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## “Foreigners and Exiles”

### Was 1 Peter Written to Roman Colonists?\*

The letter of 1 Peter (1:1) is addressed “to the chosen, foreigners of the diaspora of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1:1). Leonhard Goppelt observed in his commentary on 1 Peter that this designation indicates “the sociological component” of the original readers’ situation and characterizes “their position in society.”<sup>1</sup> A more specific identification of the recipients and their locations has eluded New Testament scholarship, but recent theories continue to provoke discussion that moves beyond the traditional thought that the apostle Peter must have at some time on his way to Rome traveled through this area.

The five Roman provinces named in 1:1 cover an area of about 129,000 square miles north and west of the Taurus mountain range in what is now modern Turkey. That makes the original destination of 1 Peter larger than that of any other book of the New Testament, and as such the letter represents evidence for the early spread of Christianity across a substantial area of the Roman empire. Three of the provinces – Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia – are also named in Acts 2:9 as the homelands of Jewish pilgrims in Jerusalem who heard Peter preach on the day of Pentecost and who may have been the first voices for the gospel in these parts. It is estimated there were about 250,000 Jews in Asia Minor at the time, making Asia Minor a substantial center of Judaism, along with Alexandria and Rome.<sup>2</sup>

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\* It is an honor to commemorate Leonhard Goppelt’s hundredth birthday by returning to a reconsideration of 1 Peter, for Professor Goppelt’s work on this New Testament letter has been influential in my own, and I share the interest he had in the historical situation of this letter.

1 Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on I Peter* (John E. Alsup, trans.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 36.

2 John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of I Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 45; Stephen Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor*, vol. 2: *The Rise of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 31–37.

# 1 The Question of the Socio-Historical Identity of the Original Recipients

The letter itself indicates the original recipients were Christians who were experiencing ostracism and criticism from the dominant Hellenistic-Roman society of Asia Minor in which they lived. Goppelt asks, “Where in the development of the conflict between Christianity and the Hellenistic-Roman world are we to locate the situation that I Peter presupposes?”<sup>3</sup> Goppelt excludes the period of Domitian’s reign (AD 81–96) because that particular persecution centered on people who refused, for whatever reason, to participate in the rituals of Imperial Cult that were so prevalent in western Asia Minor, and “there is no reference in I Peter to ... one’s position with respect to the cult of the emperor” which “lies quite clearly outside the purview of I Peter,” in comparison, for instance, to the book of Revelation.<sup>4</sup> He therefore concludes that, given the scholarly consensus for dating the letter between AD 65 and 90, “All indications speak in favor of placing it in the first rather than the second half of this period of time ... somewhere between 65 and 80.”<sup>5</sup>

Goppelt points out that “the person of Peter does not fit into the situation of the churches addressed in the letter,” for he reasons from assumptions that the letter is written to churches who emerged from Paul’s missions in the south, at a date after Peter had died in the Neronian persecution, by a pseudonymous author writing most likely from Syrian Antioch or somewhere in Asia Minor, and “thus cannot come directly from Peter.”<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Goppelt closely associates the letter with Peter through the possibility that it was penned by Silvanus, or by an unknown person intimately familiar with the gospel tradition forged by Peter and Silvanus.<sup>7</sup> The assumption that Christianity came slowly to this vast area through the evangelization of the indigenous population decades after the deaths of Peter and Paul is commonly assumed to be evidence for the pseudonymity of the letter.<sup>8</sup>

The question that Goppelt asked, “Where in the development of the conflict between Christianity and the Hellenistic-Roman world are we to locate the situation that I Peter presupposes?” has been of interest to me as well. But I have pur-

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<sup>3</sup> Goppelt, *I Peter*, 41.

<sup>4</sup> Goppelt, *I Peter*, 45.

<sup>5</sup> Goppelt, *I Peter*, 45.

<sup>6</sup> Goppelt, *I Peter*, 50, 47.

<sup>7</sup> Goppelt, *I Peter*, 50, 52.

<sup>8</sup> John H. Elliott, *I Peter*, AncB 37B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 316.

sued its answer by asking other questions that arise from 1 Peter 1:1. Why did Peter write specifically to *these* five Roman provinces?<sup>9</sup> Why did he not write to the churches in specific cities, as the apostle Paul did, especially if they were the result of his own prior missionary travel? And why does he address them in 1:1 as “chosen foreigners of the diaspora” (ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς), and in 2:11 as “resident aliens and foreigners” (παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους), with the reference to Babylon in 5:13 framing the letter in the motif of exile?

Church tradition about Peter answers these questions by suggesting that Peter may have evangelized these provinces sometime before arriving in Rome in the early 60s, not long before his execution, and he wishes the Christians to whom he writes to see themselves metaphorically as spiritual foreigners living away from their true home in heaven with God. But the letter itself does not square well enough with this general tradition to preclude seeking a more specific historical setting and motivation for its writing. The letter does not mention the author’s previous travels through this area, neither does it name any converts or contacts presumably made during those travels nor does it send greetings to specific people by name. There is nothing within the letter to suggest or corroborate that Peter is writing to people he met on previous travels through these provinces. Furthermore, why would it be important to these particular readers to hear a message allegedly from the apostle underscoring a description of their lives in terms of exile?

Moreover, there is no historical evidence of Peter’s travels through northern Asia Minor that is not based merely on inference from 1 Pet 1:1 itself. Origen, and Eusebius after him, evidently knows nothing more than what can be inferred from 1 Pet 1:1. Eusebius, citing Origen’s commentary on Genesis, writes, “Peter *seems* to have preached to the Jews of the Dispersion in Pontus and Galatia and Bithynia, Cappadocia, and Asia” (italics added; *Hist. Eccl.* 3.1.2; 3.4.2).

Rumor of a tradition that Prochorus, one of the seven deacons in Jerusalem (Acts 6:5) and later the bishop of Nicomedia in Bithynia, travelled through northern Asia Minor with Peter, is undocumented.<sup>10</sup> And even if true, this is insuffi-

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<sup>9</sup> For an extended discussion of the provinces and the sequence see Fenton J. A. Hort, *The First Epistle of St Peter* (New York: Macmillan, 1898), 157–84.

<sup>10</sup> In his commentary on Acts 6:5 F. F. Bruce cites the 5<sup>th</sup> century *Acts of John* by Pseudo-Prochorus, commenting that Prochorus, one of the seven deacons of the Jerusalem church, “appears in later tradition as an attendant of John the apostle and as the alleged author of the orthodox fifth-century *Acts of John*, as well as bishop of Nicomedia in Bithynia”, see F. F. Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, NICNT, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 184. Mark Wilson cites Bruce and adds without citation, “Prochorus is said to have traveled with Peter to Nicomedia ...”, see

cient motivation for the letter since 1 Peter does not mention Prochorus, Nicomedia, or any travel in that region as the reason for writing.

To the contrary, extant apocryphal texts concerning Peter consistently associate him with Rome, not Asia Minor. While the historical value of the details in such texts is rightly debated, the high concentration of references to Peter's miracles, preaching, and ministry *in Rome* among the various apocryphal materials suggests an authentic memory of Peter spending considerable time in the imperial city, especially relative to any time he may have spent in Asia Minor. Had he resided in Asia Minor for the period of time that would have been necessary for evangelizing the vast area referred to in 1:1, one would expect that similar texts describing his ministry there would have also been produced.<sup>11</sup> Despite this lack of evidence, the assumption that Peter likely traveled through these lands is still the most prevalent theory where any is offered.<sup>12</sup>

But even if Peter did travel through and evangelize northern Asia Minor, that does not preclude the question of why he writes as he does at some later time, apparently from Rome, to the "scattered." And so the question remains, why did Peter – or someone wanting us to read the letter as if it were from the apostle – single out Christians in this specific geographic area at this particular time to address in these exact terms? Could they have had an association with Rome that would have made them an extension of Peter's flock?

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Mark W. Wilson, "Cities of God in northern Asia Minor: Using Stark's social theories to reconstruct Peter's communities." *Verbum et Ecclesia* 32(1): 7, Art. #422, doi: 10.4102/ve.v32i1.422. There are two works titled *The Acts of John*, one a 2<sup>nd</sup> century Gnostic work by Leucius, a supposed disciple of John, and the *Acts of John* allegedly by Prochorus, a Greek romance that is not earlier than the 5<sup>th</sup> century and includes much of the text of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century work. Cf. Montague R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924; repr. 1960), 228, 469; see also James K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 303–49. Neither of these works provides relevant information that corroborates Peter's travels in Asia Minor.

**11** The process of how living memory of Peter turned into tradition bearing footprints of historical truth is discussed by Markus Bockmuehl in *The Remembered Peter in Ancient Reception and Modern Debate*, WUNT 262 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) and *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

**12** E.g., Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple–Apostle–Martyr*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: SCM, 1962), 54; Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried and John Reumann, eds., *Peter in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973), 150; Fred Lapham, *Peter: The Myth, the Man and the Writings: A Study of Early Petrine Text and Tradition*, JSNT.S 239 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 147; Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 3; Edward G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1958), 46–47.

## 2 A Theory of Roman Colonization

As an alternative to the traditional assumptions, I have previously suggested that the original recipients of the letter may have had some association with the apostle Peter elsewhere, possibly in Rome or, less likely, Antioch (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.36.2.), and then found themselves scattered across the northern provinces of Asia Minor, possibly as colonists in one of the many cities of Asia Minor undergoing Roman urbanization during the first century.<sup>13</sup> Peter, feeling apostolic responsibility for these people, writes to help them better understand their Christian identity and how to live as Christians who have been displaced from their familiar communities and churches. Although Elliott rejects this theory, it is quite congenial to his identification of the recipients as “a dispersed alien minority within a larger, generally hostile, society.”<sup>14</sup>

The framing of 1 Peter in terms of diaspora in 1:1 and “Babylon” in 5:13 suggests it would have been read originally as a “diaspora letter,” for which there is precedent in earlier Jewish tradition (e.g., 2 Macc 1:1–9 and 2 Bar 78–87). As a distinctively Jewish form, someone whose spiritual authority was recognized by the recipients wrote the diaspora letter, urging its readers to a holy way of life that did not conform to the majority society. Scholars, including Goppelt, almost unanimously identify “Babylon” in 1 Pet 5:13 as a cryptic reference to Rome.<sup>15</sup>

In discussing the other terms of the address, “visiting foreigners” (παρεπίδημοι) and “resident aliens” (πάροικοι) used in the letter to refer to the original readers, John Elliott points out,

both terms denote persons ... living in locales *different from their place of origin ... dislocated from their actual place of origin and belonging*, disenfranchised, and subject to ... hostility of a local populace suspicious of their pedigrees, intentions, and allegiances. Such was the perennial predicament of strangers in the ancient xenophobic world ... living in the Diaspora always entailed some form of alien status (emphasis added).<sup>16</sup>

Although I disagree with Elliott’s identification of these παρεπίδημοι and πάροικοι as indigenous tenant farmers,<sup>17</sup> I do agree that these terms refer to the original historical and social situation that gave rise to the letter, which the author then used to deepen the original readers’ understanding of Christian identity resulting from the new birth (1:3). Whether writing to Christian converts from Juda-

<sup>13</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 28–41.

<sup>14</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter* (AncB), 97.

<sup>15</sup> Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 373–75.

<sup>16</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter* (AncB), 312, 313.

<sup>17</sup> Elliott, *Home*, 63.

ism or to Christian Gentiles, he takes the opportunity of their personal experience to draw them into the Old Testament story of God's people in exile, encouraging them that the promised, better land has now been secured by the resurrection and ascension of Christ (cf. Heb 11:16, 40). F. Lapham also offered a theory of the displacement of the original readers from elsewhere, though he proposed Jerusalem or Syria, and observed, "it is hard to imagine that the writer would have used the analogy at all if it did not refer in the first place to some particular historical situation; and we need, now, to try to determine who these sojourners were, and why they had come to the four provinces of Asia Minor."<sup>18</sup>

My theory, first published in my commentary on 1 Peter, has now enjoyed several years of review and critique, and so this paper will address criticisms and build on work subsequently done. The idea has received a range of responses across the gamut. D. A. Carson writes, "Jobes ... has convincingly argued that although the sense of spiritual pilgrimage and transition is certainly present, a concrete setting can be responsibly envisaged in which physical scattering plays a part."<sup>19</sup> Affirming the theory, Larry Helyer recognizes that Peter addresses the original recipients

in a two-fold sense: they are living away from their former home in Rome and, at the same time, living away from their ultimate home, their heavenly home. In short, both a literal and metaphorical meaning aptly applies. This thesis has much to commend it, and, while it cannot be proven, 'it explains a number of issues.'<sup>20</sup>

As Helyer recognizes, the traditional metaphorical-spiritual sense of this life as a pilgrimage of the Christian toward his or her eternal home does not, of course, exclude some literal sense related to the historical situation that gave rise to the letter in the first place.<sup>21</sup> In fact the spiritual-metaphorical is the *only* sense that could be appropriated by readers who did not share the circumstances of the original recipients when the letter circulated beyond the original destinations.

On the other hand, Markus Bockmuehl thinks the theory "has little evidence to support it."<sup>22</sup> And John H. Elliott comments, "Jobes weaves a web spun of threads of conjecture and supposition with little if any historical evidence con-

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**18** Lapham, *Peter*, 128.

**19** David A. Carson, "1 Peter." In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 1015–45, here 1016.

**20** Larry R. Helyer, *The Life and Witness of Peter* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2012), 116.

**21** For an argument against the metaphorical sense as the original intent and a defense of the literal use of πάροικοι, see Elliott, *1 Peter* (AncB), 101; and idem, *Home*, 42, 43.

**22** Markus Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, 127 footnote 43.

necting the dots.”<sup>23</sup> But to be sure, *any* historical reconstruction of the events precipitating this letter must of necessity, if one is to say anything at all, rest on some degree of speculation – hopefully informed and thoughtful – though speculation nonetheless. Speaking of his own theory about the route Peter’s letter took when originally delivered, Elliott admits, “Though based only on circumstantial evidence, this theory ... has considerable merit.”<sup>24</sup> And he says further, “the information on the personal and social identity of the addressees is at best *inferential* and reflective of what the author presumes to know concerning his hearers/readers and their situation” (italics original).<sup>25</sup> Every theory about the historical origins of the letter cannot be other than based on circumstantial evidence and scholarly inference.

Moreover, interpreters who accept 1 Peter as a pseudonymous letter written long after the apostle’s death are even more in the dark, because they have *no* historical context against which to read the letter, for they can have no knowledge about who the author was, where he lived, when he lived, and under what influences he wrote. Therefore, they can have nothing to say about why it was written to these five specific provinces. The theory that the letter was written by an anonymous author living in some unidentified place in Asia Minor at some unknown time is no less speculative, also resting on circumstantial evidence that, by virtue of making our knowledge about the apostle Peter irrelevant, is even thinner. In a discussion of Peter in 1 Peter, Bockmuehl writes,

somewhat contrary to the drift of modern scholarship, I wish here to argue that while there are indeed weighty reasons to doubt Peter’s sole literary authorship of this letter, the conventional arguments for a fully pseudonymous composition (after his death, unconnected with his ministry or even with the envisaged readership) *do not merit the wide acceptance they have received and should be shelved.*<sup>26</sup>

So what does link the memory of the apostle Peter to Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, since there is no direct historical or textual evidence of his association with the original readers beyond 1 Pet 1:1? And why does he address believers in these particular places as foreigners and resident aliens?

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**23** John H. Elliott, Review of Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, BECNT. *Review of Biblical Literature* 10 (2006) (<http://www.bookreviews.org>).

**24** Elliott, *1 Peter* (AncB), 91.

**25** Elliott, *1 Peter* (AncB), 94.

**26** Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, 126 (emphasis added).

### 3 Peter in Rome?

It is almost universally accepted that Peter spent his final days in Rome and met his death there during the reign of Nero, and even skeptics have presented no competing claims.<sup>27</sup> As Elliott points out, “This final phase of his ministry in Rome is attested voluminously in post-NT tradition from Clement of Rome (ca. 96 CE) onwards (*1 Clem.* 5:1–4; *Ign. Rom.* 4:3; cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.14.6; 2.15.6; 2.17.1; 4.1) ...”.<sup>28</sup> Lactantius (AD 240–320) attests that “while Nero reigned, the Apostle Peter came to Rome ...” (Lactantius, *de mort. persec.* II.5). But Peter’s arrival in Rome during the reign of Nero does not mean that it was necessarily his first visit there, for the statement is made in the context of Peter’s martyrdom. Therefore, Lactantius may have been referring to when Peter arrived in Rome for the final time, not for the first time.

When Peter’s travel is explicitly mentioned in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century apocryphal material, Peter sails from Caesarea in Palestine to Rome “after 12 years had passed” from Christ’s Ascension (*Acts Pet.* 5; cf. *Acts of Andrew and Paul*<sup>29</sup>).<sup>30</sup> Assuming the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus was about AD 30, twelve years later places Peter’s first travel to Rome about AD 42. This is the same year indicated by the earliest historical documents of the Roman Catholic Church, the *Liber Pontificalis* and the *Liberian Catalogue*, as well as the evidence of Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 2.14.6) and Jerome (*De viris illustribus* 1), that puts Peter in Rome during the second year of the reign of Claudius (AD 42). However, the curious agreement of these documents might be based on the arithmetic of the tradition of a 25-year episcopate and not on independent sources.<sup>31</sup> In commenting on Peter’s influence in the Gospel of Mark, T. W. Manson puts Peter in Rome for a visit in the late 50s, based largely on the point that Paul does not mention Peter’s ministry in his letter to the Romans.<sup>32</sup> We know of Peter’s presence in Antioch about AD 48 (Gal 2:11), that he was back in Jerusalem about AD 49 (Acts 15:7), and that he had influence on Christians in Corinth (1 Cor 1:12) sometime before AD 55. Eusebius mentions that Peter was the first bishop of the church in Antioch (*Eccl.*

<sup>27</sup> But for a critique of this consensus, see Lapham, *Peter*, 93–98.

<sup>28</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter* (AncB), 309.

<sup>29</sup> James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 474.

<sup>30</sup> For further attestations see Carsten Peter Thiede, *Simon Peter: From Galilee to Rome* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1986), 155.

<sup>31</sup> John Wenham, “Did Peter Go to Rome in AD 42?” *TynB* 23 (1972): 94–102; also Thiede, *Simon Peter*, 154.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas W. Manson, “The Life of Jesus: A Survey of the Available Material.” *BJRL* 28 (1944): 382–403, here 131.

*Hist.* 3.36.2), but Rome is the city that claims his extended residence after fleeing Jerusalem “for another place” (Acts 12:17).

The phrase Luke uses to describe Peter’s destination, εἰς ἕτερον τόπον (“for another place”) is also found in Ezek 12:3 LXX, similarly in the context of fleeing Jerusalem for exile in Babylon, and so Acts 12:17 may be a specific, though, cryptic reference to Peter’s departure for Rome. While the apostle probably was not the first to bring the gospel to the imperial city, he may have been the first apostle to validate Roman believers, establishing the church there and his apostolic oversight of it (cf. Rom 15:20).<sup>33</sup> If the Jewish pilgrims to Jerusalem at Pentecost first heard the gospel from Peter’s preaching (Acts 2:10, 14), and were the first to bring the gospel to Rome upon their return, they could reasonably have been considered part of “the circumcised” under Peter’s oversight (Gal 2:7).

Although it may be debated when Peter first arrived in Rome and how long he stayed there, the theory that the Christians to whom Peter wrote had a former association with him in Rome exploits the strong and uncontested association of Peter with the imperial city. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider a possible connection between Rome and the original recipients of 1 Peter, since historical evidence fails otherwise to document Peter’s presence in northern Asia Minor.

## 4 Rome and Asia Minor

Strong ties existed between Asia Minor and Rome in the first century that were based on trade, education, and the rise of imperial estates Asia Minor, where the imperial cult was particularly strong.<sup>34</sup> David Noy counted inscriptions referring to people who lived in Rome who had come from Asia Minor. These were found to include the names of imperial slaves, ambassadors, senators, marble-workers (especially from Bithynia), doctors, and traders, who often lived in communities in Rome with others from the same points of origin.<sup>35</sup> These people did hold not Roman citizenship and were considered foreigners (Latin *peregrini*; Greek πάροικοι) in the imperial city, whose residence there was somewhat tenuous, for freed slaves or *peregrini* (foreigners) could be easily exiled without cause or trial.<sup>36</sup> Those not holding Roman citizenship, even if born in Rome itself, were subject to expulsion in various pressing situations such as food shortages, military con-

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<sup>33</sup> Thiede, *Simon Peter*, 155.

<sup>34</sup> David Noy, *Foreigners at Rome: Citizens and Strangers* (London: Duckworth, 2000), 227–234.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Ernest L. Abel, “Were the Jews Banished from Rome in 19 A. D.?” *REJ* 127 (1968): 383–86, here 386.

scription, and membership in suspect professions or religions.<sup>37</sup> Food shortages motivated the mass expulsion from Rome of all non-citizens except teachers and doctors in AD 6.<sup>38</sup> The targeting of sub-groups of non-citizens who were defined by religion, profession, or nationality was more common in the first century following Augustus. Philosophers and astrologers were professions that experienced repeated expulsions, the former group under Nero, Vitellius, Vespasian, and Domitian; the latter under Agrippa, Vitellius, Vespasian, and Domitian.<sup>39</sup> An expulsion based on objectionable religious practices in 139 BC set a precedent that Tiberius later used to justify similar measures.<sup>40</sup> Egyptian cults were suppressed in Rome through deportation, possibly under suspicion that they were subversive of Roman social and political values.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, because of their ties and allegiance to Jerusalem, Jews born anywhere were considered foreigners in the city of Rome, even if they were born there. Noy comments, “The fact that there were three expulsions of Jews from Rome up to the time of Claudius ... shows that they were perceived as ‘foreign’ at least until that date, since expulsions were only practiced against groups which were in some sense foreign.”<sup>42</sup> The expulsion of the Jews by Claudius around AD 49 is the most famous of Roman deportations, but an association with that particular expulsion is not necessary for the theory that Christianity was brought to the northern provinces of Asia Minor from Rome and possibly elsewhere by population transfer, and perhaps concurrently with the more gradual evangelization of the indigenous people.

To establish a proven connection between expulsions from Rome and colonization/urbanization in Asia Minor in the first century is beyond both the scope of this paper as well as the expertise of this writer, but there seems to be evidence that points to that possibility. The Emperors often reduced the strain of over-population in Rome by sending “colonists” out from it under a variety of circumstances, to a number of destinations, sometimes forcibly and sometimes voluntarily.<sup>43</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus proposed during the Augustan period that manumitted slaves of questionable moral character should be expelled

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**37** Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 37–47.

**38** Dio. Hal., *Ant. Rom* 55.26; Suetonius, *Aug.*, 42. Cited in Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 39.

**39** Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 44–45.

**40** Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 41–42.

**41** Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 44.

**42** Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 258.

**43** Guy Bradley, “Colonization and Identity.” In *Greek and Roman Colonization: Origins, Ideologies and Interactions*, eds. Guy Bradley and John-Paul Wilson (Swansea, Wales: Classical Press of Wales, 2006), 161–201; Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 41–47; Mary V. Braginton, “Exile Under the Roman Emperors.” *CJ* 39 (1944): 391–407.

“under the specious pretence of *sending them out as a colony*” (italics added).<sup>44</sup> That pretense would be plausible only if such a practice was not unheard of.

The Jews were an easily identifiable religious group in Rome that were targeted for expulsions in AD 19 and again in AD 49, and were censured by Claudius in AD 41.<sup>45</sup> Outsiders would almost certainly have viewed the introduction of Christianity in Rome to be a Jewish sect with new and suspicious beliefs and practices because Christians worshipped a Jewish Messiah. As Goppelt has explained when writing about the background of 1 Peter,

This posture of nonconformity was permitted generally for Jews, however reluctantly, on the basis of their ethnic peculiarity transmitted from the patriarchs. It did, however, create considerable outrage when it was experienced among one’s own fellow citizens, acquaintances, and relatives: Hellenistic people expressed spiteful misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Christian statements and Christian life-style.<sup>46</sup>

The Claudian expulsion from Rome has been associated with Christianity through the well-known and highly debated reference to *Chrestus* in the writings of two Roman historians (Suetonius, *Clau.* 25; Dio 60.6.6–7).<sup>47</sup> Although understood to be an expulsion of Jews, not Christians, certainly at that early date Jewish Christians would likely not have been identified as separate from the Jewish population. Even Gentile converts who worshipped a Jewish Messiah would likely have been considered converts to a peculiar sub-cult of Judaism, and would have especially riled Roman sensibilities. Although Rome was tolerant of foreign religions to a point, “The cardinal point of that policy was to grant hospitality to foreign religions, but to consider them a menace the moment they took advantage of that courtesy to disturb the public peace, offend accepted morals, or *engage in converting native Romans*” (emphasis added).<sup>48</sup>

It is striking circumstantial evidence that Claudius was particularly interested in the urbanization of Asia Minor and established Roman cities in *all five* of the regions named in 1 Pet 1:1. In Pontus, Claudius conferred the status of a Roman colony on the old settlement of Andrappa, which then took the name Neo-

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<sup>44</sup> Dio. Hal. *Ant. Rom* 4.24.8 (tr. E. Cary). Quoted in Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 39.

<sup>45</sup> Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 42.

<sup>46</sup> Goppelt, *I Peter*, 40.

<sup>47</sup> Helga Botermann suggests that it was Peter’s preaching that caused the disturbance, though that is far from certain. See *Das Judenedikt des Kaisers Claudius* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1996).

<sup>48</sup> Vincent M. Scramuzza, *The Emperor Claudius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), 151–52.

claudiopolis.<sup>49</sup> In Galatia, the ancient city of Iconium received a new political advantage from Claudius and took the name Claudiconium.<sup>50</sup> Claudius also established another colony in the Galatian area of Trocmi called Claudiopolis.<sup>51</sup> The ancient settlement of Archelais in the newly annexed Cappadocia was given the status of a Roman colony.<sup>52</sup> In the province of Asia the Seleucid community of Laodiceia became romanized with the name Claudiolaodiceia.<sup>53</sup> And finally in Bithynia the town of Boli was conferred with a new status which required its name to become Bithynium-Claudiopolis.<sup>54</sup> Elsewhere in Asia Minor Claudius also established five colonies in Pisidia and Lycaonia<sup>55</sup> as well as in Syria at Ptolemais Acco<sup>56</sup> and in Thrace.<sup>57</sup> It is striking that Claudius – and perhaps only Claudius – established Roman colonies in each of the five regions specifically named in 1 Pet 1:1. Although it is true that there is no historical evidence to link those expelled in AD 49 by Claudius’ to his colonies or other specific destinations in Asia Minor, the circumstantial evidence needed for this reconstruction of the situation that prompts Peter to write is far greater than that for assuming Peter personally evangelized northern Asia Minor.

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**49** Arnold H. M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 159; David Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor to the End of the Third Century after Christ*, vol. 1 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950; repr. New York: Arno, 1975), 546–47; Stanley A. Cook, F. E. Adcock and M. P. Charlesworth, *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 679.

**50** Magie, *Roman Rule*, 547.

**51** Cook, Adcock and Charlesworth, *History*, 679.

**52** Jones, *Cities*, 179; Cook, Adcock and Charlesworth, *History*, 679; Barbara Levick, *Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 158, 178; Magie, *Roman Rule*, 547.

**53** Magie, *Roman Rule*, 547.

**54** Jones, *Cities*, 164; Cook, Adcock and Charlesworth, *History*, 679; Magie, *Roman Rule*, 546.

**55** Cook, Adcock and Charlesworth, *History*, 680; see also Levick, *Roman Colonies*, 158, 178; Magie, *Roman Rule*, 547; Arnaldo Momigliano, *Claudius: The Emperor and His Achievement* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1934; repr. Cambridge: Heffer and Sons, 1961), 64–65.

**56** Barbara Levick, *Claudius* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 183.

**57** M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), vol. 1, 251.

## 5 “Foreigners” (παρεπίδημοι) and “resident aliens” (πάροικοι)

A further criticism against the theory of Roman colonization is that the letter does not mention exile or colonization.<sup>58</sup> Firstly, an argument from silence works equally against the traditional assumption, for the letter also does not mention that Peter traveled through or evangelized these areas himself. Furthermore, an author may not mention an event because it was so well known to all parties involved that to do so would seem inappropriately pedantic. But is it true that the letter doesn’t mention such an event? It is only by reading the terms “foreigners” (παρεπίδημοι) and “resident aliens” (πάροικοι) as strictly metaphorical that one would conclude that. If these terms are allowed their more literal meaning then these words form a clear and explicit reference to people who were foreign visitors and resident aliens.

It is on this point of the referent of *πάροικοι* that John Elliott and I disagree, although he, too, believes, “the identification and accentuation of the addressees in 1 Peter as ‘visiting strangers’ and ‘resident aliens’ is a significant indication of both the situation which prompted this communication [1 Peter] and the strategy according to which it was composed.”<sup>59</sup> Elliott points out that this and cognate terms refer to people who live as a resident alien in a foreign environment or away from home, who were considered less than citizens but more than strangers.<sup>60</sup> He further acknowledges the terms “foreigners” (παρεπίδημοι) and “resident aliens” (πάροικοι) “indicate not only the geographical dislocation of the recipients but also the political, legal, social and religious limitations and estrangement which such displacement entails.”<sup>61</sup> Combining this with his belief that “the letter is directed to a predominantly rural audience,” Elliott concludes that in 1 Peter,

the *paroikoi* who are addressed can be associated with the tenant farmers who worked the land and were organized in manorial households, whose social centers were villages and whose lands were gradually annexed to larger trade centers and city territories where they were then classified explicitly as ‘resident aliens. ... they may well have been numbered among the rural population ... who had been relocated to city territories and assigned inferior status ...’<sup>62</sup>

**58** Nelson D. Kloosterman, Review of Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, BECNT. *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, 17 (2006): 307–312, here 308.

**59** Elliott, *Home*, 59.

**60** Elliott, *Home*, 35, 67–68; also, idem, *1 Peter* (AncB), 312–13.

**61** Elliott, *Home*, 48.

**62** Elliott, *Homes*, 63, 48.

In other words, these indigenous peoples had the lower social, legal, and political status of foreigners without ever having left home, because of the intrusion of the dominant society, first the Greeks and then the Romans. Elliott's conclusion that the original readers of 1 Peter were tenant farmers in a rural setting has been challenged, most recently by David Horrell and by Mark Wilson.<sup>63</sup> Both argue that the emergence of Christianity in Asia Minor followed the same pattern as elsewhere in the empire and first flourished in urban centers. However, Elliott's theory does allow an urban setting by explaining that the *πάροικοι* "may well have been numbered among the rural population and villagers who had been relocated to city territories and assigned inferior status to the citizenry."<sup>64</sup>

From the time of Greek colonization of Asia Minor onward, the term *πάροικοι* was used to refer to peoples living around a colony. Greek colonists in Asia Minor used *πάροικοι* to refer to the indigenous peoples, and Roman documents attest that the term continued to be used in reference to the indigenous people living around Roman colonies and imperial estates.<sup>65</sup> However, the term *πάροικοι* underwent semantic development, particularly in the context of Roman colonization:

C'est cette signification large que, le plus souvent, le terme recouvre aussi *dans le cadre des colonies romaines*, au sein desquelles on trouve également, *comme dans les cités d'Asie*, les deux catégories d'habitants libres non citoyens, à savoir *les étrangers domiciliés et les populations autochtones*.<sup>66</sup>

(It is this broader meaning of the term most often covering also *within the Roman colonies*, in which one also finds, *as in the cities of Asia*, two categories of free, non-citizen inhabitants, namely, *aliens domiciled and indigenous peoples*.)

Contra Horrell, the issues that define who is foreign and who citizen, and the terms used to refer to each, are indeed complex.<sup>67</sup> Not only is there ambiguity

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**63** David G. Horrell, "Aliens and Strangers? The Socioeconomic Location of the Addressees of 1 Peter." In *Engaging Economics: New Testament Scenarios and Early Christian Reception*, ed. Bruce W. Longenecker and Kelly D. Liebengood (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 176–202; Wilson, "Cities of God in northern Asia Minor."

**64** Elliott, *Home*, 48.

**65** Athanassios D. Rizakis, "INCOLAE-PAROIKOI: Populations et Communautés Dépendantes dans les Cités et les Colonies Romaines de L'Orient." *REA* 100 (1998): 605; Benjamin B. Rubin, *(Re)presenting Empire: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor, 31 BC – AD 68* (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008), 28–31.

**66** Rizakis, "INCOLAE-PAROIKOI," 606–607 (emphasis added).

**67** Horrell, "Aliens and Strangers," 187 footnote 57.

concerning the referent of the word, but also the issue of citizenship and “foreignness” depends on the reference point, that of the indigenous population or that of the immigrating peoples. Furthermore, one could be a citizen of Rome but not a citizen of the city of residence, or vice-versa, or be a citizen of neither. One could be categorized as a foreigner either by traveling to another place or without ever leaving one’s birthplace.

To further complicate the situation, the term underwent considerable semantic development during the period of interest.

On voit que les termes *incolae-paroikoi* ont connu une évolution sémantique due aux changements des conditions socio-politiques des cités hellénistiques et romaines. Cette évolution n’est pas claire dans les sources anciennes qui utilisent sans distinction plusieurs termes pour définir une même situation ou un terme pour définir des situations différentes dans des contextes spatiaux et chronologiques variés. Cette ambiguïté du vocabulaire, liée à la diversité des situations sociales des cités, provoque un véritable embarras chez les modernes et une difficulté réelle à analyser, pour chaque cas, le statut et la condition des populations dépendantes.<sup>68</sup>

(We see that the terms *incolae-paroikoi* have evolved semantically due to changes in socio-political conditions of the Hellenistic and Roman cities. This evolution is not clear in the ancient sources that use several terms to define the same situation or one term to define different situations in various temporal and spatial contexts. This ambiguity of the vocabulary related to the diversity of social situations of cities, causes a real embarrassment in modern [scholarship] and a real difficulty to analyze in each case, the status and condition of dependent peoples.)

The ambiguity modern interpreters of 1 Peter face arises because the author had no need of specifying his meaning more precisely, for both the author and his original readers knew who they were and where they had come from.

During the mid-late first century, Roman urbanization was accomplished primarily by designating previously existing cities as “colonies” and where the imperial estates developed. This process of urbanization opened opportunities for people to migrate from Rome to the “colonies,” making it plausible that Peter uses *πάροικοι* (resident alien), especially in collocation with *παρεπίδημοι* (visiting foreigner), to refer to people who had immigrated into northern Asia Minor from elsewhere, bringing the Christian faith with them.

Furthermore, *πάροικοι* occurs, as it does in 1 Peter (2:11), always in the plural, because it never conveyed a personal, individual status. Rather, the *πάροικοι* are recognized collectively as a community dependent on a city.<sup>69</sup> In the context

<sup>68</sup> Rizakis, “INCOLAE-PAROIKOI,” 606–607.

<sup>69</sup> Rizakis, “INCOLAE-PAROIKOI,” 607.

of 1 Peter, this could express the author's belief that those to whom he writes are dependent on Rome, particularly their association with the Roman church. Although they are no longer physically part of the Christian community at Rome, they retain their membership, so to speak, though now living in diaspora at a distance. Peter's apostolic role in the church at Rome, regardless of when it began or how long it endured, provides him the responsibility to write to these believers scattered across Asia Minor.

Lapham also sees these terms as references to displaced Christians, particularly of Jewish origin, but immigrating from the east.<sup>70</sup> He points to two migrations of Christians out of Palestine, the first recorded in Acts 8:1, the second at the siege of Jerusalem by Titus in AD 70. He also observes that the insurrection of Jews in Syria following the failure of Trajan's Parthian campaign makes it easy to "imagine that during these years of unrest in the east, Christians would want to dissociate themselves ... and a migration to quieter regions in the west might have seemed appropriate."<sup>71</sup> Lapham argues that Peter got no further than Antioch, and he or someone later writing in his name wrote to Christians who had been under his apostolic oversight.

To the evidence of the terms *πάροιχοι* and *παρεπίδημοι*, that the text of 1 Peter does in fact refer to the immigration of the original readers, we might add the term *κλήρων* in 1 Pet 5:3, which in the context of colonization was used to refer to citizens of the Empire in distinction from the indigenous *πάροιχοι*, and to the lands which were allotted to them.<sup>72</sup> Traditionally 5:3 is understood to read, "Shepherd the flock of God ... not lording it over those allotted (*τῶν κλήρων*) to you ..." where the allotment refers to Christians brought together by God's providence, (cf. Deut 9:29 LXX). This theological understanding does not, of course, preclude a historical reference to the means God used to bring these people together in one place, namely the allotment of their place by Roman socio-political dynamics in the urbanization of Asia Minor, to which Peter alludes with the term *κλήρων*.

Which cities might have been the original destination of the letter? Although the specific destinations are unknown, extant second-century texts imply there were large numbers of Christians in Pontus (e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96–97; Lucian, *Alex.* 25.38), and there are extant letters addressed to the church at Amastris and another to the church at Nicomedia, both cities in Bithynia.<sup>73</sup> A number of itineraries that the original letter may have travelled have been proposed:

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<sup>70</sup> Lapham, *Peter*, 128–29.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>72</sup> Rostovtzeff, *History* vol. 1, 255; Elliott, *Home*, 63.

<sup>73</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter* (AncB), 87.

Elliott: Amisus (in Pontus), Amasea (in Galatia), Caesarea Mazaca (in Cappadocia), Sardis (in Asia) and Nicomedia (in Bithynia).<sup>74</sup>

Tanyar: Sinope, Amisus (both in Pontus), Caesarea Mazaca (in Cappadocia), Tavium, Ancyra, Pessiunis (all three in Galatia), Dorylaeum (in Asia), Aezani (Asia/Galatia), Nicaea, Nicomedia, Chalcedon (all three in Bithynia).<sup>75</sup>

Jobes (not necessarily in sequence of travel): [Sinope], Andrappa/Neoclaudiopolis (in Pontus), Iconium, Trocmi/Claudiopolis (both in Galatia), Archelais (Cappadocia) Claudiolaodicea (Asia), Boli/Bithynium-Claudiopolis (Bithynia).<sup>76</sup>

Wilson: Sinope, Amisus (both in Pontus), Caesarea Mazaca (in Cappadocia), Ancyra (in Galatia), Dorylaeum (in Asia), Nicaea, Nicomedia (in Bithynia).<sup>77</sup>

Elliott based his proposed itinerary on the sequence of the named destinations combined with known travel routes of the time. Tanyar associated the destinations with known locations of the imperial estates. Jobes proposed that the destinations were Romanized cities to which Christians from other locations, possibly Rome, had migrated. Wilson combined known travel routes with urban centers where Christianity likely flourished based on sociological factors. None of these proposals have direct textual, historical, or archeological proof, and the specific locations of Peter’s original readers may never be known with certainty.

What is lacking in the theory of Roman colonization is the explicit historical verification that the proposed cities actually received Christian settlers from Rome. The identification of cities in Asia Minor that were Romanized would involve methods and data that lie within the expertise of archeologists, classicists, and Roman historians. But even when there are archeological remains, it is difficult to discriminate between what is distinctively “Roman” of the culture and what is not in reference to the identity of the colony’s population. Beyond that, one would have to demonstrate a distinctive Christian identity. To identify the colonists, even for a relatively well-studied site, such as Butrint and Nicopolis in northwest Greece, seems beyond expectation with current knowledge, as one scholar concludes, “most of our currently available evidence in northwest Greece is basically ill-suited to addressing questions about the reality of the colonial experience for both colonists and colonised or for those *who were forcibly or voluntarily transferred from one place to another*” (emphasis

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<sup>74</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter* (AncB), 91.

<sup>75</sup> Alev Tanyar, *The Jews and Christians of Imperial Asia Minor: The Literary and Material Evidence* (MA diss., Bilkent University, 2002), 75–76.

<sup>76</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter* (BECNT), 29.

<sup>77</sup> Wilson, “Cities of God in northern Asia Minor,” 8.

added).<sup>78</sup> This remark suggests that colonists were at times displaced peoples forcibly expelled. Since many of the sites relevant to the study of 1 Peter have not been excavated, and are not likely to be if modern cities have been built over them, that historical proof may never be available. However, studies of other sites have confirmed that Roman colonists were not exclusively veterans of the Roman army, but as in the case of the original foundation of Butrint, were “alien settlers from Rome” (ἐποίκους ἔχον Ῥωμαίους; Strabo *Geog* 7.7.5) who were “a mixture of freedmen and clients of powerful individuals in Rome, a situation analogous to that of the Caesarean colony at Corinth.”<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, “Roman identity was only one of a range of co-existing and conflicting identities that constantly changed and shifted through time and circumstance.”<sup>80</sup> Perhaps such a situation explains why Peter insists so adamantly that the Christian believer forge their new identity in Christ (1 Pet 1:3) as the basis for life.

In the absence of any historical proof of the situation that gave rise to 1 Peter, we will have to make do with circumstantial evidence if we are to say anything about the Christians “of the diaspora of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” There is a striking convergence of circumstantial evidence pointing to a previous association of these people with Peter in Rome:

1. There is historical evidence that the apostle Peter resided in Rome, perhaps arriving as early as AD 42 during the reign of Claudius, and perhaps having some form of spiritual oversight of the church there for as much as twenty-five years.
2. There is the fact that Claudius was one of the two emperors who most extensively colonized/Romanized Asia Minor, whether through the establishment of new settlements or by designating existing cities as “colonies” of Rome.<sup>81</sup>
3. There is the fact that Claudius designated cities in each of the five provinces names in 1 Pet 1:1 as Roman colonies.
4. There is the fact that Claudius, like other emperors, used both forced and voluntary deportation and expulsion during his reign, the most famous being the expulsion of the “Jews” about AD 48/49, possibly for reasons caused by the growth of Christianity in Rome. A large Jewish population

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**78** William Bowden, “‘Alien settlers consisting of Romans’: Identity and built environment in the Julio-Claudian foundations of Epirus in the century after Actium.” In *Roman Colonies in the First Century of their Foundation*, ed. Rebecca J. Sweetman (Oxford and Oakville: Oxbow Books, 2011), 101–116, here 113.

**79** Bowden, “Alien Settlers Consisting of Romans,” 102.

**80** *Ibid.*

**81** Edward T. Salmon, *Roman Colonization under the Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 160; Rostovtzeff, *History*, vol. 1, 83, 242.

- in Asia Minor combined with the Romanization of its urban centers could have been an attractive destination for those leaving the imperial city.
5. The fact that the letter of 1 Peter refers to its original readers using terms that are in the semantic domain of colonization.
  6. The fact that 1 Peter does not address churches in particular cities, and the structure of the church seems to be embryonic (5:1–3).

Was 1 Peter written to Roman colonists? We cannot know for certain, but given the evidence, we must question the assumption that Christianity came only slowly to the vast extent of northern Asia Minor through the evangelization of the indigenous peoples. A better understanding of the historical situation of the original addresses of 1 Peter will deepen our insights into what it means for Christians in all times and all places to recognize themselves as foreigners and resident aliens even in the places we call home.

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