervo calls this a “replay” of the episode in Thessalonica,¹⁰³ and Holladay argues that the Jews’ following Paul and Silas to Berea repeats the behavior of the Jews who followed Paul from Pisidian Antioch to Iconium in Acts 14.¹⁰⁴ Not only the behavior of the Jews, however, but also Paul’s repeated flights fit the pattern we have come to expect for those who belong to the Way.

3.2.7 Acts 18:1–4

Before concluding this chapter, the final example we will consider is the case of Aquila and Priscilla, whom Paul meets in Corinth after he leaves Athens (18:1). After narrating Paul’s departure from Athens, Luke describes how he met the Jewish couple in Corinth, who had recently traveled from Italy “because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave (χωρίζεσθαι) Rome” (18:2). Luke does not mention the cause of this decree, though some scholars believe it may refer to the expulsion of the Jews from Rome mentioned by Suetonius. According to Suetonius, “Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, [Claudius] expelled them from Rome” (*Claud.* 25.4). Two things are relevant for our purposes from Suetonius’s statement. First, the expulsion from Rome was caused by “disturbances” (*tumultuantis*), which is reminiscent of the various scenes in Acts where the Jews cause uproars in the cities where Paul and his companions travel.

¹⁰³ Pervo, *Acts*, 421.

¹⁰⁴ Holladay, *Acts*, 335. So also Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, 97.

Second, these disturbances had to do with someone named “Chrestus,” which most scholars understand to be a misspelling of *Christus*, a reference to Jesus. In his commentary on Romans, Robert Jewett writes, “Most historians infer that this is a reference to agitation in Roman synagogues concerning Jesus as the Christ, and that the resultant exile should be correlated with the detail in Acts 18:2 concerning the expulsion of Priscilla and Aquila from Rome around 49 C.E.”¹⁰⁵

If Priscilla and Aquila were in fact expelled because of disturbances or *στάσεις* involving Jesus, they would join Paul in sharing not only a common trade as tentmakers but the common experience of exile caused by belonging to the Way. Even if we ignore the historical reasons for their exile which Luke does not mention, their movement from Pontus to Rome (Acts 18:2), Rome to Corinth, and then from Corinth to Ephesus with Paul (18:18) highlights their identity as migrants and refugees (at least from Rome). Because of their belonging to the church, they accompany Paul and continue his mission, even as he departs and they instruct another Christian leader, Apollos, “in the Way of the Lord” (18:26). Looking outside of Acts, Paul’s letter to the Romans tells us that they continued to move by returning to Rome, where they established a church in their home (Rom 16:5).

The example of Priscilla and Aquila not only adds to the pattern of believers who are expelled (possibly for the sake of Jesus, though that is not explicit in Acts), but it also continues the pattern established in Acts 8:2 where a severe persecution sent Christians across the empire to establish new communities. Priscilla and Aquila join this pattern by

¹⁰⁵ Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 60.

both accompanying Paul and engaging in their own work to instruct Apollos and even return to Rome to establish a house church. While most of the examples we have considered focus on Paul, at least here we see again that the displacement or exile of believers characterizes the whole church and serves as an impetus for mission.¹⁰⁶

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have considered how the various characters of Acts are either banished or forced to flee from their cities. In doing so, we have seen that these scenes of exile are part of a broader paradigm that extends beyond the narrative's immediate time period to Israel's history in which the patriarchs of Israel were also exiled or displaced. In narrating Israel's history in this way, Stephen identifies the believers as those who belong to the faithful remnant of Israel who, like Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, were sojourners or *πάροικοι*. Like Moses who became an exile (*ἔφυγεν*, 7:29) from his brothers, the members of the Way are persecuted by their Jewish opponents who force them to become exiles from Jerusalem. Many Lukan scholars have argued that Stephen's speech interprets the broader narrative of Luke-Acts. Luke Timothy Johnson writes that "Stephen's speech ... provides Luke's most explicit interpretation of his entire narrative, and shows us the logic of its two-fold structure."¹⁰⁷ One of the themes often examined in Stephen's speech

¹⁰⁶ On Priscilla and Aquila as migrant missionaries, see vanThanh Nguyen, "Migrants as Missionaries: The Case of Priscilla and Aquila," *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* 30.2 (2013): 194–207, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15733831-12341282>; On the relationship between migration and Christian mission more broadly, see Jehu J. Hanciles, *Migration and the Making of Global Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021).

¹⁰⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, SP 5 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 137, cited in Todd Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 93 n 110.

(and Luke-Acts as a whole) is the pattern of the “prophet like Moses.” Indeed, Moses takes up the most space in Stephen’s speech, and scholars argue that a major theme of the speech (and thus Luke-Acts as a whole) is the idea that the ancestors of Stephen’s accusers rejected Moses, just as they rejected Jesus, and just as they will reject Stephen and those belonging to the Way.¹⁰⁸ One aspect of this rejection that we highlighted above is Moses’s flight from Egypt. The specific changes Luke makes to Moses’s story emphasize his identity as an exile forced to flee on account of his brothers. In the aftermath of Stephen’s martyrdom, the immediate persecution and flight of the church from Jerusalem signal to the reader that Israel’s history of sojourning and exile continues in the church. The frequency with which this continues at key junctures in the story highlights how exile is central to the church’s identity. While most of these instances involve conflicts between the believers and certain Jews, in some cases (such as in Philippi) no Jews are present, and instead the believers are expelled by the Romans. Though Stephen’s speech traces these conflicts back to a split within Israel, the fact that the Christian movement is seen as a political threat by Jews, Romans, and Greeks shows that the issue is not simply “a matter of questions about words and names and your own law” (Acts 18:15) as Gallio says. Rather, as we see through the riot at Ephesus in Acts 19, Luke’s depiction of the church “displays the deep and often troubling cultural destabilization inherent to the early Christian mission.”¹⁰⁹

Not only the frequency with which Luke depicts the expulsion of Christians in his story, but also the *manner* in which he narrates these events underlines exile as a central

¹⁰⁸ Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins*, 95.

¹⁰⁹ Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 49.

part of the church's identity. As I mentioned above, the depiction of the expulsion of believers from Jerusalem in Acts 8:1 is a narrative summary. In narrative criticism, literary critics distinguish between narrative summaries and narrative scenes by considering the difference between story-time and narrative time. Douglas Hume compares the difference between scenes and summaries in narrative criticism:

In *scenes*, the story-time progresses slowly; in *summaries*, more rapidly. Speeches, events, and the actions of characters occur in *scenes* in which the progression of story-time approximates the time one might need to read the length of the text. During a *summary*, on the other hand, a few lines of descriptive text may encompass days, weeks, months, or some indefinite period.¹¹⁰

Most scholars who have written on narrative summaries in Acts have focused on the depiction of the early Christian community in Acts 2:41–47 and Acts 4:32–35.¹¹¹ Authors can use narrative summaries “as a vehicle for focalizing values that are particularly relevant for understanding the narrative,”¹¹² as is the case with the depiction of the community which “had all things in common” (Acts 2:44). Not only do authors use summaries to provide a bridge between episodes, but they also “serve as markers to draw attention to important aspects of the story.”¹¹³ One aspect of the story that the narrative summaries draw attention to is the work's *ecclesiology*. In his study of narrative

¹¹⁰ Douglas A. Hume, *The Early Christian Community: A Narrative Analysis of Acts 2:41–47 and 4:32–35*, WUNT 2 298 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 81, emphasis original.

¹¹¹ Cf. Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 2nd ed. (London: S. P. C. K., 1968), 329; Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Mary Ling (New York: Scribner's, 1956), 9–10; Hume, *The Early Christian Community*; William Andy Chambers, “An Evaluation of Characteristic Activity in a Model Church as Set Forth by the Summary Narratives of Acts” (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Ph.D., 1994); Ulrich Wendel, *Gemeinde in Kraft: Das Gemeindeverständnis in Den Summarien Der Apostelgeschichte*, Neukirchener Theologische Dissertationen Und Habilitationen 20 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener, 1998).

¹¹² Hume, *The Early Christian Community*, 81.

¹¹³ Chambers, “An Evaluation of Characteristic Activity in a Model Church as Set Forth by the Summary Narratives of Acts,” 94.

summaries in Acts, Ulrich Wendel argues that Luke uses summary reports to present an ecclesial model in which God is active with the congregation and the world.¹¹⁴

Except for the scene at Philippi, all the accounts of exile surveyed above are narrative summaries. For example, when Paul and Barnabas begin their ministry in Pisidian Antioch the author uses a narrative scene to depict how they enter the synagogue, sit down, and deliver a sermon after the reading of the law and the prophets (13:14–15). By including the specific actions and words of Paul, the author invites the reader to focus on specific narrative details. However, the response of the city later in the same chapter is told using a narrative summary. We read, “Thus the word of the Lord spread throughout the region” (13:49). What did this entail? Were converts made? Did this involve more preaching? And how many days elapsed in between? As is typical of narrative summaries, the author *tells* the reader what happens, instead of *showing* them directly through dialogue, characters’ interactions, etc. The next verse reads, “But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their region” (13:50). This is another narrative summary which depicts the banishment of Paul and Barnabas. By using a summary form here and in the other instances of exile in Acts, the author portrays this response to the church’s message as a paradigm that characterizes the church’s identity. Similar to how the summaries of the early Christian community in Acts 2 and 4 present a model of an ideal Christian community, the exile of believers due to the *στάσις* that erupts in the city leads the reader to this response which becomes typical or

¹¹⁴ Wendel, *Gemeinde in Kraft: Das Gemeindeverständnis in Den Summarien Der Apostelgeschichte*, 107–9, 283, cited in Hume, *The Early Christian Community*, 9.

paradigmatic for all who belong to the Way. To state this more directly, in the author's view, to be a Christian is to be an exile.

These summaries of exile occur frequently throughout Acts. Narrative critics recognize the repetition of summaries as another way in which narratives either highlight the significance of an event or invite readers to inquire into the themes, motifs, or beliefs that are guiding the story.¹¹⁵ When a theme or motif recurs in a narrative, it can “provide a certain focal consistency, accenting or emphasizing particular perspectives, ideas, or emotions.”¹¹⁶ Within the cultural encyclopedia of the first century, the repetition of the exile of the believers as a consequence of στάσις or παρρησία highlights the rejection of the church's way of life from the polis. Such is the way of the πάροικος who follows in Abraham's footsteps, or the φυγάς who is chased away from home like Moses. Where does the church, then, find its home? What answer does the narrative provide for the trauma and pain of exile?

As stated in the introduction, to understand the ecclesiology of Acts, one must attend to the entire narrative. By depicting the characters of his narrative as political exiles, the author displays narratively the judgment of those outside the church that the Christians do not belong in the city. Like Dio said of the Tarsians, the Christians are exiles in a sense, even if they physically remain in the city, because they are seen as a threat to the πόλις and their leaders are forced to leave. As Rowe argues, to speak of the ecclesiology of Acts is to speak of nothing less than “how to be Christian in a world that

¹¹⁵ James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 42, cited in Hume, *The Early Christian Community*, 83.

¹¹⁶ Hume, *The Early Christian Community*, 84.

did not know what being Christian was.”¹¹⁷ Part of being a Christian, according to Acts, entails rejection, persecution, and banishment from the city.

We have seen similar characterizations of the church’s identity in other early Christian texts, all of which provide their own response to the questions posed by exile. Where is the Christian’s home, then? In a heavenly Jerusalem, says the book of Hebrews. What should one do when thrown out of a city? Look to the city that is to come, says the *Shepherd of Hermas*. What answer does Acts provide to the question of the church’s belonging? One answer we have seen so far is that, like the exilic consolations or Lucian’s *Peregrinus* which looked to the long line of philosopher exiles who preceded them for solace, Luke grounds the church’s displacement in the line of “our fathers” (Acts 7:12), who include Moses, Joseph, and Abraham. As we will see in the next chapter when we turn to the gospel of Luke, the author also fashions the church’s exilic identity according to Jesus’ identity as an exile. As Jesus was banished from his home, so too will his disciples follow in his footsteps.

¹¹⁷ C. Kavin Rowe, “The Ecclesiology of Acts,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 66.3 (2012): 260.

4. Jesus the Exile

In the previous chapter, I looked closely at the way the author of Luke-Acts presents the church as a community of political exiles in the line of their ancestors Abraham, Joseph, and Moses. Throughout my analysis, I hinted at various ways in which the expulsions and flights of the believers parallel what Jesus experiences in Luke. In this chapter, I elaborate on this idea by showing how Jesus is expelled from his hometown of Nazareth. I first consider the importance of “setting” and “place” in narrative more broadly before looking at Nazareth as Jesus’ home. Then, I show how Jesus is expelled from his hometown and the significance of this expulsion for our reading of Acts. Finally, I consider how Luke presents Jesus’ homelessness as a form of discipleship, and how this becomes a paradigm for the church’s life in Acts.

4.1 Settings in Literary Studies

Do you remember the Shire, Mr. Frodo? It’ll be spring soon, and the orchard will be in blossom. And the birds will be nesting in the hazel thicket. And they’ll be sowing the summer barley in the lower fields. Eating the first of the strawberries with cream. Do you remember the taste of strawberries?¹

Towards the end of Peter Jackson’s film adaptation of J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Return of the King*, a weary Sam turns to his friend, a fiery mountain ahead of them both, and recalls the idyllic memory of the Shire, their home. Throughout Tolkien’s odyssey, the Shire functions as a beacon of hope along the protagonists’ travels. The Shire is not just a

¹ *Lord of the Rings* enthusiasts might aver that the print version is far superior to the film, but this same scene in its original form requires more contextual knowledge and thus has less heuristic value: ““Do you remember that bit of rabbit, Mr. Frodo?” he said. ‘And our place under the warm bank in Captain Faramir’s country, the day I saw an oliphant?’” (J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King: Being the Third Part of The Lord of the Rings* [New York: Ballantine Books, 1965], 229).

place on a map, but an emblem of peace, comfort, and family. Despite its absence from much of the story, the setting of the Shire pervades the entire narrative through the characters' tales, memories, and longings.

In biblical literature, settings function in a similar fashion as integral parts of a narrative. In Luke-Acts, for example, Jerusalem casts a long shadow over the entire plot as both the final destination of Jesus' journey and the origin of the Christian movement. While the importance of Jerusalem has occupied much of Lukan scholarship, few studies have probed the significance of Nazareth, the hometown of Jesus, as an important part of the story. This is in part because the related concept of "space" in general has been neglected, not only among New Testament scholars attentive to the narrative dimensions of the NT, but even by narratologists, who have traditionally focused more attention on characterization and plot. Mieke Bal, an expert in narratology, writes, "Together with character, few concepts deriving from the theory of narrative texts are as self-evident and have yet remained so vague as the concept of space."²

A narrative setting is more than just the location of the action or the space the characters inhabit, but it includes the objects that make up the setting, minor characters, and the setting's characteristics (e.g., geography, topography, social structure).³ Indeed, the location of the action is inconceivable apart from the images, associations, and mood generated by a setting such as the Shire, Jerusalem, or Nazareth. When Sam describes the

² Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 133–34.

³ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the NT*, 87–88.

Shire to Frodo, he does not supply its location relative to their current position, but recounts its flora and fauna, its activities, and even its tastes.

Settings also serve various functions in narratives. Distant settings can awaken “the memory of remote times.”⁴ The arrangement of settings in a story might also strengthen various themes by means of parallelism.⁵ While literary theorists have identified many functions of settings, the functions that concern us are primarily their symbolic function through the use of repetition and the displacement of that same setting’s symbolic value. A space can play a symbolic role in a narrative “when it becomes semantically charged and acquires an additional significance on top of its purely scene-setting function.”⁶ Literary historian Leonard Lutwack notes that this can happen through the repetition of associations of places with “certain experiences and values” which help build “a system of archetypal place symbolism.”⁷ An empty room means little on its own. But when placed in a story in which the room was once brimming with activity—children from multiple generations having occupied the space at one time—the empty room suddenly takes on new meaning. A common archetype is the home, which often symbolizes “stability and community” in literature.⁸ Some settings become literary tropes through frequent symbolic usage, such as the *locus amoenus* (lit. “pleasant place”) in classical and modern literature.⁹

55. ⁴ Leonard Lutwack, *The Role of Place in Literature*, 1st ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1984),

⁵ Lutwack, *The Role of Place in Literature*, 66.

⁶ Irene J. F. de Jong, “Introduction. Narratological Theory on Space,” in *Space in Ancient Greek Literature: Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative*, ed. Irene J. F. de Jong, Mnemosyne Supplements 339 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 15.

⁷ Lutwack, *The Role of Place in Literature*, 31.

⁸ Lutwack, *The Role of Place in Literature*, 31.

⁹ de Jong, “Introduction. Narratological Theory on Space,” 15.

The repetition of a setting or its associations not only contributes to that setting's symbolic function as an archetype, but it also allows for the opportunity to displace or disrupt the convention created through repetition.¹⁰ Matthew Skinner, who analyzes Paul's prison settings in *Locating Paul*, explains, "As similar associations accumulate through repetition, the possibility of a typical understanding of a setting or the symbolic value of a setting materializes. Any subsequent repetition, however, later in a narrative, holds the potential to signal change."¹¹

Finally, a setting contributes to the portrayal of the character occupying a place by "representing the type of person he is and his function in the story."¹² For example, the apostle Paul's visceral reaction in Acts 17 to the setting of Athens, littered with various idols, contributes to our picture of Paul as a restless missionary, unable to remain silent while waiting for his co-laborers. The Jewish synagogue and the Greek marketplace as the settings of his subsequent debates also characterize him as a truly cosmopolitan figure.

In what ways does the setting of Nazareth contribute to our picture of Jesus? What does Nazareth symbolize, and how is that symbolic value possibly displaced in Luke 4:16–30? Jesus' statement that "no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown" (4:24) highlights the significance of Nazareth for Jesus; it was his hometown (πατρίς), the place where he was raised (τεθραμμένος, 4:16). What "experiences and values" inform our understanding of Jesus' home? Before considering the context of Luke 1–4, I will

¹⁰ Matthew L. Skinner, *Locating Paul: Places of Custody as Narrative Settings in Acts 21–28*, AcBib 13 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 51.

¹¹ Skinner, *Locating Paul*, 51.

¹² Lutwack, *The Role of Place in Literature*, 69.

briefly discuss the significance of hometowns in ancient literature to place the narrative of Luke's gospel in its broader Greco-Roman context.

4.2 Hometowns in Ancient Literature

Nazareth is Jesus' πατρίς, his hometown, and while the notion of a "hometown" has lost much of its symbolic value for us who live in a globalized world with opportunities to easily relocate, the πατρίς in Greek literature had by Luke's day become a literary trope symbolizing a place of safety, kinship, and shared customs. In Greek literature, the πατρίς plays an important role in stories stretching at least as far back as Homer's *Odyssey*. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus's homeland serves a significant nostalgic role throughout the story as the ultimate end goal of his wanderings. He says of his homeland, "So true is it that nothing is sweeter than one's [homeland] (πατρίδος) and one's parents" (*Odyssey* 9.34).

In the Greek novels of the first and second centuries CE, the main protagonists' hometowns act as places of social stability and safety, while life outside of the hometown, where much of the action takes place, is filled with danger, pirates, barbarians, and the like.¹³ Indeed, most of the novels written in this time period, including Chariton's *Callirhoe*, Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale*, and Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, follow the basic plotline of love, separation, travel, trials, and reunion. When

¹³ My point in using the novels as comparanda is not to argue for the genre of Luke's gospel or Acts, but rather to provide a thick description of the use of hometowns as settings in literature roughly contemporaneous with Luke's gospel and Acts. By doing so, I aim to highlight how ancient authors thematized the πατρίς as a place of safety, kinship, and customs, and how they reaffirmed and subverted these themes through the course of their narratives. On the genre debate in Luke-Acts, see Daniel Lynwood Smith and Zachary Lundin Kostopoulos, "Biography, History and the Genre of Luke-Acts," *NTS* 63.3 (2017): 390–410.

the main characters are separated from their hometowns, they lament the loss of each other and the loss of all that is familiar. For example, in Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale*, the protagonists set sail from Ephesus only to be captured by pirates. They cry out, "Ah father ... ah mother, dearest homeland (πατρίς), household (οἰκεῖτοι), and family (συγγενεῖς)!" (2.1.2) Tim Whitmarsh says of the novels, "The safety of the individual is only guaranteed in the context of the Greek city where festivals and assemblies signal the enfranchisement of the entire populace."¹⁴ Furthermore, he writes, "*Callirhoe* and [*The Ephesian Tale*] are ... fundamentally about social life in one's native *polis*, and the traumas that occur when one is cut off from that."¹⁵

Judith Perkins agrees that the Greek novels of the first and second centuries celebrate life in one's home city by depicting the city as a place of safety and stability and the outside world as a place of danger. She explains,

The four ideal romances are specifically works of social mapping. Each romance begins and ends in a city, and the extensive traveling that separates that beginning and ending demonstrates how the city provides individuals their only security and safety. Within the home city, love, civic festivals, and social rituals such as marriage predominate; outside, pirate attacks, reduction to slavery, imprisonment, torture, and near death. The Greek romance presumes boundaries and legitimated social spaces. Once the loving couple leave their city—its streets, homes, and temples—they encounter danger and destruction.¹⁶

The significance of the hometown lies not in its geographic location, but the "experiences and values" that the home has acquired. In the novels, the home acts as a metonymy for the safety the characters enjoy within their community.

¹⁴ Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity in the Ancient Greek Novel*, 32.

¹⁵ Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity in the Ancient Greek Novel*, 41–42.

¹⁶ Judith Perkins, "Space, Place, Voice in the Acts of the Martyrs and the Greek Romance," in *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity*, ed. Dennis Ronald MacDonald (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 124.

The home city is also where romance begins, always in the context of the community and its rituals. In *Ephesian Tale*, the protagonists first meet each other at a festival when “it was customary (ἔθος ἦν) at this assemblage to find husbands for the girls and wives for the ephebes” (1.2.3).¹⁷ In Chariton’s *Callirhoe*, the whole city plays a pivotal role in the union of the protagonists. Because Hermocrates, father of Callirhoe, refuses to consent to the marriage, the city gathers an assembly (ἐκκλησία) and cries out, “Excellent Hermocrates, mighty leader, save Chaereas! This will be your greatest triumph. The city petitions for the marriage today of a couple worthy of each other” (1.1.11). Hermocrates relents to their request because of his patriotism (φιλόπατρις, 1.1.12), or literally because he loved his home city (πατρίς). The city is thus filled with jubilation: “The marriage hymn sounded throughout the city; the streets were filled with garlands and torches, and the doorways sprinkled with wine and perfume. The Syracusans celebrated this day with more joy than the day of their victory over the Athenians” (1.1.13). This vivid description imbues the setting of Syracuse with the sense that the couple and the city are tied in a reciprocal relationship; the couple unites only when the city supports them, and the welfare of the city depends on the couple’s union. As Perkins argues, “The narratives of Chariton and Xenophon explicitly marked the symbiotic relationship between the couple and the civic body.”¹⁸ In this way, the authors of the novels use the setting of the protagonists’ hometown to idealize the city through the rituals, kinship bonds, and stability that promoted social cohesion.

¹⁷ Cited in Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1995), 50.

¹⁸ Perkins, *The Suffering Self*, 49.

Given how these narratives begin with a celebration of the relationship between the protagonists and their hometowns, when they are thrust far away into foreign lands, readers are left to wonder how the loss of the home will be resolved in the narrative. The home cities of the protagonists have become associated with “certain experiences and values”¹⁹ which come into focus when their hometowns are “lost” in exile. Time away from home signifies “an inversion (geographic, cultural and ethical) of the *patris*,”²⁰ until the protagonists return safely to their homes at the conclusion. In this way, the novels reaffirm, rather than subvert, the home city as places of safety, kinship, and shared customs.

If the novels are works that celebrate the home, the exilic consolations also depict the significance of one’s home through loss and lament, though their aim is to subvert rather than reaffirm the connection between one’s πατρίς and one’s identity. Like the novels, the exilic consolations conceive of the πατρίς as a place of common customs, family, and friends. Favorinus writes in his *On Exile* that, among the burdens one must endure in exile, “First, then, is [... love of one’s fatherland ...]. Second is strong affection for one’s kin (ξυγγενῶν) and familiar companionship” (6.1).²¹ Favorinus goes on to say that “longing for friends and relatives at home ... reminds one of one’s birth, and of one’s common upbringing since childhood, assailing one with trips together to school, time shared together in gymnasia and pleasurable meetings with contemporaries and those who were enrolled at the same time, drugs and lures (as it were for the soul)”

¹⁹ Lutwack, *The Role of Place in Literature*, 31.

²⁰ Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity in the Ancient Greek Novel*, 45.

²¹ The English translation is Tim Whitmarsh’s translation found in Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire*, 302–24; For the Greek text, see Barigazzi, *Favorino Di Arelate, Opere: Introduzione, Testo Critico e Commento*.

(15.1). Losing one's "home" means not only losing friends and family, but the shared experiences of growing up together, common rituals and customs such as attending school and enrolling in one's local gymnasium. And yet Favorinus relativizes the significance of one's home by saying that the loss of one's home is only a loss in one's mind. The same kinds of altars, gymnasia, and even water can be found anywhere, as long as one has the right mindset (7.3).

When we consider Luke's gospel with this background in mind, we can ask whether the portrayal of Nazareth coheres with what we see in the literature of this time. Does the author of Luke reaffirm the values associated with the home? Or does the repetition of these themes ultimately lead to a subversion of them in the narrative?

4.3 Nazareth as Jesus' Πατρίς

In Luke 4:16, we read that the adult Jesus "came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up (τεθραμμένος), and he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath as was his custom (κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς αὐτοῦ)." According to Michael Wolter, the word τεθραμμένος "is a biographical *terminus technicus* and refers to the entirety of the growing up of children from the age of infancy to the age of [maturity]."²² In other words, by mentioning that Nazareth was where he was raised, the author signals to the reader that we should read the rest of the scene in light of what came before in Luke's infancy narrative, or to put it

²² Michael Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke*, trans. Wayne Coppins and Christoph Heilig (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 199, who cites Acts 22:3; Plato, *Republic* 572c; Isocrates, *Panathenaicus* 198; Plutarch, *Aemilius Paullus* 21.2; *Nicias* 5.3; *Alexander* 74.2; Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 1.141.

in narrative terms, in light of the symbolic significance of Nazareth as Jesus' πατρίς.²³

The first reference to Nazareth comes in 2:39 when Mary and Joseph return with Jesus to Nazareth from Jerusalem, but to understand the symbolic value of Nazareth in Luke 4:16 we must expand our inquiry beyond explicit mentions of Nazareth to the entirety of Jesus' childhood. In what follows, I will elaborate on how Nazareth, Jesus' πατρίς, acts as a metonym for everything represented by his hometown: stability, safety, and kinship.

The first four chapters of Luke's gospel are filled with stories of Jesus and his extended family. In these stories, we meet his parents and relatives as they practice their Jewish customs in a world dominated by Rome, as we learn in 2:1. The presence of these customs underscores the stability of the hometown in contrast to the dangers posed by what is unfamiliar or foreign. Like in the novels, Jesus' close circle of family and friends constitute the safety net represented by his πατρίς. The story of Jesus' upbringing begins with his relatives Elizabeth and Zechariah, the parents of his forerunner John the Baptist. Like Jesus, who enters the synagogue in Nazareth in 4:16 "as was his custom" (κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς αὐτοῦ), Zechariah is chosen by lot to enter the temple "according to the custom of the priesthood" (κατὰ τὸ ἔθος τῆς ἱερατείας, 1:9). By itself, this reference to Zechariah's adherence to custom seems insignificant, but Luke uses the term ἔθος and its cognates four times in ch. 1–4.²⁴

In 2:27, Mary and Joseph present Jesus to Simeon at the temple as was "customary under the law" (κατὰ τὸ εἰθισμένον τοῦ νόμου). In 2:42, the twelve-year old

²³ John Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, WBC 35A (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2000), 195, says that "where he was brought up" links this scene to the infancy narrative.

²⁴ Luke only uses this phrase again in his gospel at 22:39, where Jesus goes "as was his custom" (κατὰ τὸ ἔθος) to the Mount of Olives. That Luke uses this phrase here is not significant. What *is* significant is the fact that he uses this phrase (rare in the NT) four times in Luke 1–4.

Jesus and his parents travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover “according to the custom of the Feast” (κατὰ τὸ ἔθος τῆς ἑορτῆς). Finally, at thirty years of age (3:23), Jesus enters the synagogue in Nazareth “as was his custom” (κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς αὐτοῦ, 4:16). At various stages of Jesus’ life, whether before his birth (1:9), shortly after his birth (2:27), at twelve years of age (2:42), or at adulthood (4:16), Jesus and his family members act “according to custom.” The repetition of this phrase in Luke’s depiction of Jesus’ childhood contributes to a picture of Jesus’ hometown as socially stable. Jesus and his family members go about their lives in a predictable fashion, and the use of the term “custom” emphasizes the ordinary or “everyday character of the events.”²⁵ It reminds us of the scenes in the novels where social rituals such as civic festivals symbolized the cohesion and stability of the home city. It is also parallel to Favorinus’s description of how exile reminds him of customs such as “trips together to school, time shared together in gymnasia” (15.1).

In addition, customs and familiar habits played an integral role in preserving social cohesion in an honor-shame culture such as first-century Palestine. These customs would have been taught to children from birth and would have formed the matrix of social stability in a society that valued group identity over individual expression.²⁶ Indeed, the example of Paul and Silas in Acts 16 supports this point. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas exorcise a spirit from a slave girl, only to be seized by her owners, beaten, and thrown into prison. The people of Philippi charge them with “disturbing our city”

²⁵ Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50*, 109.

²⁶ Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, “First-Century Personality: Dyadic, Not Individualistic,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 94.

(ἐκταράσσουσιν ἡμῶν τὴν πόλιν, 16:20) by advocating unlawful “customs” (ἔθη, 16:21). According to the people, Paul and Silas were advocating that they act οὐ κατὰ τὰ ἔθη, which shows how closely the ἔθη were tied to social stability and the welfare of their πόλις.

Not only is Jesus’ hometown a place of stability, but it is also a place of safety from foreign dangers. Though Jesus’ family takes center stage in this introductory material, foreign powers loom in the background as ever-present threats. Luke begins his story in 1:5 by situating the story “in the days of King Herod of Judea.” As a “Roman client-king,” Herod “represented Rome to a people among whom many chafed under foreign domination.”²⁷ Herod was a Roman compromiser, and his threat to Jewish purity stands in direct contrast to the priest Zechariah, who follows the customs of the priesthood. Later in 2:1, the birth of Jesus takes place in the context of a census decreed by the Emperor Augustus, which forces Joseph to travel away from his home to Bethlehem where Mary gives birth to Jesus. In both these scenes, the ruling Gentile (or Gentile-influenced) powers contrast with the humble Jewish families of Galilee/Judea. The repetition of this juxtaposition presents Jesus’ home, vis-à-vis his family, as a place of safety.

Jesus’ home of Nazareth is also the place where he “grew and became strong” (2:40) and “increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor” (2:52). Both Mary’s Magnificat (1:46–55) and Zechariah’s prophecy (1:67–79) foretell of a day when Jesus will embody the role of Israel’s deliverer from their oppressors (in this case,

²⁷ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 64.

Herod and Augustus), and Nazareth is described as the place where Jesus' preparation progresses. His home is thus not only a place of safety, but a place where Israel's future hope for safety is becoming a reality.

Perhaps the most obvious symbolism that is created through repetition is the home as a place of kinship. Luke 1–2 narrates the story of Jesus' small circle of relatives, neighbors, and acquaintances. When Elizabeth gives birth to her son, her “neighbors and relatives” (οἱ περίοικοι καὶ οἱ συγγενεῖς, 1:58) rejoice with her. These same relatives are involved in naming her son when they say, “None of your relatives (ἐκ τῆς συγγενείας σου) has this name [John]” (1:61). When Zechariah's mouth is opened, fear falls upon all their “neighbors” (περιοικοῦντας, 1:65). Later in the narrative, when Mary and Joseph cannot find Jesus after a day's journey from Jerusalem, they search for him “among their relatives and friends” (ἐν τοῖς συγγενεῦσιν καὶ τοῖς γνωστοῖς, 2:44). That the activities of Jesus' family happen among relatives, neighbors, and friends highlights the close-knit character of this community. Indeed, such close bonds between neighbors and relatives were standard in the first-century Mediterranean world where “family membership was the primary determinant of identity, role, and allegiance.”²⁸

In summary, the picture of Jesus' home that arises from a close reading of Luke 1–2 is of the home as a place of stability, safety, and kinship. Jesus' hometown of Nazareth, wrapped up in all these associations of relatives, friends, and the experiences of childhood, functions as a quasi-*locus amoenus*, not unlike hometowns found elsewhere in

²⁸ John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 189.

Greek literature.²⁹ Perkins says that traveling is used in the novels to portray a character's hometown as a "haven and protector of social existence,"³⁰ such as when Callirhoe, upon entering non-Greek lands on her way to Babylon, is "filled with longing for her home and family."³¹ The gospel of Luke is filled with stories of travel, but no such longing occurs on Jesus' part. Instead, a decisive break occurs between Jesus and his hometown in Luke 4, to which we now turn.

4.4 The Expulsion of Jesus in Luke 4:16–30

After Mary and Joseph find a twelve-year old Jesus teaching in the temple, they return with him to Nazareth where he increases "in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor" (2:52). We know nothing of the intervening years between this point and the beginning of his ministry at age thirty (3:23), but the use of the imperfect *προέκοπτεν* in 2:52 may suggest that this was a continuous process. In other words, the repetition of associations from Jesus' childhood likely continued during this period of growth.

As mentioned earlier, such repetition of a setting's symbolism allows for the opportunity to displace or disrupt conventions. In Luke 4:16, Jesus returns to Nazareth, where he was raised (*τεθραμμένος*), and enters the synagogue "as was his custom" (*κατὰ*

²⁹ I say "quasi" because Luke does not include many details about the natural environment that would suggest Nazareth or Galilee should be viewed as a type of garden or paradise, as is often the case with *loci amoeni* in Greek literature. Cf. Philip Russell Hardie, "Locus Amoenus," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

³⁰ Perkins, "Space, Place, Voice in the Acts of the Martyrs and the Greek Romance," 125.

³¹ Chariton, *Callirhoe* 5.1.3; cited in *ibid*.

τὸ εἰωθὸς αὐτῷ). These phrases repeat the associations of chs. 1–2 and prime the reader to expect that, as before, Jesus’ home will be a place of stability, safety, and kinship.

This indeed seems to be the case based on the audience’s initial reaction to Jesus’ message. They are “amazed” (ἐθαύμαζον, 4:22) at his words, much like the people waiting for Zechariah (ἐθαύμαζον, 1:21), the people present at Jesus’ birth (ἐθαύμασαν, 2:18), and Jesus’ parents at Simeon’s prophecy (θαυμάζοντες, 2:33). But Jesus disrupts their (and our) expectations by recounting how God sent Elijah and Elisha to the Gentiles and not to the people of Israel. Why does this elicit such murderous rage from the people?

Some scholars believe this scene is paradigmatic for how the Jews later resist Jesus’ disciples in Acts.³² Bovon posits a possible “typological connection between Nazareth and Jerusalem” such that Luke here foreshadows Jesus’ eventual death. Others argue that Jesus’ point is to emphasize how his mission reaches outsiders such as the hungry and leprous.³³ While there may be varying degrees of truth to these conclusions, they all focus on *what* Jesus says and not *to whom* he speaks nor *where* this takes place.

Jesus is likely speaking here to his relatives and friends (the συγγενεῖς and γνωστοί of 2:44) who make up his social circle and were present during his childhood (hence their question about his lineage in 4:22), such as when Mary and Joseph searched for the lost Jesus “among their relatives and friends.” The fact that Jesus speaks to his kin in *Nazareth*, his πατρίς, prepares the reader for a message that aligns with the symbolic

³² Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 209.

³³ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 218.

value that Jesus' hometown has acquired.³⁴ What is surprising then about this scene is not the reaction of the audience, but *Jesus'* provocative message.

The audience initially responds positively to Jesus' initial declaration that scripture is being fulfilled in their hearing (4:21), which is not surprising given the prior connections made between Jesus' fate and the fulfillment of scriptural promises by Mary (1:46–55) and Simeon (2:29–32). But they have not truly grasped the significance of Jesus' calling, and so Jesus declares in parabolic form that his message will go to those outside the community, including to Gentiles. Not only does his universal message threaten the social stability of a community that preserves traditional customs, but it also threatens their safety.

Jesus' family in ch. 1–2 symbolized a haven from Gentile powers, but Jesus' message of outreach to outsiders, including Gentiles, undermines the community's protective barriers by threatening to go against established customs. Furthermore, the stories of Elijah and Elisha likely threaten the kinship of the community, which conceives of kinship beyond the immediate family as constituted by the entire Jewish nation.³⁵ The symbolic value of Jesus' home as a place of kinship, built up in the previous chapters, is disrupted when Jesus speaks of welcoming outsiders, and the people attempt to kill him. Luke 4:16–30, then, signals a decisive break between Jesus and the haven of his home. From this point forward, there will be no safe place for Jesus, a point made clear by the

³⁴ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke: Introduction, Translation, and Notes (I-IX)*, AB 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 529, says, "Luke has deliberately put [Jesus' visit to Nazareth] at the beginning of his public ministry to encapsulate the entire ministry of Jesus and the reaction to it."

³⁵ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 188, says that the stories of Elijah and Elisha helping Gentiles rather than the people of Israel find a parallel in the way Jesus "will leave [Nazareth] and bring the gospel to those outside his home town." Such a message from Jesus disrupts the close kinship bond between Jesus and the people of Nazareth.

fact that the symbol of Jesus' home as a place of stability, safety, and kinship completely disappears after chapter 4.

In response to Jesus, the people of Nazareth—likely including his συγγενεῖς, γνωστοί, and περίοικοι—throw him out of the city (ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως, 4:29). Jesus, in essence, is rendered homeless. Not only does he never return to Nazareth, but his relatives never actually reappear in person in the story.³⁶ Even Jesus' immediate family members do not meet him again.³⁷ As I showed in previous chapters, the verb ἐκβάλλω is often used in cases of banishment or expulsion, as we see in Acts. The phrase “they threw him out of the city” (ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως) is parallel to the Jerusalem leaders' reaction to Stephen in Acts 7. In 7:58, the author writes that they “threw him out of the city” (ἐκβαλόντες ἔξω τῆς πόλεως) before stoning him. Scholars have recognized various parallels between Jesus and Stephen, such as the reference to the Son of Man at both their trials (Luke 22:69; Acts 7:56), their offer of forgiveness to their persecutors (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60), and their giving up their spirits (Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59). A parallel that is less often recognized is the fact that they are both expelled from the city.³⁸

Why does the author connect the expulsions of Jesus and Stephen? As I showed in chapter 3, Stephen's speech connects his own expulsion to the experience of the prophets before him, such as Moses who was forced to flee from Egypt (Acts 7:29) and the

³⁶ The term συγγενής is used again in Luke 14:12 and 21:16, but only in direct speech.

³⁷ In Luke 8:19–21, Jesus' mother and brothers wish to see him, but are unable to meet him because of the crowd.

³⁸ Though see Michal Beth Dinkler, “The Politics of Stephen's Storytelling: Narrative Rhetoric and Reflexivity in Acts 7:2–53,” *ZNW* 111.1 (2020): 62–63, who recognizes this parallel between the two scenes and argues that “Stephen imitates *not* the Jesus of Luke's passion account, but the Jesus of Luke 4:16–30.” Cf. also Holladay, *Acts*, 202.

believers who are forced to flee or are banished from their cities throughout Acts. By connecting Stephen's expulsion with Jesus' expulsion, the author shows how Stephen's experience, and thus the church's experience throughout Acts, follows the pattern established by Jesus himself. Indeed, Stephen concludes his speech by indicting his audience for murdering Jesus, just as their ancestors persecuted (ἐδίωξαν, 7:52) the prophets, and just as they will raise up a persecution (διωγμός, 8:1; 13:50) against the church. Some scholars argue that the Nazareth pericope of Luke 4:16–30 is paradigmatic for the rest of Luke-Acts, partly because it presents Jesus' rejection at Nazareth as a “dress-rehearsal” for his rejection and death in Jerusalem.³⁹ If so, then the Jesus-Stephen connection is strengthened even further, for not only are they both expelled, but they are martyred.

What are we to make of this homeless Jesus? Nazareth was initially a safe haven for Jesus during the period of his growth into maturity, but when he returned to Nazareth after his baptism and temptation in the wilderness, his message of God's favor extending to the world was rejected, and him along with it. Jesus' rejection by Nazareth serves as a concrete example of his later maxim that “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (9:58). Jesus rejects the comfort of a stable home for the life of an itinerant preacher.⁴⁰ As he departs from Nazareth, the reader is left to wonder—what will become of Jesus' home? Has Jesus rejected his home, or even the idea or necessity of a home and family?

³⁹ Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 200; Cf. also Carroll, *Luke*, 108; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 529.

⁴⁰ François Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51–19:27*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. Donald S. Deer, *Hermeneia* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 12, notes that this maxim pictures the Son of Man as “a homeless person.”

4.5 Wandering Without a Home

After the scene in Nazareth, we read in Luke 4:31 that Jesus “came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee.” This section (4:31–37) recounts the acts of Jesus done in Capernaum (4:23), which the author redacts from Mark’s account in Mark 1:21–28. Unlike in Mark and Matthew, the Lukan Jesus does not spend a significant portion of his time in Capernaum. In Matt 4:13, Jesus leaves Nazareth to “reside” (κατόκησεν) in Capernaum, but the author of Luke does not mention Jesus living in a house in Capernaum. Indeed, given what we have seen in Stephen’s speech, where those who belong to the Way are portrayed as *πάροικοι* who *do not* reside (κατοικεῖτε, Acts 7:4) in Jerusalem, it’s not surprising that the Lukan Jesus, the founder of this movement, does not dwell in any single town or place. In contrast to Luke, however, Mark depicts Capernaum “as the center of Jesus’ Galilean ministry.”⁴¹

In Mark 1:21–34, Jesus begins his ministry in Capernaum after calling his first disciples in 1:16–20. In Mark 1:39, he tells Simon that he must preach in other towns as well and leaves Capernaum to preach “throughout all Galilee.” However, in Mark 2:1, he returns to Capernaum where “it was reported that he was at home (ἐν οἴκῳ).” The Greek phrase “ἐν οἴκῳ” can mean either “at home” or “in a house,” and Adela Yarbro Collins argues that the phrase here likely means Jesus was “at home,” though it’s not clear whose house this was.⁴² She says later regarding Mark 9:33, where Jesus returns again to

⁴¹ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 543.

⁴² Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia 55 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 184.

Capernaum and is “in the house” (ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ), that this is a reference to Jesus’ home.⁴³ Others, however, understand the οἶκος/οἰκία in Mark 2:1 and 9:33 as referring to Peter’s home. Joel Marcus writes that Peter’s house was Jesus’ “base of operations at the beginning of his ministry.”⁴⁴ Whether the house refers to Jesus’ own home or Peter’s, Mark portrays Capernaum as Jesus’ place of residence, unlike Luke.

The episode in Mark 2:1–12, where the paralytic is let down from the roof, takes place in Capernaum upon Jesus’ return. In Matt 9:1–8, which depends on the Markan account, it says Jesus “came to his own town” (τὴν ἰδίαν πόλιν, 9:1), which indicates again how Capernaum is Jesus’ home, the place where he resided (κατόκησεν, 4:13). In Luke, however, the episode takes place in 5:17–26 with no geographic referent. In fact, it takes place after Jesus bids farewell to Capernaum in 4:42–44. Both Mark and Matthew place this scene in Capernaum, so we must consider why Luke decides not to. We can say with a good degree of confidence that Luke is using Mark as his source, so this redaction is an intentional change.⁴⁵ If Luke is also using Matthew, then he has diverged from both his sources on this point.⁴⁶ In Luke’s narrative, Jesus is not thrown out of Nazareth to then make his home elsewhere; in Luke’s gospel, he has no home. Indeed, as many have argued, the Lukan Jesus is depicted as one who is on a journey to Jerusalem.⁴⁷ Luke

⁴³ Collins, *Mark*, 444.

⁴⁴ Joel Marcus, ed., *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 1st ed., AB 27 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 215.

⁴⁵ For a concise overview of the “Synoptic Problem” and Luke’s use of Mark, see Mark S. Goodacre, *The Synoptic Problem: A Way through the Maze*, The Biblical Seminar 80 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

⁴⁶ My argument does not depend on Luke’s knowledge of and use of Matthew, so I will not pursue this line of argumentation here. However, for a defense of Luke’s use of Matthew, see Mark S. Goodacre, *The Case against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002).

⁴⁷ Much has been written on the so-called Lukan travel narrative or Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. Cf. David P. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); Walter Grundmann, “Fragen der Komposition des Lukanischen ‘Reiseberichts,’”

removes the references to Capernaum as Jesus' home found in Mark and Matthew to highlight how Jesus has no home.⁴⁸ He emphasizes this point in 4:42–44, a scene which Luke has taken from Mark 1:35–38. In Luke 4:42–44, after Jesus performs many miraculous signs in Capernaum, he retreats to a deserted place. In the Markan account, Simon and those with him come to Jesus and say, “Everyone is searching for you” (1:37). In Luke 4:42, the crowds (οἱ ὄχλοι) of Capernaum come themselves and “wanted to prevent him from leaving them (μὴ πορεύεσθαι ἀπ’ αὐτῶν).” Bovon writes that the crowd’s reaction evokes their sense of abandonment.⁴⁹ In Mark, there is no sense that Jesus is abandoning or leaving Capernaum; the disciples seek him because he has withdrawn to a deserted place to pray.⁵⁰

What we can conclude from this comparison between the synoptic gospels is that the author of Luke intentionally portrayed the banished Jesus as one who has no residence, either in Nazareth or Capernaum. This contributes to the portrait of Jesus in Luke as a homeless wanderer, who, like the prophets before him was a πάροικος. Indeed, even at the end of Luke’s gospel, when Jesus meets two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, Cleopas asks him, “Are you the only stranger (παροικεῖς) in Jerusalem who

ZNW 50.3–4 (1959): 252–70; Frank J. Matera, “Jesus’ Journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9.51–19.46): A Conflict with Israel,” *JSNT* 51 (1993): 57–77; I. J. du Plessis, “Reading Luke 12:35–48 as Part of the Travel Narrative,” *Neotestamentica* 22.2 (1988): 217–34; Wm. C. Robinson Jr., “The Theological Context for Interpreting Luke’s Travel Narrative (9:51 Ff.),” *JBL* 79.1 (1960): 20–31; David P. Moessner, “Luke 9:1–50: Luke’s Preview of the Journey of the Prophet like Moses of Deuteronomy,” *JBL* 102.4 (1983): 575–605; David Gill, “Observations on the Lukan Travel Narrative and Some Related Passages,” *HTR* 63.2 (1970): 199–221.

⁴⁸ Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50*, 178, says that Luke deletes the note about this taking place in Capernaum “since, according to him, Jesus has left this city forever (4:42–44).”

⁴⁹ Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50*, 165.

⁵⁰ While it’s true that in Luke 7:1 Jesus returns to Capernaum where he is met by a centurion, his stay there is brief and there is no indication that it formed the base of his ministry or was his residence, as in Mark and Matthew. Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50*, 257 says concerning 7:1 that Luke “does not give the impression that Capernaum was Jesus’ most important place of residence.”

does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” While the terms *παροικέω* and *πάροικος* designated the status of a foreigner or resident alien, it likely has no technical meaning here.⁵¹ Nevertheless, when read in light of Jesus’ banishment from Nazareth, his abandonment of Capernaum, his journeying to Jerusalem, and the identity of the prophets as *πάροικοι* in Acts 7, Cleopas’s question underscores Jesus’ identity as “the Son of Man [who] has nowhere to lay his head” (Luke 9:58).

4.6 Renouncing Your Family

When Philo reflects on the hardships of exile, he often speaks of the loss of one’s native land and family. Highlighting Abraham as someone who overcame these hardships, he writes that Abraham was “so firm and unmoved of purpose” that he did not “yield and succumb to the charms of kinsfolk (*συγγενῶν*) and country (*πατρίδος*)” (*Abr.* 62). This coheres with what we find in other exilic writings that connect the trauma of exile with the loss of one’s family.

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus is expelled from his *πατρίς* by those who knew him best—his neighbors and relatives. As mentioned above, his family does not appear again through the rest of the narrative. Jesus’ homelessness is not only a lack of a permanent residence, but a break from his family. Arland Jacobson notes that in the gospels, the homelessness of Jesus “is interpreted as entailing the renunciation of family ties. It should be added that the dissolution of family ties would also entail a rupture of ties to relatives and indeed the whole community. The traumatic nature of the dissolution of family ties

⁵¹ Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51–19:27*, 373.

can hardly be overestimated.”⁵² In this section, I examine the texts where Jesus discusses this dissolution of the family to show how this aspect of Jesus’ homeless identity—his lack of a family—appears not as an unfortunate consequence of his ministry, but as an essential part of what it means to follow him. In other words, renouncing one’s family forms a vital part of a life of discipleship.

In Luke 9:51–56, as Jesus begins his journey to Jerusalem, he is rejected by a Samaritan village (9:53) and must move on to another place. This rejection becomes an opportunity for Jesus to speak about the cost of following him. Indeed, Joel Green argues that Luke often “correlates a travel notice with material on discipleship.”⁵³ Significantly, Luke writes that Jesus and his disciples are traveling “on the road” (ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, 9:57) when someone approaches and asks to follow (ἀκολουθήσω) him. This not only signals that it will be “on the journey that instruction leading to the formation of faithful disciples will be provided,”⁵⁴ but that discipleship itself involves being “on the road” with Jesus. In Acts, the members of the Way (ὁδός) journey from place to place as they face expulsion and banishment, just as Jesus is rejected from Nazareth and a Samaritan village. Being on the way thus becomes a central part of the church’s identity.

In Luke 9:58–62, Jesus articulates the cost of following him:

And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”⁵⁹ To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”⁶⁰ But Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”⁶¹ Another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to

⁵² Arland D. Jacobson, “Jesus against the Family: The Dissolution of Family Ties in the Gospel Tradition,” in *From Quest to Q: Festschrift James M. Robinson*, ed. Jón Ma. Ásgeirsson, Kristin de Troyer, and Marvin W. Meyer, BETL 146 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 191.

⁵³ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 406.

⁵⁴ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 406.

those at my home.”⁶² Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

The first person who comes to Jesus and asks to follow him is told that following Jesus entails the lack of a place to lay one’s head, or homelessness. Earlier we saw how Jesus has no physical place of residence, and how his expulsion from Nazareth is a concrete instantiation of Jesus’ maxim that “the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

However, the broader context of Jesus’ teaching shows how this phrase goes beyond the mere absence of a physical residence. As Halvor Moxnes writes, “It speaks about a person who has been deprived of all that which comes with having a place, a person outside of human community and the identity that goes with it.”⁵⁵ This passage on discipleship points to the loss of one’s family that attends the proclamation of the kingdom. Jesus’ injunction to the second person underscores this point.

To the second person, Jesus demands complete allegiance, even beyond the expected duties of a person to his or her parents. In response to Jesus’ call, this person requests to first go and bury his father. Such a request was, according to Marshall, “a religious duty of the utmost importance.”⁵⁶ For a Jew, the burial of one’s parents was part of honoring them in fidelity to the Torah. Jesus, however, says that he should “let the dead bury their own dead,” which most interpreters understand to mean leaving the “spiritually” dead to bury them.⁵⁷ John Barclay says that such a saying is “so counter to the family values of the ancient world that it is practically unparalleled in all ancient

⁵⁵ Halvor Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 51.

⁵⁶ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 411. He cites Gen 50:5; Tob 4:3; 6:15; SB I, 487–489; IV: 1,578–592 for support.

⁵⁷ So Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 411; Carroll, *Luke*, 231; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 836.

literature.”⁵⁸ The third person asks to bid farewell to his family before joining Jesus, which he also rejects. Compared with Elijah, who allowed Elisha to say goodbye to his parents before joining him (1 Kgs 19:20), Jesus’ requirement is stricter. How should we understand Jesus’ radical response? To both the second and third person, Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God. In light of the coming of the kingdom, Jesus demands a reordering of priorities or a “reorganization of former allegiances,”⁵⁹ even to one’s family. This line of teaching continues throughout Jesus’ ministry whenever potential disciples wish to follow him. In Luke 14, Jesus says to the crowds that only those who “hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters” (14:26) can be his disciples. Following Jesus may also entail being “betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives (συγγενῶν) and friends” (21:16). The συγγενεῖς of Nazareth, who did in fact betray Jesus, stand in the background of such teachings as a reminder that Jesus himself has already experienced the trials of discipleship. As Fitzmyer writes, “The following of Jesus does not simply mean imitation of him, but entering into the very conditions of his life, ministry, and lot.”⁶⁰

But Jesus does not simply reject the convention of family when speaking of discipleship. This kingdom-oriented reorganization of allegiances entails leaving one’s family to join a *new* family, “one located not in a household but in the mobile, boundary-breaking realm of God.”⁶¹ Jesus speaks at various points about this new family. In Luke

⁵⁸ John M. G. Barclay, “The Family as the Bearer of Religion in Judaism and Early Christianity,” in *Constructing Early Christian Families : Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 74.

⁵⁹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 408.

⁶⁰ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 834.

⁶¹ Carroll, *Luke*, 231.

8:19–21, Jesus’ mother and brothers attempt to meet him, but Jesus diverts attention away from them and declares, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it” (8:21). Carroll notes that Jesus’ ministry is establishing a new “fictive kinship” group “that welcomes any who orient their lives around the revelatory, convention-challenging, life-claiming word of God.”⁶²

In Luke 18:28–30, after Peter tells Jesus, “Look we have left our homes (τὰ ἴδια) and followed you,” (18:28) Jesus replies, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house (οικίαν) or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not get back very much more (πολλαπλασίονα) in this age, and in the age to come eternal life” (18:29–30). There are some revealing differences between the Lukan version of this passage and its synoptic parallels. In Mark 10:29 and Matt 19:29, Jesus includes “fields” (ἀγρούς) in the list of what his disciples have left to follow him, while the Lukan Jesus omits “fields” and only lists the family members his disciples have left behind. This changes how we read Jesus’ statement concerning the disciples’ reward in this age and in the age to come. Mark lists all that the disciples will receive back, which includes “houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields” (10:30), the same things they left behind. The Lukan Jesus says that there is no one of his disciples “who will not get back very much more (πολλαπλασίονα) in this age, and in the age to come eternal life” (18:30). The omission of “fields” underscores how the οικίαν the disciples leave behind should be understood as “household” or “family.” Marshall writes that Luke omits the “fields” of Mark to show that he might be thinking “entirely of

⁶² Carroll, *Luke*, 189.

personal relationships and that accordingly οἰκία should be understood as ‘household’ or ‘family’ rather than as a building.”⁶³ What the disciples receive back, then, even in this age, is a new family or οἰκία. The “very much more” (πολλαπλασίονα) does not include fields in Luke’s version, but rather “must relate to the new family within which ‘those who hear the word of God and do it’ (8:21) are embraced.”⁶⁴

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on how Jesus is expelled from his hometown of Nazareth to become a homeless wanderer who journeys towards Jerusalem. In this way, he follows in the line of the prophets who came before him and establishes a pattern for his disciples to follow. This pattern of discipleship entails exile, which includes leaving one’s family and relatives. Jesus experiences this when he is forced out of the setting of Nazareth, a place which in the early chapters of Luke is imbued with familial significance. This also coheres with what we find in the exilic literature of the time, which describes the pain of leaving one’s family.

In light of Jesus’ call to leave one’s family, some scholars have likened him to a Cynic sage who advocated a total disruption of social ties and conventions.⁶⁵ However, other scholars have countered this claim by pointing to the fact that Jesus does not advocate leaving one’s family or household to serve “an ascetic ideal,” but as a part of

⁶³ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 688.

⁶⁴ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 659.

⁶⁵ See for example John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991); F. Gerald Downing, *Christ and the Cynics: Jesus and Other Radical Preachers in First-Century Tradition*, JSOT Manuals 4 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988); Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

the new life oriented around the kingdom.⁶⁶ This deprivation of family and household is also depicted as a consequence of Jesus' and the disciples' missionary activity (both in Luke and Acts), and not a goal or end in its own right. As Stephen Barton argues, "Where the Cynics adopt a deliberate asceticism as an integral part of the wise man's revolt against culture and his return to nature, the Gospels speak more of involuntary deprivation and hardship in consequence of faithful missionary discipleship."⁶⁷ This "involuntary deprivation and hardship" is depicted as the expulsion or exile of Jesus in the gospel of Luke, and of his followers in the book of Acts. In the next chapter, I will turn again to the book of Acts to show how this exile becomes the entryway into a new community for the displaced believers. We have already seen how Jesus speaks of a new family for those who follow him, but the fulfilment of this does not take place until the book of Acts. As the members of the Way are thrown out of their cities, they themselves form a "new city" in which they have all things in common.

⁶⁶ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 658.

⁶⁷ Stephen C. Barton, "The Relativisation of Family Ties in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman Traditions," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 96.

5. The Church as Polis

In chapter 1, I explained how “politics” in the ancient world was focused on the well-being of a πόλις or city. When someone was seen as a threat to a city, he or she was expelled, a punishment that separated one from his or her family, possessions, and home. The exilic consolations provided various responses to the trauma of exile, and in the previous chapter I showed how part of Luke’s response is to argue that exile is a form of discipleship in the way of Jesus, who was himself exiled from Nazareth. In this chapter, I show how exile is not only a form of discipleship, but also entrance into a new form of political community. By depicting the early Christian community in civic terms, the author of Acts portrays the church as a new πόλις, where what is lost in exile is regained in the church.

In what follows, I compare the language used to describe the early Christian community in Acts 2 and 4 with the speeches of Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides to show how Luke’s narrative participates in the political discourse of his day concerning ὁμόνοια and στάσις in a πόλις. I also support this argument by examining the use of this rhetoric in Christian texts such as 1 Corinthians and 1 Clement. By applying the language of civic unity and discord to his description of the church, Luke portrays the early Christian community as an ideal πόλις or πολιτεία. I also examine the scenes in Acts 20–21 where Paul visits various communities of the Aegean. The kind of kinship and hospitality available to citizens of a πόλις is available to Paul even in exile, for the churches serve as this new home for Paul and his co-laborers.

5.1 The Early Christian Community

After Jesus' ascension into heaven, the disciples return to Jerusalem (Acts 1:12) and gather in an upper room, where "all these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer" (1:14). This is the first description in Acts of the early Christian community, and here we find many of the same terms that are repeated later concerning this group. They acted "with one accord" (ὁμοθυμαδόν) and "were devoting themselves" (ἦσαν προσκατεροῦντες) to prayer. After Matthias is chosen by lot to replace Judas and the day of Pentecost arrives, we find that again "they were all together (ἦσαν πάντες ὁμοῦ) in one place (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, 2:1)."¹ The phrase "ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό" can simply mean "together,"² which accentuates their unity.

After the Spirit descends at Pentecost and Peter preaches to those in Jerusalem, Luke presents another picture of the new Spirit-filled community beginning in verse 42:

Ἦσαν δὲ προσκατεροῦντες τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ, τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς.

And they were devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

This sounds similar to the initial description of the apostles in 1:14, except now the "three thousand souls" who received Peter's message and were baptized (2:41) join the community. Luke goes on to say, "All who believed were together (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό) and had all things in common (ἅπαντα κοινὰ)" (2:44). They continued to devote themselves "with one accord" (ὁμοθυμαδόν) in the temple (2:46), and the Lord was adding to their number "daily together" (καθ' ἡμέραν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, 2:47). The use of the same

¹ Some textual witnesses have ὁμοθυμαδόν for ὁμοῦ here.

² BDAG, s.v. "ἐπί." Cf. also Lk 17:35; Acts 1:15; 2:44.

terminology we have already seen in 1:14 and 2:1, along with the use of imperfect tense verbs (e.g., ἐγίνετο, 2:43; εἶχον, 2:44; ἐπίπρασκον and διεμέριζον, 2:45; μετελάμβανον, 2:46; προσετίθει, 2:47) and periphrastic participles (ἦσαν ... προσκαρτεροῦντες, 2:42) highlights how this is a general description of the ongoing characteristics of this community, and not a one-time occurrence after Pentecost.³ In other words, they did not merely sell their belongings and divide the proceeds after Pentecost, never to be repeated again, but this was an enduring characteristic of the community according to Luke.

This is emphasized by the description of the community again in 4:32–35. Here, after Peter and John are released by the Sanhedrin, the disciples “with one accord” (ὁμοθυμαδόν, 4:24) raise their voices in praise to God. Then, all (ἅπαντες) are filled with the Holy Spirit (4:31) and speak with boldness. Luke goes on to describe them as those who had “one heart and soul” (καρδία καὶ ψυχή μία) and who had “all things in common” (ἅπαντα κοινά, 4:32). There was no needy person among them since whoever owned fields or houses sold them and brought the proceeds before the apostles (4:35). The general character of this description is again highlighted using imperfect verbs throughout, and in verses 36 and 37 the aorist is used only when a specific instance is highlighted (i.e., Barnabas selling his field and bringing the money to the apostles).

Readers of Acts have long pondered over the possible background of the description of the early Christian community as one that had “all things in common” in Acts 2:44 and 4:32. Does this phrase reflect the *topos* of friendship (φιλία) in Hellenistic

³ Cf. Culy, Parsons, and Hall, *Acts 1–14*, 58, who says concerning 2:42, “The imperfect verb form appears to introduce a summary of ongoing activity in the early church.”

philosophy?⁴ Does it portray the community as an ideal state as described by Plato and Aristotle? Or is it perhaps an allusion to a “Golden Age” myth in Greco-Roman literature?⁵ Most studies have approached this question by considering lexical and conceptual parallels, of which there are many.

However, some evidence closer to the time of Acts has generally been left out of the discussion. Those who argue that this phrase portrays the community as an ideal state or πόλις generally point to similar passages in Plato’s writings. David Mealand argues that the phrases “and no one was saying that anything belonging to them was their own” and “they had all things in common” (4:32) appear in many places in Plato.⁶ Though Mealand believes these themes predate Plato, “it was Plato who gave great impetus to the ideal” and from the 5th century BCE onwards this ideal became “a constant theme in the utopian passages of philosophers, poets, historians, and the writers of romances.”⁷ Rubén R. Dupertuis argues in a condensed version of his dissertation that Luke explicitly alludes to Plato’s *Republic* to portray the early Christian community as an ideal state, and the leaders of this community (the apostles) as patterned after the guardians of Socrates’

⁴ Cf. Jacques Dupont, “The Community of Goods in the Early Church,” in *The Salvation of the Gentiles: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. John R. Keating (New York: Paulist, 1979), 85–102; Hume, *The Early Christian Community*.

⁵ Joshua Noble, *Common Property, the Golden Age, and Empire in Acts 2:42–47 and 4:32–35*, LNTS 636 (New York: T&T Clark, 2021).

⁶ David L. Mealand, “Community of Goods and Utopian Allusions in Acts II–IV,” *JTS* XXVIII.1 (1977): 97 n. 2, cites for the first phrase Plato *Critias* 110D (ἴδιον ... οὐδέν); *Rep.* iii.416D (οὐσίαν ... μηδεμίαν ... ἰδίαν), v. 464D (μηδὲν ἴδιον), viii. 543B (ἴδιον ... οὐδέν); *Tim.* 18B (μηδὲν ... ἴδιον), and for the second phrase cites *Critias* 110D (ἅπαντα ... κοινά); *Rep.* v. 464D (τὰ δ’ ἄλλα κοινά), viii. 543B (κοινὰς δὲ πᾶσι).

⁷ Mealand, “Community of Goods,” 98.

ideal city.⁸ Others argue that the summary statements of Acts 2 and 4 depict the church as a philosophical community.⁹

However, not all scholars are convinced. Why, after all, would a first-century Christian writer allude specifically to Plato's vision of an ideal state? And just as importantly, what difference does identifying this allusion make for our understanding of Acts' message? While Plato's writings undoubtedly had a wide-ranging influence beyond his own time, the lexical and thematic parallels alone cannot prove Luke's allusion to Plato specifically. Instead, it will be helpful to consider how other political thinkers closer to the time when Acts was written made use of similar tropes in their writings. This will move us closer to not only the background of Luke's description, but also its rhetorical function.

5.2 Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides

While Plato's *Republic* presents a picture of a utopian city, what might the language of speeches delivered by orators to *actual* cities in the Roman Empire reveal about Luke's portrait of the early church? Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides were orators steeped in classical learning who delivered speeches to cities in the Greek East in the first and second centuries CE. Dio was born around 40 CE in the city of Prusa in

⁸ Rubén R. Dupertuis, "The Summaries of Acts 2, 4, and 5 and Plato's *Republic*," in *Ancient Fiction: The Matrix of Early Christian and Jewish Narrative*, ed. Jo-Ann A. Brant, Charles W. Hedrick, and Chris Shea, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 32 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).

⁹ Gregory E. Sterling, "'Athletes of Virtue': An Analysis of the Summaries in Acts (2:41–47; 4:32–35; 5:12–16)," *JBL* 113.4 (1994): 679–96.

Bithynia and died around 120 CE.¹⁰ The oration we will consider, *Oration 38*, was delivered around 81 CE.¹¹ Aristides was born in 117 CE in northwestern Asia Minor¹² and delivered *Oration 23* and *24* in 167 CE and 142 CE respectively.¹³

Dio's speech addresses the civic unrest (στάσις) between the cities of Nicomedia and Nicaea in Bithynia. As we know from the letters of Pliny the Younger, Bithynia was infamous for the unrest there, and this particular oration addresses a dispute concerning the title of πρώτη ("first") given to Nicaea by the emperor. The subject of the speech is ὁμόνοια or "concord" and its opposite, στάσις or "strife." Dio says in 38.8, "But I want to break up my address, and first of all to speak about concord (ὁμονοίας) itself in general, telling both whence it comes and what it achieves, and then over against that to set off strife (στάσιν) and hatred (ἔχθραν) in contradistinction to friendship (φιλίαν)." Dio in the opening to his speech here places his oration within the tradition of *homonoia* speeches, which extolled what was seen as one of the greatest political virtues. As I mentioned in chapter 1, ὁμόνοια was praised not only in speeches like Dio's, but across literary genres, on inscriptions, and on coins.¹⁴ Dio writes that "not only are the works of poets and philosophers alike full of its praises, but also all who have published their histories

¹⁰ H. Lamar Crosby and Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses 37–60*, Loeb Classical Library 376 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1946), ix.

¹¹ Anthony R. R. Sheppard, "Dio Chrysostom: The Bithynian Years," *L'Antiquité Classique* 53 (1984): 172.

¹² Michael Trapp and Aelius Aristides, *Orations, Volume I*, Loeb Classical Library 533 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), x.

¹³ Aristides and Behr, *The Complete Works*, 2:365, 368.

¹⁴ On the significance of ὁμόνοια more broadly in Greek cities under the Roman Empire, see Anthony R. R. Sheppard, "'Homonoia' in the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire," *Ancient Society* 15 (1984): 229–53; On the meaning of ὁμόνοια coins, see Ursula Kampmann, "Homonoia Politics in Asia Minor: The Example of Pergamon," in *Pergamon Citadel of the Gods: Archaeological Record, Literary Description, and Religious Development*, ed. Helmut Koester, Harvard Theological Studies 46 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 373–93.

(ἱστορία) to provide a pattern for practical application have shown concord to be the greatest of human blessings” (38.10).¹⁵

Dio goes on to describe the benefits the Nicomedians will gain if they pursue concord with the Nicaeans. He says, “At present you two cities have each your own men; but if you come to terms, you will each have the other’s too; and as for honours—for a city needs these too—set them down as doubled, and likewise the services” (38.41). He is saying that if cities enjoy benefits individually during *στάσις*, they will enjoy much more in common during *ὁμόνοια*. Not only will concord mean “the elimination of the things which cause you pain—envy and rivalry and the strife (*στάσις*) which is their outcome” but “the introduction into your cities of their opposites—sharing in things which are good (*κοινωνίαν ἀγαθῶν*), unity of heart and mind (*ὁμοφροσύνην*), rejoicing of both peoples in the same things” (38.43). Dio is likely drawing on the common topos of a community having all things in common to exhort his audience to pursue concord so that they too can accrue benefits in concord rather than strife. This is clear from what he says later:

Well, this thing which seems incredible can take place at once—Nicaea can be yours and your possessions theirs. Or, since we admire those brothers who share completely a common estate (*ἅπαντα κοινὸν οἰκοῦντας οἶκον*) and have not because of stinginess divided their patrimony; whose wealth, moreover, is even more admired, since it is greater for the very reason that it has not been divided and half of everything made the property of each, but instead the whole is thought to belong to both; and whom, furthermore, all men regard as good and just and really brothers—since this is true, if this spirit of brotherhood is achieved in your cities, will it not be an even greater blessing, more beautiful and richer? (38.45)

While it is not clear whom he is referring to here when he says that they admire those “who share completely a common estate,” the phrase is nearly identical to the *ἅπαντα*

¹⁵ As we will see below, Acts may be just such an example of a *ἱστορία* that provides a pattern for concord.

κοινά of Acts 2:44 and 4:32. Dio is not saying the Nicomedians and the Nicaeans will literally share all their possessions in concord, but that those who *do* have all things in common can serve as an example of the good that can come from such a “brotherhood” (ἀδελφότης). He later says that the Nicomedians and Niceans have “everything in common” (πάντα κοινὰ ἔχοντες, 38.46), by which he means “ancestors, gods, customs, festivals, and, in the case of most of us, personal ties of blood and friendship.” This fact, he says, should lead them to greater sorrow and a greater desire for peace.

Aelius Aristides argues similarly in his *Oration 23*, “Concerning Concord,” delivered to the Κοινόν, the general assembly of the cities of Asia which was meeting in Pergamum in 167 CE.¹⁶ Aristides writes to resolve the στάσις between these leading cities (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum) that has resulted from a competition over titles. Like Dio, Aristides extols concord and denounces faction or strife as “the sum of every evil” and “most of all contrary to the title [Κοινόν] which you have bestowed upon yourselves” (23.40).¹⁷ Much of his speech is filled with exhortations concerning the advantages of concord and the disadvantages of faction using examples from history, but in section 65 he begins to discuss the topos of holding things in common. These cities had been fighting for honorific titles (e.g., πρώτη) and the benefits granted to those holding such titles (i.e., the building of temples, holding games honoring Rome, etc.), and Aristides says that while they regard these temples and contests as “common (κοινούς) to you all, yet because of these very things you have entered into dissension” (23.65).

¹⁶ Aristides and Behr, *The Complete Works*, 2:365.

¹⁷ All translations of Aristides are from Aristides and Behr, *The Complete Works*, vol. 2; The Greek text is from Aelius Aristides, *Aelii Aristidis Smyrnaei Quae Supersunt Omnia*, ed. Bruno Keil, vol. 2 (Berlin: Weidmans, 1958).

Aristides is amazed that they would take what is meant to counter faction (i.e., having things in common) and turn it into a reason for fighting. He goes on to say,

It is fitting that all things be held in common (κοινὰ πάντ' εἶναι) by those who will have as good a life as possible. For where each has separate possessions, what is expedient for each is also separate. Hence faction (στάσεις), battles, and disputes. For “this is not yours, but mine” begins every argument. But where men believe that possessions belong to all in common (ἅπαντες κοινὰ τὰ ὄντα ἡγοῦνται), they also have a common point of view about them. (23.65)

The member cities of the Κοινόν, Aristides says, have indeed “called [their] council chambers ‘common’ (κοινὰ μὲν τὰ βουλευτήρια), [their] temples and contests ‘common’ (κοινοὺς δὲ τοὺς νεῶς καὶ τοὺς ἀγῶνας), and everything which is most important, one might say, ‘common’” (κοινὰ δὲ πάνθ', 23.66). And yet they should be ashamed that they fight over these things.

He makes a similar argument in *Oration 24*, which is addressed to the citizens of Rhodes around 149 CE to address a class struggle among the people.¹⁸ After speaking of the horrors of στάσις, he speaks of the benefits of ὁμόνοια and says that in concord there is “means of life for the poor, and the enjoyment of possessions for the rich, and maintenance for the old and an orderly life for the young, and as the saying goes, ‘all things are held in common’ (πάντα κοινά), just as the light of the sun, under whose sway we are kept safe” (24.42). Here again Aristides draws on the topos of common possessions to exhort the Rhodians to pursue concord. Aristides begins his oration by remarking that what he is about to say regarding ὁμόνοια and στάσις is something “which no other Greek or barbarian should properly be in ignorance of [besides, apparently, the Rhodians, whom he is addressing]” (24.4).

¹⁸ Aristides and Behr, *The Complete Works*, 2:368.

The politics of *ὁμόνοια* and *στάσις* were widespread and well-known, such that Luke, in narrating the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church through these very cities that were often embroiled in *στάσις*, was likely caught up in the political rhetoric of his day. Both Dio and Aristides used the topos of common property to exhort their audiences to pursue concord. The fact that these authors could draw on these “utopian” traditions for paraenetic purposes should temper interpretations of such language in Acts (and elsewhere) that see it as a “fulfillment” of utopian ideals.¹⁹

How did Luke use these political *topoi* in his narrative? Before returning to Luke, it will be helpful to briefly consider how two other Christian writers, Paul and the author of 1 Clement, adopted these same themes in their own writings.

5.3 Στάσις in Corinth

Margaret Mitchell has convincingly argued that 1 Corinthians is an example of “deliberative rhetoric.” She says that deliberative rhetoric was characterized by the following: “1) concentration on the future as the realm of deliberation; 2) a fixed set of appeals, the most common of which is the appeal to advantage; 3) the use of examples for imitation in the proof; and 4) specific topics of consideration, among which are discussions of factionalism and concord.”²⁰ From our brief consideration of Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides, it is clear that their speeches are examples of this genre, and Mitchell argues that 1 Corinthians is as well.

¹⁹ So Mealand, “Community of Goods.”

²⁰ Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*, Hermeneutische Untersuchungen Zur Theologie 28 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1991), 296.

Much of 1 Corinthians is concerned with an exhortation to “unity.” In 1 Cor 1:10, Paul writes, “Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες καὶ μὴ ἦ ἐν ὑμῖν σχίσματα, ἦτε δὲ κατηρτισμένοι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοῖ καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ γνώμῃ.” He urges them “to all agree” or “say the same thing” (τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε), that “there be no divisions (σχίσματα) among you,” that they be restored “in the same mind” (ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοῖ) and “the same opinion” (ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ γνώμῃ).²¹ Paul (or any other NT author) never uses the word ὁμόνοια, but the prepositional phrase “ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοῖ” can be considered a synonym.²² Likewise, many Greek political texts on concord speak of having one γνώμην.²³ In 1:12, Paul names these factions who say, “ἐγὼ μὲν εἰμι Παύλου, ἐγὼ δὲ Ἀπολλῶ, ἐγὼ δὲ Κηφᾶ, ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ.” Regarding this verse, Mitchell notes that “a common and recognizable aspect of ancient party politics” was “the dependence of factions upon a leader.”²⁴

Besides party divisions, another problem at Corinth seems to have been that some people were boasting in possessions. Paul addresses this boasting by arguing that “*all things belong to all Corinthian Christians*, thus denying any special claims by individuals or splinter groups.”²⁵ Paul says in 3:21, “Let no one boast in human leaders, for *all things are yours* (πάντα γὰρ ὑμῶν ἐστίν).” Not only these human leaders, but “the world or life

²¹ The verb for “restore,” καταρτίζω, is often used metaphorically in Greek literature “to describe the ‘resetting’ of broken human relationships and communities” (Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 74).

²² He also never uses the word στάσις, though he uses the cognates διχοστασία (3:3) and ἀκαταστασία (14:33). Ancient commentators, however, identified the conflict in 1 Cor as a στάσις. Cf. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 77 n. 66 for sources.

²³ Cf. Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 39.8, where he invokes the gods to grant to the city “a singleness of purpose (μία γνώμη) ... that they may cast out strife (στάσις)”; cited in Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 79. Also Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 23.65, cited above, where he says that those who have all in common “also have a common point of view (κοινήν ... γνώμην) about them.”

²⁴ Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 83.

²⁵ Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 93, emphasis original.

or death or the present or the future—all are yours (πάντα ὑμῶν)” (3:22). Paul’s argument draws on the *topos* of common possessions as a cure for στάσις and grew out of economic disparities that likely contributed to the factionalism in the Corinthian church.²⁶

Despite Paul’s efforts, the στάσις at Corinth does not seem to have been resolved by the time 1 Clement was written. One of the first to identify 1 Clement as a work of deliberative rhetoric was W. C. van Unnik, who focused on the terms used in 63.2: “For you will make us joyful and happy if you become obedient to what we have written through the Holy Spirit and excise the wanton anger expressed through your jealousy, in accordance with the request we have made in this letter for your peace and harmony (περὶ εἰρήνης καὶ ὁμονοίας).”²⁷ Van Unnik argued from this purpose statement that 1 Clement was akin to the deliberative discourse of orators like Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides.²⁸

While Paul did not use the terms ὁμόνοια or στάσις in 1 Corinthians, these and other cognates are found throughout 1 Clement. The letter begins by saying the author has been slow to address “the matters causing disputes among you, loved ones, involving that vile and profane faction (στάσεως) that is alien and foreign to God’s chosen people” (1.1). This στάσις involved a dispute between the congregation and its leaders, and the author writes “that the most secure and ancient church of the Corinthians is reported to have created a faction (στασιάζειν) against its presbyters, at the instigation of one or two

²⁶ In addition to this verse, Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 94 n. 170 cites 8:1; 10:17; 12:6–11, 18, 24, 28; 15:57.

²⁷ Translation of 1 Clement is from the LCL.

²⁸ W. C. van Unnik, “Studies on the So-Called First Epistle of Clement: The Literary Genre,” in *Encounters with Hellenism: Studies on the First Letter of Clement*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and L. L. Welborn, *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Antiken Judentums Und Des Urchristentums* 53 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 156–57.

persons” (47.6). L. L. Welborn argues that 1 Clement describes the crisis in “self-consciously political” terms by adopting the Roman political ideology of *ὁμόνοια*.²⁹

In both 1 Corinthians and 1 Clement then we have two first century Christian documents that adopt and apply the political *topoi* of unity and strife to the church—but why? Margaret Mitchell says that Paul addressed the issues in Corinth using Greco-Roman political *topoi* because he saw the church “as a *real political body* (even the local church) to which some Greco-Roman political lore, especially the call for concord, is directly applicable.”³⁰ Welborn argues that 1 Clement adopts the ideology of Roman politics both as an endorsement of the Roman imperium and to legitimate the authority of the Roman church, which modeled its actions on the Roman senate, which sent embassies to the provinces to address civic unrest.³¹ Both Paul and the author of 1 Clement understood the *ἐκκλησία* as a sort of political body modeled on the *ἐκκλησίαι* of the cities of the Roman Empire. Can we say the same for Luke?

5.4 Civic Language in Acts

The various descriptions of the early Christian community portray a community that acted “with one accord” (*ὁμοθυμαδόν*, 4:24), were of “one heart and mind” (*καρδία καὶ ψυχή μία*), and “had all things in common” (*ἅπαντα κοινά*, 4:32). In other words, there are clear lexical parallels to what we see in the speeches of Dio Chrysostom and

²⁹ L. L. Welborn, “Roman Political Ideology and the Authority of First Clement,” in *Into All the World: Emergent Christianity in Its Jewish and Greco-Roman Context*, ed. Mark Harding and Alanna Nobbs (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 387.

³⁰ Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 300.

³¹ Welborn, “Roman Political Ideology and the Authority of First Clement,” 390.

Aelius Aristides. However, there are also lexical parallels between these phrases and what we find in friendship ideals and Golden Age myths. On the one hand, this is not surprising, since these *topoi* were so widespread and well-known that Aristides could say (albeit with some exaggeration) that “no one ever has disputed the fact that concord is the greatest good for cities” and that no Greek or barbarian is ignorant of ὁμόνοια as a city’s greatest good and στάσις as its greatest evil (24.4). On the other hand, when we consider the narrative as a whole, we find that Luke uses civic language throughout his narrative to describe the church.

Though Luke never uses the word ὁμόνοια, he repeatedly characterizes the community as one that acted “with one accord” (ὁμοθυμαδόν). According to Steve Walton, the term is used “more with at least some sense of unity of thought or action than merely in the sense of shared location. Luke uses it to highlight a major theme, the unity of the earliest Christians.”³² The only place it is used outside of Acts is in Rom 15:5–6, where Paul says, “May the God of endurance and comfort grant you to think the same way (τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν) among yourselves according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord (ὁμοθυμαδόν), in one voice (ἐν ἑνὶ στόματι), you might glorify the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Mitchell notes that the phrase “τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν” is “a favorite phrase of Aristides, especially in his deliberative speeches urging concord.”³³ In Acts 2 and 4, therefore, ὁμοθυμαδόν serves as an adverbial form of ὁμοθυμέω, which is a

³² Steve Walton, “Ὁμοθυμαδόν in Acts: Co-Location, Common Action, or ‘Of One Heart and Mind’?,” in *The New Testament in Its First Century Setting: Essays on Context and Background in Honour of B.W. Winter on His 65th Birthday*, ed. P.J. Williams et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 104.

³³ Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 69.

synonym of ὁμονοέω, the verb form of ὁμόνοια.³⁴ Like Paul, Luke may have avoided using the term ὁμόνοια because of its pagan associations.³⁵

Aristides and Dio show that even when the language of the πόλις is used, it can be applied to other kinds of political bodies beyond a single πόλις, such as the Κοινόν. In the case of 1 Cor and 1 Clem, these *topoi* are applied to the church as a political body. Todd Penner argues that Acts tells the story of a “new Christian *politeia* and *oikoumene*” within a narrative that “is fundamentally civic in nature.”³⁶ He continues, “Lukan discourse is thus permeated with political and cultural *topoi*. He deliberately presents Christianity as the model *politeia* with an exemplary constitution and leadership.”³⁷ Regarding the summary statement in 2:43–47, where the Christian community shares common property, Penner argues that this language presents the community as an ideal *politeia* which is superior to the factions within the Jewish community and the Greco-Roman cities throughout Acts.³⁸ Christopher Stroup likewise contends that the author of Acts depicts the Christian community as a cohesive and peaceful Jewish civic association, unlike other contentious Jewish associations.³⁹ While Stroup does not examine the depictions of the early Christian community in 2:43–47 or 4:32–37, he argues that “cities and civic life

³⁴ LSJ, s.v. “ὁμοθυμέω,” says the verb ὁμοθυμέω is a synonym for ὁμονοέω, the verb form of ὁμόνοια.

³⁵ Ὁμόνοια or *Concordia* was a goddess in Greek and Roman religion. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 78 thinks Paul may have avoided the term to avoid reference to the cult of the pagan goddess, especially in a letter concerned later with idolatry. Paul may also provide a Christian counterpart in 1 Cor 2:6, where he says, “ἡμεῖς δὲ νοῦν Χριστοῦ ἔχομεν.”

³⁶ Todd Penner, “Civilizing Discourse: Acts, Declamation, and the Rhetoric of the Polis,” in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 103. Emphasis original.

³⁷ Penner, “Civilizing Discourse,” 89–90.

³⁸ Penner, “Civilizing Discourse,” 92–93.

³⁹ Christopher Stroup, *The Christians Who Became Jews: Acts of the Apostles and Ethnicity in the Roman City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020), 104.

play an important role in the development of the narrative generally.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, the author depicts the early church “according to recognizable civic norms and practices.”⁴¹ His work draws from Laura Nasrallah’s study on Paul’s travels in the latter half of Acts, which contends that the growth of the early Christian community from Jerusalem to Rome resonates “with the logic and functions associated with the creation and promotion of city leagues.”⁴²

What these scholars have in common is their grasp of the importance of the civic context of Acts. In chapter 3, I examined the civic language tied to exile and στάσις, and how the politics of Acts relates to the welfare of the city. In Acts 2 and 4, the author depicts the church as an ideal πόλις that shares common property and exemplifies ὁμόνοια in an empire filled with cities and factions that are embroiled in στάσις. To give one example, in Acts 19:23–40, a στάσις erupts in Ephesus when Paul’s preaching threatens the business of local artisans. The silversmiths incite the crowds by saying Paul threatens “almost all of Asia” (σχεδὸν πάσης τῆς Ἀσίας, 19:26) and they become filled with “rage” (γενόμενοι πλήρεις θυμοῦ, Acts 19:28). The city is “filled with confusion” (ἐπλήσθη ἡ πόλις τῆς συγχύσεως, 19:29) and they do not even know why they have gathered (οὐκ ᾔδεισαν τίνος ἕνεκα συνεληλύθεισαν, 19:32). They shout “for about two hours” (ὡς ἐπὶ ὥρας δύο κραζόντων, 19:34) and admit they are in danger of being charged with στάσις (κινδυνεύομεν ἐγκαλεῖσθαι στάσεως, 19:40). This portrait of a rage-filled, confused ἐκκλησία in Ephesus contrasts not only with the Christian community

⁴⁰ Stroup, *The Christians Who Became Jews*, 8.

⁴¹ Stroup, *The Christians Who Became Jews*, 8.

⁴² Laura Nasrallah, “The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Cities, and Hadrian’s Panhellenion,” *JBL* 127.3 (2008):

which acts ὁμοθυμαδόν, but also with the ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ (Acts 20:28) in Paul’s address to the Ephesian elders. In this regard, Luke joins with later apologists such as Origen, who in his *Contra Celsum* understood the ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ as set against the ἐκκλησίαι of the world:

...everywhere in the world in order that men might be converted and reformed He [i.e., God] made the gospel of Jesus to be successful, and caused assemblies (ἐκκλησίας) to exist in political opposition (ἀντιπολιτευομένας) to the assemblies of superstitious, licentious, and unrighteous men. For such is the character of the crowds who everywhere constitute the assemblies of the cities. And the assemblies of God which have been taught by Christ, when compared with the assemblies of the people where they live, are ‘as lights in the world’... The assembly of God, say, at Athens is meek (πραεῖα) and quiet (εὐσταθής), since it desires to please God. But the assembly of the Athenians is riotous (στασιώδης) and in no way comparable to the assembly of God there.⁴³

Other early readers of Acts identified these themes as well. In his first homily on Acts, John Chrysostom says that among other things, the book is concerned with the character of the apostles, and “what unanimity (πολλὴν τὴν ὁμόνοιαν) there is among them now [after the resurrection]: no where any envying as there was before, nor any of the old hankering after the preeminence, but all virtue brought in them to its last finish” (*Hom.* 1).⁴⁴ Regarding Acts 2:44 where the disciples had “all things in common,” Chrysostom says, “The fellowship (κοινωνία) was not only in prayers, nor in doctrine alone, but also in social relations (πολιτεία)” (*Hom.* 7). Later, he says again regarding Acts 2:44 that the fact that they had all things in common shows that “this was an angelic commonwealth, not to call any thing of theirs their own (πολιτεία ἀγγελικὴ, μηδὲν αὐτῶν λέγειν ἴδιον

⁴³ Origen *Cels.* 3.29–30, cited from George H. van Kooten, “Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ: The ‘Church of God’ and the Civic Assemblies (Ἐκκλησίαι) of the Greek Cities in the Roman Empire: A Response to Paul Trebilco and Richard A. Horsley,” *NTS* 58.4 (2012): 529–30.

⁴⁴ The Greek text of John Chrysostom’s homilies is from J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus (Series Graeca)*, MPG 60 (Paris: Migne, 1857); The English translation is from John Chrysostom, *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. John H. Parker (Oxford: J. Parker, 1851).

εἶναι).” This depiction of the early community as an “angelic commonwealth” becomes a model of exhortation for his hearers. This theme of ὁμόνοια is also not limited to the early chapters, but Chrysostom reads much of Acts through this lens. Later in Homily 37, he uses Acts 17:15 where Silas and Timothy join Paul as an opportunity to exhort his hearers to imitate these disciples: “See what zeal the rest of the disciples shewed with respect to their leaders: not as it is now with us, who are separated and divided into great and small.” He goes on to say, “Thou lackest the chief excellence of virtue. For as men’s being bad by agreement together more provokes God; so for men to be good by unanimity (τὸ ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ εἶναι) delights Him more.” Though Chrysostom is writing centuries after Acts was written, as someone living in a similar cultural environment where στάσις was still an issue in the cities and the church, he gives us a glimpse into how the earliest readers might also have read Acts. In light of his reading, the rhetoric of Acts functions much like 1 Corinthians and 1 Clement to encourage unity in the Christian πολιτεία.

This is not to say that Luke depicts a church that does not experience conflict. Indeed, immediately following the depiction of the community as one that shared everything in common in Acts 4:32, we read about Ananias and Sapphira, who withhold part of their possessions from the community (5:4) and thus lie to the Holy Spirit (5:3). However, while this incident may at first glance seem to argue against the unity of the Christian community, it acts as a foil to highlight the *nature* of the community’s unity.

The author connects this scene with the depiction of the community in Acts 4 using terms such as “heart” (καρδία) in 4:32 and 5:3–4, and “filling” (πληρώω) in 4:31 and 5:3.⁴⁵ In Acts 4:31, we read that the community is “filled (ἐπλήσθησαν) with the Holy Spirit” and becomes “of one heart (καρδία) and soul.” This is directly followed by the description of the community as one that “had everything in common” (4:32). In the Ananias and Sapphira scene in the next chapter, we read that, instead of the Holy Spirit, *Satan* has filled (ἐπλήρωσεν) Ananias’s heart (καρδίαν, 5:3) to withhold the proceeds from his land from the community. This conflict, therefore, does not negate the theme of unity or ὁμόνοια in the church. Rather, it underscores how the unity of the community is a direct result of being filled by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶ Ananias’s actions characterize “a counterfeit of the heart united in mutual care.”⁴⁷

In summary, the language of unity and having all things in common, in light of its broader civic context and its use in Acts, points to the church as a political body or πόλις which embodies the civic values prized in speeches delivered to factious cities in the first century. The unity is one which comes from being filled by the Holy Spirit, as we read in Acts 4:31. The church, as this new, Spirit-filled πόλις, becomes a home for those who are displaced or exiled from society. In the next section, I will show how the church as an alternative πόλις becomes a new home for the believers in Acts.

⁴⁵ Alan J. Thompson, *One Lord, One People: The Unity of the Church in Acts in Its Literary Setting*, Library of New Testament Studies 359 (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 72.

⁴⁶ Thompson, *One Lord, One People*, 72.

⁴⁷ Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 2.79; cited in Thompson, *One Lord, One People*, 72.

5.5 The Church as Home

In the ancient Mediterranean, one's identity was closely tied to one's πόλις, and removal from one's πόλις was akin to losing one's identity, or "a form of social or political death."⁴⁸ The hardships of exile included the loss of possessions and family, which we find repeated throughout the exilic consolations. In the early chapters of Acts, we read about a new community formed by the Holy Spirit (2:38; 4:31) that embodies the values of an ideal city. They have no concern over their possessions because they have all things in common (2:44; 4:32). This characteristic of the community directly addresses the loss of possessions that follows exile. Those who are banished have no concern over possessions, because "there was not a needy person among them" (4:33). However, given that this description is limited to the early chapters of Acts, does this ethic of sharing possessions extend beyond chapter 4? Does it characterize the church in general in Acts?

The only other section of Acts where we have an extended picture of the church's community life is in Acts 20:1–21:17. In this section, travel reports are interspersed with pictures of the church's community life. Beverly Gaventa organizes this section in the following way:

20:1–6	Travel report
20:7–12	Gathering of believers in Troas
20:13–16	Travel report
20:17–38	Farewell speech in Miletus to Ephesian elders
21:1–7	Travel report
21:8–14	Gathering of believers in Caesarea
21:15–17	Travel report ⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Gray, *Stasis and Stability*, 156.

⁴⁹ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ANTC (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 276.

These scenes present a picture of community life that includes the breaking of bread, teaching, and prayer. By interspersing these scenes with reports of Paul's travels, Luke narratively brings these disparate communities together.⁵⁰ As Gaventa argues, these scenes are reminiscent of the depiction of the early Jerusalem community: "The combination of travel report and community gathering comprises a portrait of the life of believing communities that echoes some important features of the early descriptions of community life in Jerusalem."⁵¹ In 2:42, the new community "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." In Troas, Paul instructs the gathered believers "until midnight" and they gather to break bread (20:7, 11). Paul also instructs the elders at Ephesus in his farewell speech (20:18–35) and prays with them before departing.⁵² These communities extend hospitality to Paul and his companions during their travels, such as when they stay with the believers at Ptolemais (21:7) or with Philip the evangelist in Caesarea (21:8), which speaks to the provisions provided by the believers for one another. Paul also speaks about the proper use of possessions at the end of his Miletus speech where he quotes a saying of Jesus, who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (20:35). While the language of "one heart and soul" (4:32) is not used, the communities are united in their support for Paul. Gaventa notes that the communities are also "in one accord" in their anticipation of resistance to Paul in Jerusalem.⁵³ These scenes of community life therefore show us how the ethics of the early Christian community in Acts 2 and 4 continue through the book of Acts. While

⁵⁰ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "Theology and Ecclesiology in the Miletus Speech: Reflections on Content and Context," *New Testament Studies* 50.1 (2004): 42.

⁵¹ Gaventa, "Theology and Ecclesiology in the Miletus Speech," 43.

⁵² Gaventa, "Theology and Ecclesiology in the Miletus Speech," 43.

⁵³ Gaventa, "Theology and Ecclesiology in the Miletus Speech," 43.

the depictions of the early Christian community in Jerusalem are not repeated in the same way after Acts 4, we should not expect this from the narrative. Indeed, including such a description throughout the narrative would be redundant, especially given that the author has already provided two similar summaries in Acts 2 and 4. These scenes towards the end of Acts, as Paul heads back to Jerusalem, highlight the nature of the Christian community as one where “there was not a needy person among them” (4:33). These scenes of community life interspersed between these travel reports depict Paul as a wandering preacher who, though he has no permanent abode, finds refuge and provisions wherever he goes. This is reminiscent of what Plutarch says to an exile from Sardis in his treatise *On Exile*, where he writes, “Wherever a man happens to find a moderate provision for his livelihood, there that man lacks neither city nor hearth nor is an alien” (601E). He continues, “For while loss of wealth cannot easily and quickly be repaired, every city at once becomes a native city (πατρίς) to the man who has learned to make use of it and has roots which can live and thrive everywhere and take hold in any region” (601F). Plutarch is addressing the concern that exile will strip someone of possessions, family, and friends. His response parallels what we find in the book of Acts; as Paul travels across the Mediterranean, whether to Troas, Miletus, or Caesarea, he is welcomed by his ἀδελφοί who extend hospitality and give him provision for his livelihood. In this way, all these cities become “native cities” for Paul, because the communities found there extend hospitality and friendship. Indeed, all of Acts, but especially this latter portion, reveals the broad connections Paul has throughout the Roman Empire because of the existence of Christian communities, both those started by Paul and those whose origins are left untold in the narrative.

This pattern of hospitality continues until the end of Acts as Paul travels to Rome. After surviving a perilous journey by sea, he arrives at Puteoli where he finds brothers and sisters (ἀδελφούς, 28:14) and stays with them for several days. When he finally reaches Rome, the ἀδελφοί of the church in Rome “came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us” (28:15). Wherever Paul goes, he meets his friends or ἀδελφοί along the way, who accompany him even in danger. Favorinus writes in his consolation on exile that the hardships of exile reveal who one’s true friends are:

If he truly is a friend [of an exile], and understands the secret of friendship, and remains his partner, sharing in every kind of reputation, enterprise and fate, will he hesitate, when he has travelled abroad for a few days, to provide himself with the sight which is the fairest of pageants and spectacles, that of a friend? Will he hesitate, on his part, to lighten the misfortune for his friend? (15.3)

A true friend will not abandon someone when he faces hardship, including exile. Rather, Favorinus argues that “the surest friend and companion is he who accompanies one who is down on his luck” (17.4). The narrative of Acts, especially these latter chapters, provides a portrait of Paul as one who travels from city to city with true friends, who do not abandon him when he faces danger, but stay by his side even in the face of death.

Not only those who travel with Paul, but those who welcome him and bid him farewell become his friends and family. On their way to Jerusalem, Paul and his companions stay with the church in Tyre (21:4), which likely began after the dispersal of believers from Jerusalem (11:19).⁵⁴ Though this community began independent of Paul, they express their affection for him by urging him not to go to Jerusalem, where he will face danger (21:4). They also, “all of them, with wives and children” (21:5), escort Paul

⁵⁴ Holladay, *Acts*, 396; Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 3:3081.

and his companions outside the city before saying farewell. This short vignette in Tyre captures what was likely, as Keener says, “A larger pattern of the way Paul must have parted in each place he stopped.”⁵⁵ Both at Miletus (20:36–38) and in Tyre, Paul’s departure is filled with signs of affection to highlight the love the community has for him.⁵⁶ In this scene, the disciples, including their wives and children, all come out to personally escort Paul and his companions. They kneel on the beach to pray (21:5), which is reminiscent of the farewell at Miletus. When Paul says farewell to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, we read that “he knelt down with them all and prayed. There was much weeping among them all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, grieving especially because of what he had said, that they would not see him again” (20:36–38). Both of these farewell scenes underscore the love the communities had for Paul as his friends and family. They also point to “the wide and hospitable network of this new Christian ‘family’ in the eastern Mediterranean world, and Paul’s acceptability to this spiritually united movement.”⁵⁷ Laura Nasrallah also notes how the various Christian communities spread across the Mediterranean form a kind of “city league” for traveling Christians such as Paul in Acts. She argues that the movement and growth of the early Christian community from Jerusalem to Rome resonates “with the logic and functions associated with the creation and promotion of city leagues”⁵⁸ in the second century. Even as Paul and his companions are displaced from the cities of the Mediterranean, they find refuge, or a home, in the cities where they travel, since these cities have an ἐκκλησία ready to

⁵⁵ Keener, *Acts*, 3:3067. Keener is referring to Acts 20:36–38, but sees Acts 21:5 as an example of this pattern.

⁵⁶ Or as Keener, *Acts*, 3:3084 says, to support Paul’s *ēthos* in forensic rhetorical terms.

⁵⁷ Keener, *Acts*, 3:3080.

⁵⁸ Nasrallah, “The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Cities, and Hadrian’s Panhellenion,” 534.

accept them and provide for their needs. This network of families addresses the pain of exile as the church becomes the new home for these displaced believers.

What we see in Acts also resonates with recent studies on the parallels between early Christian communities and Greco-Roman associations. While an in-depth consideration of this research is beyond the scope of this study, a few comments are germane to our theme. First, associations functioned to create places of belonging for socially displaced groups. Jonathan Z. Smith argues that associations responded “to the experience of dislocation” by providing “a new, predominantly urban, social location.”⁵⁹ Milton Moreland, in a study on the Jerusalem community in Acts, comments on Smith’s essay and says, “Part of the sociological function of these associations was the restoration of a family unit (fictive kinship group) in the midst of social dislocation. These associations developed new notions of the homeplace by forming a new social location for the group members.”⁶⁰ We have seen how the churches in Acts make up the broader family network of ἀδελφοί for Paul and others who are displaced or exiled because of their faith. This becomes a fulfilment of what Jesus says in the gospel of Luke, which we considered in chapter 4. In Luke 18:29–30, Jesus says to Peter, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house (οικίαν) or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not get back very much more (πολλαπλασίονα) in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.” The ἀδελφοί who welcome Paul and his

⁵⁹ Jonathan Z. Smith, “Here, There, and Anywhere,” in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, ed. Scott B. Noegel, Joel Thomas Walker, and Brannon M. Wheeler, Magic in History (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 34.

⁶⁰ Milton Moreland, “The Jerusalem Community in Acts: Mythmaking and the Socio-Rhetorical Functions of a Lukan Setting,” in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 302.

companions wherever they travel become this new family which Jesus envisages in the gospel of Luke. The presence of the disciples with their wives and children (Acts 21:5) at Paul's departure accentuates how the church is a new home for those who have "left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:29).

Not only did associations in the Greco-Roman world become a "fictive kinship" group to those facing social dislocation, but they were also an "extension of the idea of the city to groups formally excluded" according to John Kloppenborg.⁶¹ Christ groups used the term ἐκκλησία to imitate the πόλις and offered its members the ability to participate in a political body in a way unavailable to non-citizens of a πόλις.⁶² In this way, Kloppenborg argues, Christ groups created "a space for connectivity and network formation beyond the family" by allowing its members to practice a form of "fictive citizenship." This is analogous to how some Jews in Rome considered themselves "dual-citizens," or those who possessed both Roman and "Jewish" citizenship. As Philo writes in his *Embassy*, Jews with Roman citizenship in the time of Augustus "were careful to preserve their Jewish citizenship (τῆς Ἰουδαϊκῆς)" (*Legat.* 157) through practicing their own customs and meeting in houses of prayer. Likewise, the Christian communities in Acts form an alternative πολιτεία in which they practice a "fictive citizenship" as a new family. In this way, the author shows how what is lost in exile—family, possessions, and a home—is regained within the church.

⁶¹ John S. Kloppenborg, "Associations, Christ Groups, and Their Place in the Polis," *ZNW* 108.1 (2017): 40.

⁶² Kloppenborg, "Associations, Christ Groups, and Their Place in the Polis," 32.

5.6 Conclusion

In previous chapters, I showed how the members of the Way are banished or exiled from the πόλις because of their identity as followers of Jesus. Within the context of the Greco-Roman world, exile from the πόλις was seen as a form of social or political death. The exilic consolations were written to address the trauma of exile by showing how an alternative political existence was possible outside of one's πόλις. In this chapter, I have shown how the author of Acts depicts the church itself as an alternative πόλις in which its members have all things in common. In this way, not only do the displaced believers have a new city, but they also have no concern for possessions since “there was not a needy person among them” (4:35). The church also becomes the fulfilment of the new family which Jesus envisages in the gospel of Luke. By considering the latter chapters of Acts where Paul and his companions find refuge and hospitality among the believers spread across the Mediterranean, I have shown how the author depicts these churches as a new family and network of friends. In other words, all that is lost in exile—possessions, family, friends, and a home—is regained in the church which becomes the new home for those who belong to the Way.

6. Conclusion

In this study, I have argued that the author of Luke-Acts depicts the church as a community of political exiles who are seen as a threat to the πόλις. Exile as a form of social and civic death requires a response—where does this community now find its home? I argued that the church itself becomes a new πόλις for the displaced believers. In Acts, the exiled church takes on a form of discipleship in the way of Jesus, who was exiled from Nazareth in the gospel of Luke. This thesis, of course, raises many questions. What was exile in the first century? Does Acts in fact depict the church as exiled? If so, what are the broader implications for Luke’s depiction of the church? My study has attempted to answer these questions through a close reading of Luke-Acts. In what follows, I summarize my argument before presenting the implications of this study and avenues for further research.

6.1 Summary

In chapter 1, I began by defining the term “political exile.” In the first century, there would have been no need to add the adjective “political,” since exile was a punishment that either banished someone or forced them to flee from a πόλις. The goal of politics in the first century was to ensure the welfare of a πόλις, and exile was a way to remove a person seen as a threat to a city’s well-being. The trauma of exile in the Greco-Roman world led to what has been called a “discourse of displacement,” in which authors

sought to reimagine new forms of political belonging when forced to leave their homes.¹ In chapter 1, I surveyed some of the ways philosophers such as Plutarch and Musonius Rufus argued against the belief that exile is an evil. I showed how these authors participate in a literary tradition which draws from and responds to the classical tradition, which understood exile as worse than death. These authors contend that what is lost in exile—possessions, friendship, political participation, etc.—can be regained outside of one’s hometown.

In chapter 2, I showed how the terminology used for the Babylonian and Assyrian exiles differs from the “political” exile which is my focus. Recontextualizing the term “exile” in this way is important in a study on the New Testament, since exile in NT studies is often framed as a theological framework arising out of the Babylonian and Assyrian exiles. In the Hebrew Bible and Septuagint, the words used for these exiles is the language of forced migration or deportation (גלות / ἀποικία) and *not* the language of exile as φυγή. Therefore, while some studies have suggested that the NT authors portray Jesus’ ministry as the end of Israel’s exile, we must not allow the single English term to conflate two distinct phenomena in the Greco-Roman world. I also demonstrated how some Second Temple Jewish writers, such as Philo and Josephus, used the same terms and concepts of banishment or exile as φυγή. This underscored the distinction already made between Israel’s exile and exile as a political punishment.

Philo’s reading of the Old Testament also conveys his familiarity with the discourse of exile. Like the authors surveyed in chapter 1, Philo sees the loss of one’s

¹ Gaertner, *Writing Exile*.

native land, family, and possessions as the hardship of exile (*On Abraham*, 65). In his allegorical readings of the OT, he portrays figures such as Adam as ones who suffered the punishment of exile (*Cher.* 2). In his more historical works, he shows how Flaccus, for example, was sentenced to banishment (*Flacc.* 151) and how some Jews in Alexandria were expelled from their homes and deprived of their citizenship (*Flacc.* 55). My survey of Philo's (and Josephus's) writings on exile underscored how the discourse of exile as *φυγή* was familiar to Jews who lived around the time Acts was written. I also considered the attempts of some Jews to attain citizenship in Alexandria. Philo's reflections on the pogrom in Alexandria and its aftermath highlight the liminal status of the Jews and the strategies they used to maintain a sense of belonging in Alexandria, "a city not their own," according to Claudius in his letter to the Alexandrians.

I then showed how the themes of exile, displacement, and banishment are present not only in Second Temple Jewish writings, but also in early Christian texts. In both 1 Peter and the book of Hebrews, Christians are called *πάροικοι* because they are marginalized from society. In 1 Peter, the marginalized community forms an *οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ* (4:9), which becomes the new family for the displaced community. Hebrews roots the church's present situation of marginalization and flight in the experience of the Old Testament patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Like the patriarchs who longed for "the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (11:10), the readers are "looking for the city that is to come" (13:14). Hebrews' ecclesiology is also inseparable from its Christology. The letter ends with an exhortation to "go to [Christ] outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come" (13:13–14). Outside of the NT, I showed how the

Shepherd of Hermas also uses the imagery of expulsion from one's city for parenetic purposes. Like Hebrews, *Hermas* exhorts its readers to look to an eschatological city to which they will return when they depart "this city" (1.6).

In chapter 3, I began by considering the place of migration and flight in Stephen's speech and its relationship to the rest of Acts. I analyzed how Stephen's speech depicts the people of God as a wandering people who have been persecuted throughout Israel's history. The largest section of the speech focuses on Moses, whom Luke describes as a *πάροικος* forced to "flee" (*ἔφυγεν*) from Egypt (Acts 7:29). He does this to show how the people of God are divided between those who are persecuted and forced to flee, like Stephen, and those who persecute the prophets, like Stephen's audience (7:52). At the end of his speech, Stephen's fate is sealed when the crowds "throw him out of the city" (*ἐκβαλόντες ἔξω τῆς πόλεως*, 7:58) and stone him. This verse uses the same language we find in scenes of banishment or expulsion. As we moved further in Acts, we found that Stephen's martyrdom sets a pattern for the persecution the church faces throughout the narrative.

Indeed, the later scenes of exile become instantiations of the programmatic statements concerning the people of God in Stephen's speech. Just as Moses was forced to flee from Egypt, so the members of the Way are persecuted and forced to flee from Jerusalem in Acts 8. This pattern continues throughout the narrative. In Acts 9:23–25, Paul is forced to flee from Damascus because of his *παρρησία*, and in Acts 9:28, he again flees from Jerusalem when he begins "speaking boldly" (*παρρησιαζόμενος*, 9:28). These two flights share parallels which highlight the paradigmatic nature of Paul's experience: He preaches boldly, which stirs up trouble, which results in exile. In Acts 13, for

example, Paul and Barnabas speak boldly (παρρησιασάμενοι, 13:44) to the city of Pisidian Antioch. This causes a split among the residents of the city, a sign of στάσις, which leads to their expulsion. We read that the Jews “stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their region” (ἐξέβαλον αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν ὁρίων αὐτῶν, 13:50). Similarly, in Acts 14 at Iconium, a στάσις, or split in the multitude of the city, forces Paul and Barnabas to flee (κατέφυγον, 14:6) the city. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas are imprisoned in Philippi before they are again forced to leave (ἐκβάλλουσιν, 16:37) the city. Scholars note that this likely points to an official expulsion by the authorities. In Acts 17, Paul and Silas arrive in Thessalonica, and again they begin preaching at the local synagogue. Certain Jews set the city in an uproar (17:5) and drag Jason and some believers before the authorities because they cannot find Paul and Silas. The charges they bring against the believers amount to a charge of στάσις, and Paul and Silas are forced to flee “by night” (διὰ νυκτός, 17:10), just as Paul escaped from Damascus through a basket “in the night” (νυκτός, 9:24). As Tajra argues, the authorities taking bail from Jason and the others was meant to prevent any further unrest by making Jason responsible should Paul and Silas return. In effect, the authorities *banished* Paul from the city.²

Acts 17 is particularly important for my study because it not only adds to the pattern of exile, but also because it emphasizes how the perceived threat of the Christians to the city’s welfare was not limited to traveling missionaries such as Paul and Silas, even though they were the ones forced to flee. The charges brought against them are charges

² Tajra, *The Trial of St. Paul*, 43.

against the entire Christian movement, and so the whole community remains in a liminal state as a potential threat to civic welfare. My last example was from a parallel scene in Berea, where the Jews of Thessalonica came “to stir up (σαλεύοντες) and incite (ταράσσουντες) the crowds” (17:13). Just as in Thessalonica, Paul was forced to flee from Berea (17:14). These examples show that the church in Acts is depicted as a community of political exiles. According to Stephen’s speech, this extends back to the experience of the patriarchs and, as I show in chapter 4, also mirrors Jesus’ experience of expulsion from his hometown.

In chapter 4, I showed how the church’s exile in Acts follows the pattern of Jesus’ own exile from Nazareth in the Gospel of Luke. I began by considering the symbolic functions of narrative settings. Specifically, I argued that hometowns are often associated with safety, kinship, and customs, which can be reinforced or subverted in a narrative. In the early chapters of Luke, Nazareth functions as a metonym for what is implied by a hometown: stability, safety, and kinship. These conventions are disrupted in Luke 4:16–30 when Jesus begins his ministry by preaching at a synagogue in Nazareth. In response to Jesus’ message, the people of Nazareth throw him out of the city (ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως, 4:29). This language parallels the Jerusalem leaders’ reaction to Stephen in Acts 7:58, which suggests that Stephen’s expulsion, and the church’s subsequent expulsion from Jerusalem, follows in the steps of Jesus’ own exile from Nazareth.

I proceeded to argue that the Lukan Jesus is depicted as a homeless wanderer without a permanent residence. As he journeys toward Jerusalem, he calls those who follow him to renounce their family as an essential part of what it means to be his disciple. But the Lukan Jesus does not reject the conventions of home and family;

instead, he promises that those who leave their families for the sake of the kingdom will receive a new family oriented around the word of God (8:21). The formation of this new family begins in the book of Acts.

In chapter 5, I expanded on the thesis that the church in Acts is depicted as a community of political exiles. I maintained that exile is not only a form of discipleship in the way of Jesus, but also entrance into a new form of political community. By comparing the language used to describe the early Christian community in Acts 2 and 4 with contemporary extrabiblical speeches addressed to cities, I showed how Luke depicts the church as a new πόλις. In other words, while being a member of the Way entails displacement *from* the πόλις, the church becomes a new πόλις for the believers when what is lost in exile—possessions, family, friends, etc.—is regained in the community. This is true not only in the early chapters of Acts, but also in Acts 20–21, where Paul visits various communities of the Aegean. In these scenes, Paul and his co-laborers find refuge, hospitality, and friendship in the Christian communities that welcome them and send them off. This becomes a fulfilment of what Jesus says in Luke about the new family his followers would receive (Luke 18:29–30). The church, as a new πόλις, becomes a new home for the displaced believers.

6.2 Implications and Avenues for Further Research

The conclusion of my study is that Acts depicts the church as a community of political exiles who find their home in the church, which becomes a new πόλις for the

believers. In what follows, I consider the implications of this thesis in addition to new avenues for further research.

1. *In Luke-Acts, exile or homelessness is not a problem to be solved, but a pattern of discipleship, entrance into true community, and a vehicle for mission.*

The exilic consolations sought to answer the claim that exile is a worse punishment than death. They offered solutions that in some respects parallel what we find in Acts. And yet while this study began by asking how the narrative of Acts provides an answer to the question or problem of exile, in one sense the answer given is that exile is not a problem at all. Rather, when we read Luke-Acts as a whole, it becomes clear that exile is part of the fabric of Christian discipleship. Discipleship is not an answer that retroactively applies to the condition of exile because the church faces conflict in Acts; rather, Jesus' expulsion and his teaching about renouncing one's family to receive a new family sets a pattern that is fulfilled through the church's exile in Acts.

This exile is also entrance into true community. The depiction of the Jerusalem community in Acts 2 and 4 uses the language of an ideal city that has all things in common and is of one heart and soul. Throughout the narrative, we see the outworking of this depiction in the hospitality, kinship, and friendship Paul and others receive as they travel throughout the empire. Exile also becomes a vehicle for mission. I mentioned in chapter 3 that aside from studies in missiology, few scholars have focused on exile or displacement in Acts. These studies point out how both in contemporary mission movements and in the book of Acts, exile or displacement is the impetus for mission.³ For example, the dispersal of the believers from Jerusalem in Acts 8 results in the

³ See especially Stenschke, "Migration and Mission."

planting of new churches, or Paul and his co-laborers fleeing to new cities expands their work to new regions, such as in Acts 14 when Paul and Barnabas flee to Iconium. This connection between exile and mission in Acts is an area that invites further research, especially in dialogue with studies on contemporary mission movements and the phenomenon of displacement and migration in the field of World Christianity.⁴

2. *The exilic identity of the church underscores the connection between Christology and Ecclesiology*

In Hebrews 13:13–14, we read, “Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.” In Hebrews, the author connects the audience’s experience of exile with Jesus who suffered outside the city gate. Similarly in Luke-Acts, the church is called to be a community of exiles, not only because Jesus himself suffered exile from Nazareth, but also because it becomes a central part of discipleship or following in the way of Jesus. The pattern of life of those who belong to the church is established by the way of life of Jesus, who is not only expelled but also begins a journey towards Jerusalem, even as he calls others to follow him.

3. *Discussions of the “politics” of Acts must account for the liminal space inhabited by Christians.*

Throughout the narrative, we read that the church is accused of fomenting στάσις, the greatest evil to befall a city according to Greek political thinking. Some of the

⁴ Cf. Hanciles, *Migration and the Making of Global Christianity* for a historical overview of the connection between migration and mission.

Christians are exiled, and this, I argued, is a significant political act which was a form of civic death in the first century. Like the linen-workers of Tarsus, who stood “outside the constitution” (ἔξωθεν τῆς πολιτείας, Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.21), or the Jews of Alexandria, who faced banishment and marginalization as “foreigners and aliens” (ξένους καὶ ἐπήλυδας, Philo, *Flacc.* 54), so also the Christians in Acts are depicted as threats to civic welfare, or fomenters of στάσις. As a result, they are either thrown out of the city or live under the threat of persecution. This is part of their identity, and so the politics of Acts inextricably intersects with the ecclesiology of Acts, because politics in the ancient world is ultimately a question of belonging. To which city does one belong, and does one have a right to say so? The Jews claimed Alexandria as their πατρίς, while their Greek neighbors denied this claim. Acts relativizes the significance of any single πόλις by showing how the members of the Way have a home wherever they travel, for the ἐκκλησία becomes a new home and πόλις for the displaced believers.

Future discussions of the politics of Acts must consider how the narrative’s use of civic language connects with its ecclesiology, specifically its understanding of the Christian’s place (or lack thereof) in the city. Further research is needed to examine how the alternative politics of the ἐκκλησία in Acts contributes to the text’s broader political theology, which includes questions about the church’s posture towards the Roman Empire, the church’s relationship to the world more broadly, and what it means for an exilic community to continue to participate (or not) in the city where it exists.

4. *Acts presents the church as an exilic community which finds its new home in local communities of believers found throughout the Empire, unlike other early Christian texts which situate the Christian’s home in heaven.*

When speaking of Christians as exiles or sojourners, other early Christian authors also pointed to the “home” where these exiles could find belonging. In both Hebrews and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, that home awaits the Christian in the future in heaven. Later Christians, most notably Augustine, would continue this line of thinking by construing the Christian’s final home as heaven. These solutions to the problem of exile understand the home primarily as a place free from suffering. As mentioned earlier, one’s home was understood as a place of safety, kinship, and shared customs in the ancient world. Against this background, I explained how the narrative of Acts differs from some other early Christian texts in that its vision of the Christian’s home or place of belonging is not a heavenly Jerusalem or a city that is to come, but the local ἐκκλησία which embodies the associations bound up with the idea of “home,” and which becomes a new πόλις for the displaced believers.

What are the implications of this distinction? Unlike some other early Christian texts, Acts places the hope for the believer in concrete communities of Christian believers. This changes how we understand Christian practice as it relates to welcoming those who face literal exile or displacement today, and it reframes discussions about where Christians find belonging within broader society. Like the author of 1 Peter, who describes the Christian community as an οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ (1 Pet 4:17), the author of Acts envisions local church communities fulfilling the role of the οἶκος or πατρίς for the community of exiles. Further research can examine how Acts’ depiction of the church as “home” or πόλις can influence contemporary reflections on political theology. Discussions of the Christian’s home can also promote additional research on the eschatology of Acts. In texts such as Hebrews or *Hermas*, the heavenly city is the

Christian's ultimate destiny. In Acts, the solution to the problem of exile is the reimagining of the ἐκκλησία as the new city. How might this influence discussions of Acts' eschatology?

What is clear from the scope of this study is that the question of Christian identity is central to the narrative of Acts. As research on Acts continues, future work must engage with the twin realities of the church's exile from the city and the church's identity as a new city for those who belong to the Way.

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