

*πάροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος:*  
**Proselyte Characterizations**  
**in 1 Peter?**

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*In some diaspora Jewish works, the terms *πάροικος* and *παρεπίδημος* belong to the semantic field of "proselyte/proselytism." In 1 Peter, however, they do not indicate that the recipients of the letter are considered former proselytes. The terms function rather as metaphors drawn from the social world of proselytes (source domain), characterizing the social situation of the Petrine Christians (target domain), especially throwing light on the social estrangement of the Christian converts in the Greco-Roman societies of Asia Minor as understood by the author.*

*Key Words: diaspora, proselytism, 1 Peter, Philo*

In three recent studies of 1 Peter, the three authors have suggested three different controlling metaphors as important for the writer of 1 Peter and hence crucial for our understanding of this letter. Troy W. Martin suggests "diaspora" as the controlling metaphor;<sup>1</sup> Reinhard Feldmeier suggests "der Fremde";<sup>2</sup> while Paul J. Achtemeier<sup>3</sup> in his recent commentary suggests "Israel." In spite of the fact that they all also find other metaphors important as submetaphors in the letter, none of them has paid much attention to the role of proselytes/proselytism as a major aspect of the letter. "Proselyte/proselytism" is a subcategory that goes well together with both "diaspora" and "Israel," and I will here argue that the issue of "proselyte/proselytism" plays a much greater role in the letter than has hitherto been observed.

1. Troy W. Martin, *Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter* (SBLDS; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 144-61.

2. Reinhard Feldmeier, *Die Christen als Fremde: Die Metapher der Fremde in der antiken Welt, im Urchristentum and im 1. Petrusbrief* (WUNT 64; Tübingen: Mohr, 1992) 175-77.

3. Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 69-72.

In his impressive commentary, Achtemeier says that understanding "Israel" as being the controlling metaphor for the Christian community in 1 Peter clarifies several points that have been problematic in understanding the letter. It clarifies the fact that, despite its OT related terminology, the letter was not written to Jewish-Christian readers; second, it makes possible the proper understanding of the characterization *παρόικος καὶ παρεπίδημος*; third, it clarifies the self-understanding of the Christians as a "new people of God." Fourth, it answers the question why historical Israel is never mentioned in the letter.<sup>4</sup>

I will take as my point of departure his second point, the use of such categories as *παρόικος* ("stranger"), *παροικία* ("resident alien"), and *παρεπίδημος* ("exiles") in the letter. If we accept Israel as a central category for understanding the arguments and descriptions in the letter, some characterizations of the Christians, especially of their social conditions in society, are best understood from the perspective of proselytes/proselytism. In addition to using traditional terms from the conceptual field of "Israel," I find that 1 Peter uses proselyte-related terminology in its descriptions.

I would state my main thesis thus: In some diaspora Jewish works, the terms *παρόικος* and *παρεπίδημος* belong to the semantic field "proselyte/proselytism." In 1 Peter, however, they do not indicate that the recipients of the letter are considered actual former proselytes. The terms function, rather, as metaphors drawn from the social world of proselytes (source domain), characterizing the social situation of the Petrine Christians (target domain), especially throwing light on the social estrangement of the Christian converts in the Greco-Roman societies of Asia Minor as understood by the author.

A few aspects of my thesis and procedures should be highlighted here. First, I will not argue that these terms belong to the semantic field "proselyte/proselytism" alone, but that this is a relevant, though neglected field. Second, we should not argue so much from the standpoint of the social situation of the Christians in Asia Minor; in fact we know very little about it. I focus, rather, on how the author of 1 Peter, according to his letter, *perceived their situation*. Here the issue of proselyte/proselytism seems relevant. Third, drawing upon the view of metaphors set forth by Lakoff and Johnson,<sup>5</sup> especially their view of structural metaphors, I consider the social world of proselytes/proselytism the *source domain* for these terms and the perceived life of the Petrine Christians as the *target domain*. I shall

4. Ibid., 71-72.

5. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (eds.), *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

elaborate a little on the views of Lakoff and Johnson below. Fourth, I shall substantiate my view by reconsidering the much-discussed terms πάροικος and παρεπίδημος (1:1, 17; 2:11), especially drawing on interesting descriptions of proselytes in the works of Philo of Alexandria and in some other Jewish diaspora works. I do not posit any literary connections between 1 Peter and the works of Philo, but they both belong to the first-century diaspora and have important social aspects in common. Some of these social aspects were their needs and efforts to keep a distinct identity in the pluralistic Greco-Roman world, especially their views and attitudes toward outsiders and newcomers. The Jewish Hellenistic diaspora communities had a history of coping with these issues and, since many of the first Christians had a Jewish or a proselyte background, they appropriated many of the Jewish debates and practices.<sup>6</sup> As a "word of exhortation" (5:12),

1 Peter is trying to strengthen the Christians by guiding them in their Christian-identity building.

Hence, both the ways that Jews described the proselytes and the social position of their proselytes in the Greco-Roman world illuminate the author's understanding of the situation of the Christians to whom he wrote.

## THE RECIPIENTS OF 1 PETER IN RECENT RESEARCH

### *Nonmetaphorical Readings*

*The Recipients as Former Proselytes.* In his article from 1956, "Christianity according to 1 Peter," van Unnik said, "it is very interesting to see that in a number of places this epistle uses expressions which are very closely parallel to those used in connection with the proselytes among the Jews."<sup>7</sup> He did not develop this idea any further in this study, but he obviously alluded to and drew on an earlier

6. I am influenced on these issues by the works of Peder Borgen. A main thesis in many of his works is that "The Early Church draws on traditions, debates and practices from Jewish proselytism, modifies them, and makes them to serve a different kind of community structure." See Peder Borgen, "The Early Church and the Hellenistic Synagogue," *Philo, John and Paul: New Perspectives on Judaism and Early Christianity* (BJS 131; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987) 207-32, here cited from p. 208. See also Peder Borgen, "'Yes,' 'No,' 'How Far?': The Participation of Jews and Christians in Pagan Cults," in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1994) 30-59. Borgen has not, however, focused much on 1 Peter.

7. See W. C. van Unnik, "Christianity according to 1 Peter," in *Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Essays of W. C. van Unnik, Part Two* (NovTSup 30; Leiden: Brill, 1980) 115. See further down on the same page: "It may be that he is thinking here of the so-called 'God-fearers,' men like Cornelius and others who are often mentioned in Acts." This article was first published in *ExpTim* 68 (1956) 79-83.

work of his own on 1 Pet 1:18-19, published in the Netherlands in 1942.<sup>8</sup> There his main thesis was that the "blood" of 1 Pet 1:18-19 is to be read as a reference to the proselyte offering needed for acceptance into Israel,<sup>9</sup> and he lists 15 additional places where he finds traces of proselytism in the letter.<sup>10</sup> While admitting that not all of these passages contain clear references to proselytism, he finds that "the similarities appear constantly wherever the situation of the addressees of the epistles is being treated and wherever the work of Jesus is discussed" (emphasis his).<sup>11</sup> From these observations, he draws further conclusions concerning the addressees and the objectives of the epistle: he dates the letter before 70 CE, he finds no pivotal objections to seeing the Apostle Peter as its author, and he states that the letter is addressed to "people who had formerly been pagans, had joined the Synagogue as "godfearers," but had later been converted to Christianity."<sup>12</sup>

In his arguments he draws a little upon Philo of Alexandria's characterizations of proselytes as well as some other Jewish works. With regard to the particular expressions of 1:1, 17; 2:11 (πάροικος παροικία, and παρεπίδημος), he treats them not as metaphors but as denoting the people from whom the converts were drawn—that is, God-fearers and proselytes. These former pagans were exiles in a double sense; on the earth as πάροικοι and in the synagogue as παρεπίδημοι. According to van Unnik, the narratives of Acts about the mission of Paul confirm this interpretation.

Few would follow van Unnik today in many of his interpretations in this article, but it represents an important and concise exposition of his view. Crucial questions remain—such as, for example, the issue whether a reference to proselytes in 1:1, 17; 2:11 is bound to a literal understanding of them as denoting former proselytes to Judaism or whether actual proselytism could also be the source background for a metaphorical understanding.

J. Ramsey Michaels briefly states in his commentary that "No one will seriously argue that the Gentile Christians to whom 1 Peter was written were actual proselytes to Judaism. . . . Peter is dealing with metaphors."<sup>13</sup>

8. Because of the language barrier, this study was not accessible to many before its republication in English in vol. 2 of his *Sparsa Collecta* in 1980. See W. C. van Unnik, "The Redemption in 1 Peter I 18-19 and the Problem of the First Epistle of Peter," in *Sparsa Collecta, Part Two*, 3-82. It was first published as "De Verlossing 1 Petrus i 18-19 en het probleem van den eersten Petrusbrief," *Mededelingen der Nederlandsche Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde* n.s. 5/1 (1942) 1-106.

9. See comments by Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 130.

10. Among these are 2:2, 9; 3:18; 1:14; 4:3; 3:9, 13; 4:7, 12-13.

11. Van Unnik, "Redemption in 1 Peter I 18-19," 68.

12. *Ibid.*, 81.

13. J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC 49; Waco, Tex.: Word, 1988) lii.

He had probably not read van Unnik.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, according to Michaels, the author did not know the exact background of the recipients and, while there are many characterizations and descriptions in the letter, they are not used to define the recipients' legal or social status in the Roman Empire but "simply to further [the author's] standing analogy between them and the Jewish people."<sup>15</sup>

K. Berger has also noted the similarity between the Jewish descriptions of proselytes and the Christians in 1 Peter. According to Berger, the author of 1 Peter does see the fate of the Gentile Christians as comparable and very similar to that of the Jewish proselytes. They might have been considered a kind of proselyte by non-Christians, and the author teaches his readers to accept this kind of identity. In this way, the addressees should accept their isolation and in a spiritual and social way live as strangers and aliens, avoiding assimilation.<sup>16</sup>

A few scholars, then, have already considered the category "proselyte/proselytism," but no agreements have been reached. While van Unnik argues for a realistic interpretation—that is, that the Christian converts addressed in 1 Peter had in fact been proselytes or God-fearers—both Michaels and Berger, as far as they accept the category "proselyte/proselytism," read these terms as metaphors. We shall follow up on some of these issues below.

*The Recipients as Social Strangers and Aliens.* The NT scholar who in recent years has been the most formative thinker and representative person for the view that the terms πάροικος and παρεπίδημος are not to be read as metaphors but as social descriptions is undoubtedly John H. Elliott.<sup>17</sup>

In his study *A Home for the Homeless*, he provides one of the best expositions so far of the possible social implications of the terms concerned. He finds that the terms denote displaced persons who

14. See now, however, Scot McKnight: "In general, we can safely conclude that the audience of Peter was comprised of Gentile converts to Christianity who had probably been proselytes to Judaism or at least God-fearers." Idem, *1 Peter* (NIV Application Commentary Series; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996) 24.

15. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 116.

16. Klaus Berger, *Theologisches Handbuch des Urchristentums: Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Francke, 1994) 413.

17. John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (London: SCM, 1981); idem, "1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy: A Discussion with David Balch," in *Perspectives on First Peter* (C. H. Talbert, Special Studies Series; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1986) 61-78; idem, *What Is Social Science Criticism?* (Guides to Biblical Scholarship; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 70-86. See now also his commentary; *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 37B; New York: Doubleday, 2000). This work reached me too late to be used in this present study.

are currently aliens permanently residing in or strangers temporarily visiting the provinces; the meaning of πάροικος he finds to be "stranger" or "resident alien," the meaning of παρεπίδημος to be "visiting stranger." As such the words may well represent terms that were applied to persons who were differentiated from the natives in respect to their land of origin, ethnic or familial roots, or even their different views and opinions, language, property, and religion.

Furthermore, and this is especially emphasized by Elliott, these persons did not *become* strangers and aliens by becoming Christians but *remained* strangers and aliens:

1 Peter was directed to actual strangers and resident aliens who had become Christians. Their new religious affiliation was not the cause of their position in society though it did add to their difficulties in relating to their neighbors. It is precisely this combination of factors which best explains the disillusionment which the members felt. Attempting to improve their social lot through membership in the community which the Christian movement offered, they experienced instead only further social aggravation. Now they were demeaned not only as social strangers and aliens but for being "Christ-lackeys" as well.<sup>18</sup>

This emphasis on the social implications of these labels and the aspect of the strangers' and aliens' continuing status as deprived persons are central to Elliott. He admits, however, that the terms should not be read as social terms only; the words are used to describe religious as well as social circumstances.<sup>19</sup> But it remains that the fundamental contrast in 1 Peter is not theological or cosmological but social. The Christians are set apart from and are in tension with their neighbors, and the social aspects are dominating in Elliott's expositions.

Elliott's study has been very influential:<sup>20</sup> some social connotations of the terms are not to be denied, and in 1 Peter they should be considered both theological and social terms. What has gained less acceptance is his thesis that the terms πάροικος and παρεπίδημος imply that the readers had been strangers even before they became Christians and remained thus.<sup>21</sup> And he does not consider the social phenomenon of proselytes as a social model for the estrangement of these Christians.

### *Metaphorical Readings*

The most prevalent and influential interpretation of these terms, and perhaps the oldest one as well, has been to read them as expressions

18. Idem, *A Home for the Homeless*, 131-32.

19. See especially *ibid.*, 42.

20. One person who follows him closely is McKnight, *1 Peter*, 24-25, 47-52.

21. See, for example, the comments by Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 56-57, 173-75.

of a pilgrimage theology: the Christians are pilgrims on earth; they do not have their real home here but are on their way to their heavenly home. These characterizations of the Christian life are surely present in several other NT books; they are also found in other early Christian works (see Diognet 5:5f); they persist strongly in many modern interpretations,<sup>22</sup> and they remain not least in many Christian songs and hymns, old and new.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, proponents of this view also find it supported by the role of the characterization ἐκλεκτοῖς in 1:1 (compare with 2:9); it is the election of God that has made the Christians πάροιχοι and παρεπίδημοι.<sup>24</sup> This election is grounded in God, in heaven. Hence, the Christians' life and social circumstances are to be interpreted in an eschatological perspective.

Troy W. Martin argues strongly for a metaphorical understanding of these terms. He states that "there are many indications in 1 Peter that the recipients were not literally strangers or aliens. Since they are obviously Gentile, the only way to understand the phrase strangers of the dispersion in 1:1 is metaphorically."<sup>25</sup> To him the sociological status<sup>26</sup> of the recipients was determined by the action of God according to 1 Pet 1:3 and 2:9. In spite of his emphasis on diaspora as the controlling metaphor, he does not comment on the possibility that the Christians of 1 Peter might be considered in light of the similar or comparable conditions of Jewish proselytes. Because of this, the result of his exposition of the (in his terms) subcategories of πάροιχος and παρεπίδημος is unsatisfactory.

One of the recent scholars dealing with the topic of estrangement in 1 Peter who also takes the works of Philo seriously as a possible *traditionsgeschichtliche* background is Reinhard Feldmeier. Surprisingly enough, however, he does not deal extensively with the phenomenon of proselytes/proselytism as a possible background to the use of 1 Peter. Instead of integrating these aspects, he deals with and finds the experiences of the *people of Israel* as the primary conceptual and social

22. Francis Wright Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970) 135; J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London: Black, 1969) 41, 72, 103; Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990) 46-47; Lyder Brun, *Förste Peters Brev* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1949) 22, 63, 91.

23. The main NT passages drawn upon in support of this interpretation are Heb 11:9-10, 13-16; Phil 3:20; and Eph 2:19. See further Excursus 3 of Reinhard Feldmeier, entitled "Ich bin ein Gast auf Erden . . . : Beobachtungen zur Wirkungsgeschichte der Kategorie der Fremde," in *Christen als Fremde*, 211-18.

24. Norbert Brox, *Der Erste Petrusbrief* (EKKNT 21; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979) 56, 112.

25. Martin, *Metaphor and Composition*, 142.

26. Martin here uses the expression "sociological status." By this he presumably means "social status." This is a flaw of expression that, alas, is to be found in many works of NT scholars.

background for the view of the Christian's estrangement in 1 Peter. Furthermore, he suggests that the presentation of the estrangement (German: *Fremdlingschaft*) of the Petrine Christians has several roots; the author uses OT traditions, a usage that is also influenced by the use of these traditions in contemporary Judaism, especially Hellenistic Judaism; in addition, the view set forth in 1 Peter is marked by an eschatological sharpening, an influence that derives "aus dem Gesamtzusammenhang der urchristlichen Verkündigung."<sup>27</sup>

To Feldmeier, then, the descriptions of the Christians as *πάροικοι* and *παρεπίδημοι* function metaphorically. His understanding of the estrangement gains almost an existential cast; 1 Peter does not deal with the place of estrangement—that is, the world.<sup>28</sup> The Christians' estrangement is not derived from their relations to the world. They are estranged to nonbelievers because of their relationship to God and their membership in the Christian community: "die Fremdlingschaft hat so ihren eigentlichen Grund in der eschatologischen Existenz der christlichen Gemeinde."<sup>29</sup> The estrangement seems to be perceived by Feldmeier more as a theological statement than as a social reality, though the latter is not completely excluded. He retains it by stating that Christians' situation in the world is enlightened and explained by their relation to God, by their eschatological existence.

This view is correct as far as it goes, but I doubt that it pays enough attention to the social aspects of the perceived estrangement of the readers in the Greco-Roman world of their time. A further consideration of the experiences of proselytes/proselytism would, I suggest, enrich the horizon of interpretation of the estrangement set forth in 1 Peter.

Some scholars arguing for a metaphorical interpretation also admit social implications of the meaning of these terms. Knoch, for instance, states that the Christians are *πάροικος* and *παρεπίδημος* because they have no rights in the place where they are living; they are only strangers and guests. This estrangement is also demonstrated by their way of living.<sup>30</sup>

27. Feldmeier, *Christen als Fremde*, 103.

28. Ibid., 178: "Der Verzicht des 1 Petr auf ein verobjektiviertes Gegenüber als negative Folie ist aufschlussreich. Denn er zeigt, dass der 1 Petr das Selbstverständnis der Christen als Fremde nicht in erster Linie aus ihrer Entfremdung zu der sie umgebenden Gesellschaft ableitet."

29. Ibid., 179.

30. See Otto Knoch, *Der Erste und Zweite Petrusbrief: Der Judasbrief* (Regensburger Neues Testament; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1990) 37, 38, 52, 71. See p. 38: "Die Christen passen sich dem Geist und Lebensstil ihrer heidnischen Umwelt nicht an, weil sie ihre Heimat bei Gott, dem Vater, und bei Jesus Christus, dem Auferstandenen, haben."

*Preliminary Conclusions and Further Suggestions*

Our brief review has demonstrated that the views concerning the meaning and connotations of the terms πάροικος and παρεπίδημος can be seen as exhibiting a preference for either a theological (that is, a metaphorical) or a social reading. Elliott's study represented a kind of shift from a primarily theological reading of these terms as denoting pilgrims to a reading influenced by the social world and the social connotations of these words in other contexts. Some scholars want to argue a closer characterization of the readers in light of these terms—for example, van Unnik and McKnight, who propose that the recipients had really been proselytes or God-fearers—while other scholars are more indecisive concerning their exact background. Van Unnik's use of Philo will be further pursued below.<sup>31</sup>

There is little reflection or discussion on the nature of metaphor in these works presented above; T. W. Martin is an exception to this general lack of hermeneutical discussion. He deals rather briefly with the nature of metaphor, however, drawing on the understanding of K. Berger. Martin's comments on the diaspora as the source domain and the Christian community as the target domain of the main metaphor "diaspora" and its submetaphors are, admittedly, pertinent. He nevertheless does not see proselytism as relevant for the understanding of πάροικος and παρεπίδημος.<sup>32</sup>

In general, following M. Black, one might say there are at least three different views of the function of metaphors.<sup>33</sup> These views are related to how a metaphor functions. One view may be called *the substitution view*. Here a term is substituted for another without any further meaning being added or emphasized. A second view is often called the *comparison view*. Here a metaphor might present some underlying analogy or comparison. The third view is perhaps the most interesting, called the *interaction view*. The metaphors belonging to this group function as a filter, clarifying or emphasizing particular aspects of a term. To understand the exact role of metaphor here, it is also important to know its grounding, or, to use Black's phrase, its "system of associated commonplaces."<sup>34</sup> Any metaphor suppresses some aspects while emphasizing others; in other words it organizes

31. Compare Maiherbe's positive assessment: "W. C. van Unnik has shown that the language of Jewish proselytism is used frequently in 1 Peter. . . . [H]e has demonstrated that the hellenistic Jewish writings, especially their statements relating to proselytes, contribute to the clarification of the letter." Abraham J. Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," in *ANRW* 11:26.307-8.

32. Martin, *Christen als Freande*, 144-61.

33. See here, for example, M. Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962) 25-47.

34. *Ibid.*, 40.

our understanding. It functions as a kind of filter. To understand the implications of these metaphors, it is important to know their wider field, including their social grounding. Hence, metaphors should not be interpreted apart from their social context—that is, their source of domain.

To Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors are pervasive in everyday life, and our ordinary conceptual system, "in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature."<sup>35</sup> Without subscribing to all aspects of Lakoff and Johnson's general view of language as being primarily symbolic and metaphorical,<sup>36</sup> I nevertheless find several aspects of their view of metaphors helpful and illuminating for understanding the roles of metaphors in a text such as 1 Peter. Metaphors, according to Lakoff and Johnson, can be defined as "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another."<sup>37</sup> Metaphors can, furthermore, be categorized in three groups: *ontological* metaphors, which "are ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances";<sup>38</sup> *orientational* metaphors, which are metaphors that give a concept a spatial orientation;<sup>39</sup> and finally, *structural* metaphors, in which "one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another."<sup>40</sup> Structural metaphors, which are the ones relevant here, are more dependent on the culture to which they belong than the other metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson speak about the grounding of structural metaphors.<sup>41</sup> Structural metaphors cannot be understood apart from cultural grounding—that is, source domain. Hence, when metaphors have experiential groundings, we ought to be on the lookout for their source domain, the relevant aspects of the culture concerned that provide background for their images. This is because structural metaphors correspond systematically to our experience. They emerge naturally in a culture, because what they highlight corresponds so closely to the experience of the persons involved. But they not only are grounded in physical and cultural experiences, they also influence experience and actions. Hence to understand the particular use of the terms *πάροικος* and *παρεπίδημος* as metaphors in 1 Peter, it is important to research their social grounding in the diaspora.

As stated above, Martin has characterized the diaspora as the source domain for the terms *πάροικος* and *παρεπίδημος*. According to

35. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.

36. See especially *ibid.*, chap. 24 about *Truth* (pp. 159-84).

37. *Ibid.*, 5.

38. *Ibid.*, 25.

39. *Ibid.*, 14.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, 61-68.

the hypothesis adopted in the present study, "diaspora" should be narrowed down even further to mean diaspora Jewish proselytes and proselytism. In the view of the author of 1 Peter, the Christian recipients of his letter were to consider themselves as undergoing the same experiences as Jewish proselytes were as πάροικος and παρεπίδημος. Hence, the diaspora-Jews' understanding of proselytes to Judaism is important to our understanding of these issues in 1 Peter. But first we have to look into the linguistic evidence for our view that the terms πάροικος and παρεπίδημος are proselyte-related terms.

#### THE LITERARY AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE TERMS πάροικος AND παρεπίδημος

##### *Old Testament Background: Masoretic Text and Septuagint*

The use of πάροικος and παρεπίδημος in ancient Jewish and early Christian literature is clearly related to the Hebrew Bible and its descriptions of strangers among the Israelites. The central terms in the Hebrew Bible in this case are גַּר and the phrase גַּר וְתוֹשֵׁב. The word גַּר appears 92 times in the Hebrew Bible, denoting a "stranger," "sojourner," or "alien."<sup>42</sup> According to K. G. Kuhn,<sup>43</sup> we find in the Hebrew Bible "two distinct classes of aliens in the land and these are distinguished linguistically. First 1. there are foreigners present only for a time, e.g., travellers, and for these the word is נָכַר ('stranger', Deut 14:21; 15:3; 23:21; 29:21). . . . Then 2. there is the alien who resides temporarily or permanently in the land; this is the גַּר (e.g., Exod 12:49; Deut 23:8; 2 Ch 2:16)." The נָכַר is without fellowship with Israel and has no rights or protection; the גַּר, however, stands under the protection of both God and the people he /she dwells among and thus has religious rights in Israel. The term is not, however, univocally used in the Hebrew Bible; sometimes it seems to denote the stranger living more or less temporarily in Israel; in other texts it seems to describe the resident alien, approaching the status of the later "proselyte." Some further features of the use of גַּר might also be mentioned:

1. Not only are incoming strangers described as גַּר, but sometimes also Israelites (for example, Gen 15:13: "your offspring shall be strangers in a land that is not theirs"; Exod 22:20: "you were strangers in the land of Egypt"; 23:9) or particular Israelites, such

42. See further A. H. Konkel, "גַּר Dwell as Stranger," in *NIDOTTE*, 836-39; "προσήλυτος," *TDNT* 6.727-44; THAT 1.411; and Feldmeier, *Christen cols Fremde*, 39-51.  
43. *TDNT* 6.728.

as Abraham (Gen 23:4: "I am a stranger and sojourner residing among you").

2. In some texts the term גֵר, is used to describe the Israelites' relation to YHWH; they are aliens before him: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants" (גֵרִים וְתוֹשְׁבֵי־אֶרֶץ, Lev 25:23; 1 Chr 29:15; Ps 39:12; 119:19). Most scholars seem to read these expressions metaphorically.<sup>44</sup>
3. The favorable attitudes of the Israelites toward the strangers within their gates are also legitimized by reminders of their own situation when sojourning in Egypt: "You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Exod 22:21; 23:9; Lev 19:34; Deut 10:19).<sup>45</sup>

Reading the Bible historically in light of modern tradition- and source-critical theories reveals that especially in the later strata the גֵר is more and more described as a stranger religiously attached to Israel—that is, close to what we call a "proselyte."<sup>46</sup> The Hebrew Bible does not however, distinguish linguistically between these meanings because proselytism was not very well developed at that time. Furthermore, the ancient Jews and early Christians did not read their Scriptures in light of source-critical theories but as a whole. Hence, the later translations become interesting for seeing how these texts were understood in later and socially different situations. The social situation of the Greek translation, the Septuagint (LXX), is different from most of the social situations of the books of the Hebrew Bible. The translation of the LXX is also influenced by the context in many places. The LXX is most likely the text-type used by Philo and the early Christians. Hence, its translations of גֵר are important for understanding how writers such as Philo and the author of 1 Peter might have understood the terms concerned.

In the LXX, then, the Hebrew term גֵר is translated either πάροικος or προσήλυτος. Προσήλυτος is used 77 times; in 14 instances the LXX has other words for גֵר, 11 of them πάροικος. Πάροικος is also the usual translation for גֵר תוֹשֵׁב.<sup>47</sup>

44. Cf. e.g., Konkel, "גֵר," 837; Feldmeier, *Christen als Fremde*, 45-51. Elliott (*A Home*, 28-29) emphasizes the social aspect of these expressions as well.

45. Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "Israels Stellung zu den Fremdlingen und Beisassen und Israels Wissen um seine Fremdling- und Beisassenschaft," *Judaica* 1 (1945) 269-96.

46. This aspect is completely missing in Elliott's exposition, see esp. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 24-37.

47. See TDNT 6.731. Furthermore W. C. Allen, "On the Meaning of PROSELYTOS in the Septuagint," *The Expositor* 10 (1894) 264-75; Moses Chin, "A Heavenly Home for the Homeless: Aliens and Strangers in 1 Peter," *TynBul* 42 (1991) 96-112; Feldmeier, *Christen als Fremde*, 51-52.

W. C. Allen finds that προσήλυτος is not synonymous with πάροικος, that it does not mean "stranger" or "sojourner" only, but that its original meaning, as far as the extant literature enables us to judge, was "proselyte."<sup>48</sup> His reading might give the impression that πάροικος is used consistently for "גַּל to denote a stranger and προσήλυτος consistently as a translation for גַּל to denote a proselyte, but this is not quite so, as the following examples demonstrate. The texts demonstrate a certain variety in the translations of גַּל, indicating that the translators did not always differentiate between a πάροικος and a προσήλυτος.

(1) As in the Hebrew Bible, not only strangers from outside but also Israelites can be called πάροικοι. Of the 11 uses of πάροικος, Gen 15:13 denotes Israel in Egypt, Gen 23:4 Abraham at Schechem, Exod 2:22 and 23:3 Moses in Midian, and Deut 23:8 Israel in Egypt. When describing the nation or members of the nations, πάροικος is preferred,<sup>49</sup> not προσήλυτος, and Abraham is described as a model πάροικος.

In 1 Chr 29:15, however, at least one variant text has προσήλυτος instead of πάροικος. Furthermore, in 2 Sam 1:13, the Hebrew גַּל is translated πάροικος, but a textual variant has προσήλυτος. In three other texts, the term προσήλυτος is used instead of πάροικος for Israel (Lev 25:23, 35; Deut 1:16). We see here that some scribes, at least, could exchange πάροικος and προσήλυτος.

(2) In the four passages that most often are interpreted metaphorically, the LXX has προσήλυτος and πάροικος or πάροικος and παρεπίδημος (Lev 25:23; Ps 39:12 [LXX 38:12]) for גַּל וְגַלְתִּי, or πάροικος for גַּל (Ps 119:19; 1 Chr 29:15). In the first of these we have προσήλυτος and πάροικος together; in Ps 39:12 this has been changed to πάροικος and παρεπίδημος. This should be considered relevant for the expression in 1 Pet 1:1, 17. Again we see that the translators have used the terms interchangeably, and the term προσήλυτος is included and used interchangeably with πάροικος or παρεπίδημος.

(3) The legitimations for the Israelites' concern for the strangers are said to have been their own experiences as aliens in Egypt. What terms are used for their position in Egypt? We should expect πάροικος, but this is not the case. In all the texts concerned (Exod 22:21; 23:9; Lev 19:34; Deut 10:19), the Greek term used is προσήλυτος. This is often explained as due to the fact that the passage deals with proselytes, and thus the same word is also used for the Israelites.<sup>50</sup> But this might be to beg the question.

48. Allen, "On the Meaning of PROSELYTOS," 266.

49. Chin, "A Heavenly Home for the Homeless," 101.

50. See Allen, "On the Meaning of PROSELYTOS," 269; Feldmeier, *Christen als Fremde*, 52 n. 96.

(4) In 1 Pet 2:11 we have the terms πάροικος and παρεπίδημος (see also παρεπίδημος in 1:1). These 2 terms are also found coupled in the LXX; on the 10 occasions when גַּל is used with כּוּשֵׁן we find that they are translated πάροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος (Gen 23:4; Ps 39:13). Two times we have only πάροικος (Lev 25:6, 45). In the remaining instances we have προσήλυτος – πάροικος. This phenomenon triggers two conclusions: first, a distinction between גַּל, and כּוּשֵׁן should not be pushed; neither should their equivalents πάροικος and παρεπίδημος be considered too diverse. Second, while there generally seems to be a difference between πάροικος and προσήλυτος, this distinction is not always strictly upheld when it comes to the גַּל כּוּשֵׁן.

These observations on the use of גַּל in the Hebrew Bible and the terms used to translate it in the LXX suggest a need for further research on the meaning of these terms in 1 Peter. They clearly indicate that πάροικος and παρεπίδημος are proselyte-related terms. One might say that, while there generally seems to be a distinction upheld between πάροικος and προσήλυτος, it is not always consistent; there is some interchangeability. Furthermore, it is important to realize that προσήλυτος is a relevant translation of גַּל and that προσήλυτος is sometimes used when one might expect πάροικος. Accordingly, the possibility that the πάροικος in Peter is part of the proselyte terminology should be further investigated. Hence, we now turn to the works of Philo of Alexandria.<sup>51</sup>

### *Strangers and Proselytes in the Works of Philo*

In the works preserved from the Jewish philosopher and theologian Philo of Alexandria, we find that both the noun πάροικος and the verbal forms are used 16 times, respectively; the derived form παροίκηση – σις is used 3 times (*Leg.* 3:244; *Sacr.* 43; *Congr.* 20), and παροικία and παροικίζω are used one time each (*Conf.* 79; *Spec.* 4:93). Παρεπιύδημος is used only once (*Conf.* 79 = Gen 23:4). The other word used in the LXX for the Hebrew גַּל, the term προσήλυτος, is used 8 times.<sup>52</sup> Philo has, however, much more to say about "proselytes," but he seems to prefer the words ἑπηλύς, ἑπηλύτης, ἑπήλυτος (used 27 times total).<sup>53</sup>

When considering how Philo interprets the Hebrew Scriptures with which we are concerned here, we soon become involved in the

51. Elliott deals summarily with Philo, finding only an allegorical use in his works; see Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 31-32.

52. *Cher.* 108, 119; *Somn.* 2:273; *Spec.* 1:51, 308; *QE* 2:2 (3 times).

53. See further *TDNT* 6.731-32 R. A. Bitter, *Vreemdelingschap bij Philo van Alexandrie: Een Onderzoek naar de betekenis van PAROIKOS* (Ph.D. Diss., 1982) 31ff.; Ellen Birnbaum, *The Place of Judaism in Philo's Thought: Israel, Jews, and Proselytes* (BJS 290; *Studia Philonica Monographs* 2; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996) 195-99.

particular theology of Philo, especially his view of humans, which exhibits both Stoic and Platonic influences. We cannot deal with all of these aspects, especially not as they are found in his more allegorical explanations of the Hebrew Scriptures,<sup>54</sup> but we can provide a brief sketch of how Philo conceptualizes and theologizes about the phenomenon of strangers and proselytes in his works.

*Allegorical Interpretations.* Philo's expositions in his so-called allegorical commentaries are primarily symbolic or allegorical; in the *Expositio* however, he deals more directly with strangers and proselytes in the Jewish communities and their social world.<sup>55</sup>

As in the Hebrew Bible and in the LXX, humans are described as proselytes and strangers in relation to God (Lev 25:23-24). Philo addresses this topic in his treatise on the cherubs (*Cher.* 108ff.). Here he fleshes out his view that the essence of man, the soul, is not from below but from God. Hence, in relation to each other, all human beings enjoy equal honor and equal rights, but to God they are aliens and sojourners (ἐπηλύτων καὶ παροίκων): "For each of us has come into this city as into a foreign city, in which before our birth we had no part, and in this city he does but sojourn, until he has exhausted his appointed span of life" (*Cher.* 120). God alone is the true citizen, and all created beings are sojourners and aliens (see *Cher.* 108; *Conf.* 79ff.; *Her.* 267). In fact, the wise person, who is the focus here, should not consider his body his true home; only fools do this. The wise person—that is, the lover of virtue—is not granted by God to dwell in a body as his or her homeland but only to sojourn there as in a foreign country; Philo here refers to Gen 15:13, where Abraham is told that his offspring will live as strangers among men.

The aspect of strangeness and alienship is further exemplified by Philo in his descriptions of the wise person's relation to the basic studies, the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία (*Leg.* 3:244; *Congr.* 22ff.; *Sacr.* 43-44). These studies are not to be considered most important; wise people must estrange themselves from them, proceeding to higher wisdom, which is the study of the Law of Moses.

The figure of Abraham as a stranger is also used to describe the wise person's relation to the present world (*Conf.* 79ff.). Abraham said he was a stranger and a sojourner (πάροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος; Gen 23:4), and so were Jacob (Gen 47:4; *Conf.* 80) and Moses (Exod 2:22; *Conf.* 81).

54. See here Bitter, *Vreemdelingschap bij Philo*.

55. On Philo's work in general, see now Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time* (NovTSup 86; Leiden: Brill, 1997).

We saw above that the LXX translated the Hebrew word  $\text{גֵר}$  as  $\text{πάροικος}$  or  $\text{προσήλυτος}$ . When Philo finds  $\text{προσήλυτος}$  in his Greek *Grundlage*, he retains the term and reads it as denoting "proselyte." As pointed out above, he himself, however, seems to prefer the words  $\text{ἐπηλυς}$ ,  $\text{ἐπιλύτης}$ , and  $\text{ἐπήλυτος}$  for proselyte; literally, these words denote "incomer." A proselyte is for Philo one who has come into a new commonwealth: the Jewish people. The closeness of a  $\text{πάροικος}$  to a "proselyte" is demonstrated in several ways in Philo's works, not least in his way of depicting Abraham as a model proselyte on the basis of his status as a  $\text{πάροικος}$  in the Scriptures. We shall have a closer look at how Philo describes the proselytes in his non-allegorical writings.

*Proselytes in the Expositio.* His exposition in *Questions and Answers on Exodus* can serve as a point of departure. Here he starts out with a question based on Exod 22:21: "Why does (Scripture) in admonishing 'Thou shalt not oppress a sojourner,' add, 'for ye were sojourners in the land of the Egyptians?'"<sup>56</sup> Philo's exposition makes it clear that here he is dealing with proselytes. First he deals with the issue of circumcision; then he asks:

what is the mind of the proselyte ( $\text{προσηλύτον}$ ) if not alienation from belief in many gods and familiarity with honouring the one God and Father of all? In the second place, some call strangers "newcomers" ( $\text{ἐπήλυδας}$ ). But strangers are also those who have run to the truth, not in the same way as those who made their sojourn in Egypt. For these are newcomers to the land ( $\text{ἐπήλυδας χώρας}$ ), while those are (newcomers) to laws and customs. But the common name of "newcomers" is ascribed to both ( $\text{τὸ δὲ ὄνομα κοινὸν ἑκατέρων ἐπηλύδων}$ ).

Philo here deals with a passage from the Hebrew Bible that exhorts the Israelites to behave well toward the strangers among them for the reason that the Israelites themselves had been strangers in Egypt. Already the LXX used the term  $\text{προσήλυτος}$  here, and Philo does not discuss this terminology but describes what a proselyte means to him: one who has left a belief in many gods and run to the truth—that is, to the Jewish faith. Philo has several other descriptions of proselytes, not just theological,<sup>57</sup> but social as well.<sup>58</sup>

All of these descriptions are important for an exposition of the social conditions of the early Christians as described in 1 Peter, and we shall return to these issues below when dealing with 1 Peter.

56. See Exod 22:20:  $\text{καὶ προσήλυτον οὐ κακώσετε οὐδε μὴ θλίψετε αὐτόν, ἦτε γὰρ προσήλυτοι ἐν γῆ Αἰγύπτῳ}$ .

57. Contra *TDNT* 6.732.

58. Birnbaum, *Place of Judaism*, 195-219; Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria*, 206-24; Scot McKnight, *A Light among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 38-40, 43-44, 69-70.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Philo's conception of the proselytes as a kind of stranger is his expositions of Tamar and, especially, Abraham as models and prototypes for proselytes. This aspect indeed also reveals the conceptual closeness of strangers and proselytes in the mind of Philo.<sup>59</sup> While Abraham in the Hebrew Bible is described as a *gēr tōšāb* (Gen 23:4; compare 15:13 on his descendants as גֵר), an expression that the LXX renders πάροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος (see *Conf.* 79; compare with 15:13: πάροικον), Philo describes Abraham as a proselyte. His departure from Chaldea is described and expounded in several texts (*Abr.*; *Virt.* 212-20; *Praem.* 58), some containing elaborate allegorizations of his travels;<sup>60</sup> the one given in *Virt.* 212-20 is most closely related to a proselyte (see also *Abr.* 60-67). Philo's conclusion runs thus (*Virt.* 219):

he is the standard of nobility for all proselytes (οὗτος ἅπασιν ἐπηλύταις εὐγενείας ἔστι κανών), who abandoning the ignobility of strange laws and monstrous customs which assigned divine honours to stocks and stones and soulless things in general, have come to settle in a better land, in a commonwealth full of true life and vitality, with truth as its director and president. (*Abr.* 67)

His road of travel from a vain faith in idols is thus depicted as typical for those who come over to the Jews as proselytes; from strangeness to knowledge of the One.<sup>61</sup>

### *Further Conclusions*

We have seen that when the LXX translates the Hebrew term גֵר there is much interpretation involved, since the term sometimes is translated πάροικος and other times προσήλυτος. Furthermore, there is not complete consistency in the way the two Greek terms are used as translations of the Hebrew term. There is some interchangeability, and sometimes we get προσήλυτος where one might have expected πάροικος and vice versa. The main point is, however, that the translator(s) considered both terms to be faithful renderings of the Hebrew term.

59. Another example from Philo on how "strangers" may be read as "proselytes" is the description of the peoples that followed Israel out of Egypt. In the Hebrew text of Exod 12:38 and in the LXX these groups are described as a mixed company of people; in *Tg. Neof.* Exod 12:38 (cf. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Targum Onqelos*), they are understood as proselytes. This view is also adopted by Philo and expanded upon. See further McKnight, *A Light among the Gentiles*, 92-96.

60. In the allegorical writings, see *Leg.* 3:244; *Cher.* 4; *Det.* 159; *Gig.* 63; *Migr.* 1-12; 176-95, et al.; cf. Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria*, 217-18.

61. Without using the specific terminology of proselytes, we may say that Tamar is also described as a model proselyte in comparable terms. Tamar (Genesis 38) passed from profound darkness to light, deserting to the "camp of piety at the risk of her life, caring little for its preservation" (*Virt.* 221-22).

When Philo finds προσήλυτος in his Greek *Vorlage*, he retains it; in other cases he seems to have preferred other terms for proselytes. His understanding of πάροικος is also close to that of "proselyte," as is most explicitly demonstrated in his exposition of the stranger Abraham as the model proselyte. In the next section we shall draw upon these findings of πάροικος and παρεπίδημος as terms closely related to the other terms for "proselytes," and read the social descriptions of the early Christians in 1 Peter in light of Philo's characterizations of the Jewish proselytes.

#### THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE CHRISTIANS IN 1 PETER IN LIGHT OF DIASPORA JEWISH DESCRIPTIONS OF JEWISH PROSELYTES

In this section we shall have a closer look at passages and terms used by the author of 1 Peter to depict and characterize his readers. My suggestion is that several of these passages should be read against the background of diaspora Jewish descriptions of proselytes. This does not primarily mean that the author considered the readers to have been former proselytes but that, in his perception of the social world of his Christian recipients, their social situation had become similar to that of Jewish proselytes.

##### *The Recipients as πάροικοι and παρεπιδήμοι*

The first passages to be commented on are the descriptions of the recipients in the introductory section of 1 Peter and the parallel characterizations in 1:17 and 2:11:

- 1:1: ἑκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς  
 1:17: ἐν φόβῳ τὸν τῆς παροικίας ὑμῶν χρόνον ἀναστράφητε,  
 2:11: Ἄγαπητοί, παρακαλῶ ὡς παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους

The terms underlined here are perhaps some of the most discussed when scholars deal with the social location of the recipients. The use of these terms by the author of 1 Peter suggests that he considers them not as negative terms but as characterizations of honor; the characterization ἑκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς in the introduction of the letter is strange if it was a derogatory characterization; characterizations of recipients in introductory sections are generally made in positive terms.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, used as introductory characterizations, they probably represent a typical description of the recipients; not something occasional or temporary but typical and

62. Feldmeier, *Christen als Freinde*, 207.

enduring. One might then ask: Do the statements say something about *when* this situation of a παρεπίδημος came about? 1 Pet 1:1 seems to locate the beginning of the recipients' situation at the time of God's election.<sup>63</sup> Hence, the recipients were not παρεπίδημοι before they became Christians but entered this state upon their conversion. Elliott's suggestion that they had been παροίκοι καὶ παρεπίδημοι even before they became Christians as well as afterward is not the most likely view.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, in light of 1:17, their state of παροικία seems to be considered temporary. This suggestion is strengthened when we consider 1 Pet 4:2-3; these verses seem to imply that the Christians had not been marginalized before their conversion but had been integrated among "the Gentiles."<sup>65</sup> Their present condition of παροίκοι καὶ παρεπίδημοι is, then, something new and is central to the admonitions of the author.

Furthermore, the metaphorical nature of the description in 1:1 is suggested by the ὥς of 2:11, since ὥς is a particle regularly used in 1 Peter to introduce a metaphorical expression,<sup>66</sup> and "its association with elect and diaspora indicates that its origin lies in the story of Abraham rather than in the political situation of the first century."<sup>67</sup> I think van Unnik and Elliott make a comparable mistake: both find one main meaning in the terms—proselytes or deprived, marginalized alien persons, respectively—and both presume that their description fit all of the recipients of the letter. One might ask: How much did the author know about his readers? If the letter was sent to the vast regions enumerated in the introduction (1:1), how could he possibly know all or even most of them?

Read in light of the Abraham story and the further conceptualization of Abraham as a model proselyte, it is probable that the author of 1 Peter did not envisage his readers as actual (former) proselytes but that their social condition was considered by the author to be comparable with the social condition of Jewish proselytes. Accordingly, the descriptions should not be read in light of an ideology of heavenly pilgrimage on earth or of a socially deprived situation of aliens and temporary residents in general but in light of descriptions of the social situation of diaspora Jewish proselytes.

63. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 6; Birger Olsson, *Första Petrusbrevet* (Kommentar Till Nya Testamentet; Stockholm, 1982) 19-20.

64. Bengt Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 94.

65. Birger Olsson, "A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter," in *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts in Their Textual and Situational Contexts—Essays in Honor of Lars Hartman* (ed. Tord Fornberg and David Hellholm; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995) 827-46; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 56.

66. *Ibid.*, 56.

67. *Ibid.*, 82.

*The Perceived Conditions of the Recipients in Light of Philo's Descriptions of Proselytes*

W. C. van Unnik has argued that several characterizations of the recipients in 1 Peter indicate that they were actual (former) proselytes. Several of his arguments do not hold up to closer scrutiny, while others might very well point to proselyte descriptions without indicating that the recipients were actual former proselytes.<sup>68</sup> According to my reading they only confirm the importance of proselyte descriptions as relevant to the authors' understanding of the social conditions of his readers.

ὡς τέκνα ὑπακοῆς. Van Unnik has suggested that the expression in 1 Pet 1:22 about obedience (Τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν ἡγνικότες ἐν τῇ ὑπακοῇ τῆς ἀληθείας; see also 1:14; ὡς τέκνα ὑπακοῆς and εἰς ὑπακοὴν in 1:2)<sup>69</sup> belongs to the conceptual field of proselyte descriptions. I admit that, in a parallel situation, Paul considered the obedience of his converts a central part of his mission (Rom 1:5; 15:18; 16:19, 26). Obedience is, however, such a central part of both Israel's obligations to God and Christians' that it is hard to see any specific proselyte indications in the use of obedience here. Van Unnik overstates his case when reading this expression as indicating that the recipients were proselytes.

τοῦ ἐκ σκότους ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος εἰς τό θαυμαστόν αὐτοῦ φῶς (1 Peter 2:9). 1 Pet 2:9 is a theological description much more related to proselytes than the one discussed above. Various proposals have been given regarding the background of this description.<sup>70</sup> L. Goppelt surmises that, "in 1 Pet 2:9, however, the tradition-historical starting point is probably the corresponding characterization of conversion in the Qumran writings, which stands in a similar context; 1QH 4:5, 6, 23."<sup>71</sup> Closest to the view expressed in the present study is that of N. Brox. He notes that "Es gibt Indizien dafür, dass

68. Malherbe states that "W. C. van Unnik has shown that the language of Jewish proselytism is used frequently in 1 Peter" ("Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," 307).

69. Van Unnik, "The Redemption in 1 Peter I 18-19," 60.

70. E. G. Selwyn states that "the phrase in 1 Pet ii.9b is without exact parallel elsewhere, and is of striking poetical quality. The phrase may be the author's own, or it may be a part of a Christian hymn which he is quoting." F. W. Beare correctly pinpoints that the contrast of light and darkness is not peculiar to the religious vocabulary of the NT, "but is widely employed in the contemporary paganism." See E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (reprint; London, 1946) 280; Beare, *First Epistle of Peter*, 132.

71. Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (ed. F. Hahn; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993) 150 n. 67.

das Motiv im Zusammenhang mit dem Proselytismus des Judentums üblich war."<sup>72</sup>

He provides no further evidence, however, than a reference to an article by van Unnik. In this article, dealing with "Christianity according to I Peter,"<sup>73</sup> van Unnik states that the epistle "uses expressions which are closely parallel to those used in connection with proselytes among the Jews," a statement that he exemplifies by saying that "Philo says that they have come out of the darkness of paganism to the radiant light (cf. ii 9)."<sup>74</sup>

In Philo's works, the Gentiles are characterized by polytheism (which to Philo is atheism), and darkness and the absence of light prevent them from attending to the vision of God. Israel, on the other hand, can be characterized as "οὐ μὴν τυφλῆ διανοία, ἀλλ' ὄξυ καθορῶντες," "with no blind understanding but with keenest vision" (*Agr.* 81). In *Virt.* 179, Philo says concerning the proselytes that "we must rejoice with them, as if, though blind at the first, they had recovered their sight and had come from the deepest darkness to behold the most radiant light." Tamar is described as: "passing, as it were, from profound darkness, she was able to glimpse a little ray of truth; she deserted to the camp of piety at the risk of her life, caring little for its preservation if it were not to be a good life" (*Virt.* 221). Abraham is described as the first, the model proselyte who saw the ray and made his transition out of darkness into the light of God:

Then opening the soul's eye as though after profound sleep, and beginning to see the pure beam instead of the deep darkness (καὶ καθαρὰν αὐγὴν ἀντι σκότους βαθέος βλέπειν ἀρξάμενος), he followed the ray and discerned what he had not beheld before, a charioteer and pilot presiding over the world and directing in safety his own work, assuming

72. Cf. Brox, *Der Erste Petrusbrief*, 106. See also Olsson, *Första Petrusbrevet*, 72: "Möjligen judisk missionsterminologi." Cf. H. Conzelmann in *TDNT* 7.441: "1 Pet 2:9 is an example of the conversion style adopted from Judaism, cf. Ac 26:18"; *ibid.*, p. 441: "Conversion is illumination, a transition from darkness to light. This figurative description of conversion derives from Judaism (JosAs) and was widespread in Christianity, Ac 26:18; 1 The 5:4f; Eph 5:8; 1 Pet 2:9; 2 Cor 4:6." Elliott (*The Elect and the Holy: An Exegetical Examination of 1 Pet 2:4-10 and the Phrase Basileion Hierateuma* [NovTSup 12; Leiden: Brill, 1966] 43) states, however, that "These words suggest an Isaianic origin, though the terms 'to call' and 'light' in the NT era had developed into such common images for election and salvation that we would do best here to think of a common Christian parlance"; cf. also W. L. Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition in 1 Peter* (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr, 1989) 42: "The darkness/light imagery of 2.9 is already hackneyed in pre-Christian Judaism, as the abundant parallels in Isaiah, the Psalms etc., indicate so as to preclude the possibility of demonstrating literary dependence."

73. Van Unnik, "Christianity according to 1 Peter," 79-83.

74. *Ibid.*, 115.

the charge and superintendence of that work and of all such parts of it as are worthy of the divine care. (*Abr.* 70)

A similar view is also represented in the novel about *Joseph and Aseneth*. The dominating view of conversion is here spelled out by Joseph in his prayer for Aseneth (8:9-10):

Lord God of my father Israel, the Powerful One of Jacob, who gave life to all (things), and called (them) from the darkness to the light, and from error to truth, and from the death to life (καὶ καλέσας ἀπὸ τοῦ σκούτους εἰς τὸ φῶς καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς πλάης εἰς τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ ἀπο θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν)—you Lord, bless this virgin and renew her by your spirit and form her anew by your hidden hand, and make her alive again by your life. . . .

Conversion is here described as a transition from darkness into light as well as from error to truth, from death to life. The same aspects recur in 12:1-2, when Aseneth blesses the angel who came to convey to her the heavenly message of her acceptance with God: "Blessed be the Lord your God the Most High who sent you to rescue me from the darkness and to bring me up from the foundation of the abyss, and blessed be your name forever" (15:12). Furthermore, as heaven is characterized by light (14:9) and God is the one "who created all [things] and . . . brought the invisible [things] out into light" (12:1), those who turn to him become partakers of a recreation and are "called out from darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9). Hence, one need not go to the Qumran scrolls to find the conceptual and social background for the description in 1 Pet 2:9b; closer parallels to 1 Peter are found in the particular diaspora Jewish ways of describing the transition made by Gentiles when they converted to Judaism. Words such as are used in 1 Pet 2:9 seem to indicate that the author had proselyte characterizations and proselyte conditions in mind when he wrote his letter.

It is when we consider the social descriptions of the recipients, however, that we are closest to the world of proselytes. Hence, we shall now have a further look at what such a hypothesis might represent for understanding the social conditions of the recipients of 1 Peter as described by its author. Having established that the notions of strangers and aliens constitute parts of the background for the biblical concept of proselytes and that Philo in particular drew on these texts, we shall provide a closer look at the social descriptions of proselytes in Philo's works. By reading the descriptions in 1 Peter in light of Philo's characterizations as part of the author's source domain for his metaphors, furthermore, we should presumably have a better understanding of how the author of 1 Peter considered the social conditions of his readers. Considering the descriptions of proselytes

in Philo, we find that the following aspects are emphasized: leaving polytheism for monotheism; leaving one's country, family, and kinfolk and becoming enemies of families and friends at the risk of one's life; and entering a community of fictive kinship and brotherly love.<sup>75</sup>

*Leaving Polytheism for Monotheism.* As a Jew devoted to the Hebrew Scriptures, Philo without doubt perceived the issue of becoming a proselyte as leaving many gods in preference for the Only One, the one and only truly existing God. To Philo monotheism was not disputable.<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, the proselytes are repeatedly described as people who are coming "to truth and the honouring of One who alone is worthy of honour, and . . . leaving the mythical fables and multiplicity of sovereigns" (*Spec.* 4:178); they are leaving "their customs and the temples and images of their gods, and the tributes and honours paid to them . . . from idle fables to the clear vision of truth and the worship of the one and truly existing God" (*Virt.* 102). The issue of transference from the world of polytheism to that of monotheism is especially emphasized in the descriptions of Abraham and Tamar as model proselytes. Abraham<sup>77</sup> is said to have been the son of an astrologer. But realizing that this context would hinder his progression to the One, he left his "native country, his race and paternal home, knowing that if he stayed the delusions of the polytheistic creed would stay within him and render it impossible to discover the One" (*Virt.* 214). Abraham is therefore the first person spoken of as believing in God, and he is the model of those "abandoning the ignobility of strange laws and monstrous customs which assigned divine honours to sticks and stones and soulless things in general" (*Virt.* 219). Tamar is described as among those who "became schooled in the knowledge of the monarchical principle by which the world is governed" (*Virt.* 220) and as leaving her paternal place for a better home.

We find this emphasis in several other Jewish works dealing with proselytes—for example, in *Joseph and Aseneth* and in early Christian works such as 1 Thess 1:9; Gal 4:8; and Acts 15:19. In 1 Peter the

75. See here especially Borgen, "The Early Church and the Hellenistic Synagogue." Borgen has many valuable observations in this article, but he does not focus on 1 Peter except for one brief reference. See also his several other studies in *Philo, John, and Paul* and in Peder Borgen, *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996).

76. G. Dellin, "MONOS THEOS" *Studien zum Neuen Testament und zum hellenistischen Judentum: Gesammelte Aufsätze 1950-1968* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970) 391-400.

77. On Abraham, see also D. Georgi, *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief* (WMANT 11; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964) 63-82; H. Mayer, "Aspekte des Abrahambildes in der hellenistisch-jüdischen Literatur," *EvT* 32 (1972) 118-27.

readers are admonished not to indulge in, among other things, "lawless idolatry" anymore, and the Gentiles are described as surprised when they do not join them in the same or similar activities anymore (1 Pet 4:3-4). Several aspects of 1 Peter might imply that the recipients were Jews (see especially 1:1);<sup>78</sup> the descriptions of 4:3-4, however, probably exclude a Jewish background. The recipients are here presumed to have been idolators, that is polytheists; this understanding excludes Jews but not former proselytes or other Gentiles.

Accordingly, being former polytheists, the proselytes described in Philo enable us better to understand the social implications of the conversion of the recipients presumed in 1 Peter. Furthermore, drawing on the insights from modern social science studies on the embedded nature of religion in their kind of society,<sup>79</sup> we realize even more fully that the issue at stake was not peripheral to their social world but comprised most aspects of their daily life. It is obvious that Philo also was fully aware of the social consequences of proselytism with regard to family and bonds of friendship. Hence, we now turn to these issues.

*Leaving One's Country, Family and Kinsfolk; Becoming Enemies of Families and Friends at the Risk of One's Own Life.* Because Philo is often dealing directly with Pentateuchal texts when he elaborates on the social aspects of the life of proselytes, he sometimes quotes from the biblical descriptions of Moses' telling the Israelites to take care of their strangers. The proselytes, according to Philo, are said to have left "their country, their kinsfolk, and their friends for the sake of virtue and religion" (ἀπολελοιπότες φησί πατρίδα καὶ φίλους καὶ συγγενεῖς δι' ἀρετὴν καὶ ὁσιότητὰ *Spec.* 1:52; compare with *Virt.* 102). This is for Philo a saying not only about the past but also about his own time. Hence, one might say that, "According to Philo, conversion meant that the proselytes made a sociological, judicial and ethnic break with pagan society and joined another ethnic group, the Jewish nation."<sup>80</sup> This process, furthermore, was not an easy one; it often led to enmity and danger from former fellows. It seems as though Philo almost considered it natural and inevitable that proselytes, when leaving their ancestral religion in preference to Judaism, were doing so at the risk of their lives. Not only is Tamar said to have "deserted to the camp of piety at the risk of her life" (*Virt.* 220), but proselytes in general are so described. In *Spec.* 4:178, Philo says that God cares for the incomer because

he has turned his kinsfolk, who in the ordinary course of things would be his sole confederates, into mortal enemies, by coming as a pilgrim

78. See the discussion in Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 50-51; Michaels, *1 Peter*, xlix-lv.

79. Bruce J. Malina, "Religion in the World of Paul," *BTB* 16 (1986) 92-101.

80. Borgen, "The Early Church and the Hellenistic Synagogue," 213.

to truth and the honouring of One who alone is worthy of honour, and by leaving the mythical fables and multiplicity of sovereigns, so highly honoured by the parents and grandparents and ancestors and blood-relations of this immigrant to a better home.

This passage is perhaps one of the most instructive with regard to the way that Philo took into consideration the *dangers* that the proselytes were exposed to. In leaving the context of their family traditions, they could be exposed to mortal dangers. This aspect is also expressed by characterizing the proselytes as refugees: they are not to be denied citizenship but "to find shelter standing ready for refugees to the camp of piety" (*Spec.* 1:52). These issues are not only found in Philo but also in the ancient novel about *Joseph and Aseneth*. Aseneth contemplates the enmity her conversion has triggered: "All people have come to hate me, and on top of those my father and mother, because I, too, have come to hate their gods and have destroyed them. . . . And therefore my father and mother and my whole family have come to hate me and said, 'Aseneth is not our daughter because she destroyed our gods'" (*Jos. and Asen.* 11:4-6; compare 12:7). Tacitus in *Histories* 5:5 has obviously caught the tone of Philo when he says about the Jews that "those who come over to their religion adopt the practice, and have this lesson first instilled into them, to despise the gods, to disown their country, and set at nought parents, children and brethren."<sup>81</sup>

Several Christian sources contain reflections of similar descriptions in their characterizations of Christian converts. One might point to Eph 2:11-22, especially 2:12: "at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." As Christians they have become citizens of a new *politeia* (Phil 3:20). As Borgen points out, however, there is a difference: "the Christian proselytes are not to make an ethnic and judicial break away from their families, country and nation."<sup>82</sup> What is the situation in 1 Peter?

1 Peter contains several remarks about the endangered situation of the recipients as Christians, and there are exhortations not to indulge in the excesses of the life of their neighbors. The terms πρόσχειν (12x) and πάθημα (4x) are used more times in this letter than in any other NT book. The Christians are suffering temptations or testings

81. Consider also the sternness of Philo in his descriptions of Jewish apostates and the measures to be taken against them; see my *Establishment Violence in Philo and Luke: A Study of Non-conformity to the Torah and Jewish Vigilante Reactions* (Biblical Interpretation Series 15; Leiden: Brill, 1995).

82. Cf. Borgen, "The Early Church and the Hellenistic Synagogue," 214. Borgen emphasizes the international nature of the church.

(1:6: ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς), and they are spoken against (2:12: καταλαλοῦσιν ὑμῶν; compare 3:16); they are reviled (3:9: λοιδορία), abused (4:4: βλασφημέω), and reproached (4:14: ὀνειδίζω). Theologically evaluated, these sufferings are characterized as testings and refining of faith (1:7-8). As social phenomena, the sufferings seem to have been part of an ostracism of Christians. It is, admittedly, not stated by whom these sufferings were inflicted—whether by family members, neighbors, or authorities. Perhaps the author did not know the details—only that the recipients were suffering severe social problems because of their faith. Some of these sufferings, if not all, have often been read as references to more or less official persecutions.<sup>83</sup> But because they are hard to fit into what we know about the Roman persecutions of the Christians at the end of the first century CE, most scholars now consider them more likely to have been local harassment and ostracism than persecution.<sup>84</sup>

It is, furthermore, a central part of these sufferings that they occurred because of the nature of converts: they are being reproached because of the name of Christ (4:14); they suffer because they are Christians (4:15). No particular "crimes" by Christians are singled out as reasons for their neighbors' aggression. 1 Pet 2:12 says they are slandered as "evildoers"; 4:16 might, however, point to efforts to accuse Christians of murder, theft, or as being ἄλλοτριεπίσκοπος, "people who defraud others" or "meddle in their business."<sup>85</sup> It is evident that their problems are due to the fact that the others consider them outsiders. They are different, and they are being discriminated against because of their exclusiveness and unwillingness to conform—an attitude that they did not have before: "They are surprised that you do not now join them in the same wild profligacy, and they abuse you" (4:4). Hence, their estrangement is obviously associated with their status as Christians (4:16) and their separateness from the others.

In a society so saturated with the values of honor and shame, these slanders, revilings, and abuses were great obstacles to social integration in local communities; the Christians became παρεπιδήμιος διασποράς (1:1) and παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους (2:12). For the time being, they were living in a state of παροκία (1:17). The author of 1 Peter exhorts them to be steadfast in their trials so that their faith may turn out worthy of honor "at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:7). Furthermore, they are to be prepared to make a defense to those who

83. See the reviews in Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 28-36; Selwyn, *First Peter*, 52-56; J. Molthagen, "Die Lage der Christen im römischen Reich nach dem 1. Petrusbrief. Zum Problem einer Domitianischen Verfolgung," *Historia* 44 (1995) 422-58.

84. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 34-35; Feldmeier, *Christen als Fremde*, 105-32.

85. On this rare and difficult word, see Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 310-12; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 267-68; Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 141.

call them to account for their faith; in this way they should live honorably among the Gentiles and keep their conscience clear. Those who revile and abuse them will at the end be put to shame (4:15-16). Hence, while suffering shaming for the present time, they must remember that their source of honor is God, which will become evident at the parousia (1:17). Thus, the emphasis on the conduct of the Christians (their ἀναστροφή) is strongly associated with their strained situation and life as strangers (see 2:12, 15) in the present world.<sup>86</sup>

Several scholars have seen the author's use of *Haustafel* schemes in this letter as due to the social problems dealt with. Malherbe has suggested that "both Philo and Josephus use expansions of the *Haustafel* form to counter the charges that Judaism was antisocial and to present it as the ideal society,"<sup>87</sup> and he is of the opinion that such an apologetic use of *Haustafel* can also be detected in 1 Peter. His former student D. L. Balch has elaborated on his view<sup>88</sup> but goes so far as to argue that the household codes in 1 Peter were used to argue and demonstrate the Christians' conformity to the accepted rules of the Greco-Roman societies. Balch categorizes this strategy as assimilation: its purpose was to integrate, accommodate, and assimilate. This reasoning, however, carries the arguments too far. Elliott has quite correctly criticized Balch for not taking into account "the letter's repeated call for Christian separation from the world."<sup>89</sup> The goal of 1 Peter was not assimilation to Greco-Roman society; its exhortations demonstrate, rather, that the goal was to encourage the recipients to live as Christians and to be further assimilated into the Christian way of life and beliefs.

Finally, drawing on Philo in considering the various aspects of the vices listed in 4:3-4, we can see the similarity of these issues with the ways that Philo describes the activities of the various Greco-Roman clubs and associations.<sup>90</sup> He emphasizes eating and drinking (*Spec.* 2:193; *Legat.* 312), intrigues, and rioting (*Spec.* 3:96; *Contempl.* 40-41)

86. W. C. van Unnik, "The Teaching of Good Works in 1 Peter," *Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Essays of W. C. Van Unnik, Part Two* (NovTSup; Leiden: Brill, 1980) 83-105; idem, "Christianity according to 1 Peter."

87. See Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977) 52; idem, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," 304-13. This view has been adopted by A. F. Segal, "The Costs of Proselytism and Conversion," in *SBL 1988: Seminar Papers* (SBLSP 27; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988) 336-69.

88. D. L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (SBLMS 26; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981); idem, "Household Codes," in *Graeco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* (ed. by David E. Aune; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988) 25-50.

89. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 111.

90. See further my "Philo and the Clubs and Associations of Alexandria," in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen C. Wilson; London: Routledge, 1996) 110-27.

and describes them as clubs with "a large membership, whose fellowship is founded on no sound strong principle but on strong liquor and drunkenness and sottish carousing and their offspring, wantonness" (*Flacc.* 136). These characterizations indicate the great problems that these clubs and associations represented for both Jews and Christians on the cultural and social level, and later sources demonstrate similar problems for the Christians as well (see Tertullian).<sup>91</sup> The Christians' "otherliness" and separateness are strongly emphasized in 1 Peter.

*Entering a Community of Fictive Kinship and Brotherly Love.* The first-century Mediterranean world was a world in which the individualism so cherished and well-known to us in the Western industrialized world was little known and even less favored. People lived in close-knit societies, they were dependent upon, and other people depended on their groups—whether family, clan, tribe, or city. Their behavior and values were derived from the life and traditions of their group. Collectivism was highly honored;<sup>92</sup> the personality type has been characterized as dyadic.<sup>93</sup> One always had to belong to a group. Accordingly, converting from one group to another was a process of cutting ties, followed by a strong need to make new bonds. Hence, the author of 1 Peter repeatedly admonished his readers to show brotherly love to their fellow-believers; a new kinship and fellowship of care had to be established:

1:22: ἕκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας ἀλλήλους ἀγαπήσατε ἐκτενωσ  
 2:17: τὴν ἀδελφότητα ἀγαπάτε  
 4:8: πρὸ πάντων τὴν εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἀγάπην ἐκτενή ἔχοντες

Brotherly love is present in the works of Philo as well. It has been suggested that Philo never used the OT injunction of loving one's neighbor as oneself (Lev 19:18b),<sup>94</sup> but this is incorrect.<sup>95</sup> Philo clearly

91. See also my brief review article, "Collegium kai Ekklesia: Nyere synpunkter på de gresk-romerske foreninger som modell for og parallell til de urkristne forsamlinger," *Ung Teologi* (1984) 49-65.

92. Harry C. Triandis, *Individualism and Collectivism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

93. Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, "First Century Personality: Dyadic, not Individualistic," in *The Social World of Luke—Acts: Models of Interpretation* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991) 67-95; Bruce J. Malina, "Is There a Circum-Mediterranean Person?: Looking for Stereotypes," *BTB* 22 (1992) 66-87.

94. A. Nissen, *Gott und der Nächste im antiken Judentum* (WUNT 15; Tübingen: Mohr, 1974) 304-5.

95. Borgen, "The Early Church and the Hellenistic Synagogue," 82-83, 95; idem, "The Golden Rule, with Emphasis on Its Usage in the Gospels," *Paul Preaches Circumcision and Pleases Men* (Trondheim: Tapir, 1983) 99-114.

applies Lev 19:34 in *Spec.* 1:51-53 and *Virt.* 102-4. Both of these passages deal with love toward proselytes, and the Jews are especially admonished to include the proselytes in their brotherly love (*Spec.* 1:52; compare *Virt.* 102): "Thus, while giving equal rank to all incomers with all the privileges which he gives to the native-born, he exhorts the old nobility to honour them not only with marks of respect but with special friendship and with more than ordinary goodwill." This exhortation to love proselytes is also found in later rabbinic sayings.<sup>96</sup> Philo also states that, at conversion, proselytes at once became friendly and loving, while apostates became shameless, quarrelsome, and friends of falsehood and perjury (*Virt.* 182). Brotherly love is thus a mark of a true proselyte as well as a native-born Jew, while its absence is notable among the others—the outsiders and the apostates. The focus on brotherly love in 1 Peter thus nicely corresponds to the same emphasis in Jewish literature. Van Unnik takes such exhortations as 1 Pet 1:22; 2:17; and 4:8 as examples of traces of proselytism in the letter.<sup>97</sup> Again, it is hard to escape the conclusion that he overstates his case, since it cannot be demonstrated from the sources that brotherly love was an admonition primarily given to (former) proselytes. If that were the case, one would have to say that all the readers of both Paul's and John's letters were (former) proselytes, because these letters contain several exhortations to brotherly love (for example, Rom 12:10; 13:8; Eph 1:15; 1 John 4:7.11). But no one has seriously come up with such a suggestion.

There is not much about "church-organization structures" in 1 Peter, but the love of the early Christians had a context of a fictive kinship system that also included some organizational structures. 1 Peter does not use the term ἐκκλησία; the term closest to this is "brotherhood": "Love the brotherhood" (τὴν ἀδελφότητα ἀγαπάτε, 2:17; compare 5:9), and they are to "show hospitality one to another without begrudging" (4:9). They have God as their father (1:17), they have been born again (1:3.23; 2:2), and they are a holy priesthood (2:5.9).<sup>98</sup> The author can even quote Hos 1:9 and say that in "times past you were not a people, but now you are God's people" (2:10). 1 Pet 5:1-6 also suggests that they had some organizational structures, since their leaders are called "elders," but this term is too general to enable any further description of the structures concerned.

Enough is stated above, however, to demonstrate that the Jewish issues of love and goodwill toward the proselytes are paralleled in

96. Cf. e.g., *Mek. Exod.* 22:20; cf. Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar* I, 355-59.

97. Van Unnik, "Redemption in 1 Peter I 18-19," 65-66.

98. On the understanding of priesthood in Philo and 1 Peter, see my "'Common Priesthood' of Philo and 1 Peter: A Philonic Reading of 1 Peter 2.5, 9," *JSNT* 57 (1995) 87-119.

the descriptions of the converts in 1 Peter as well. Again, the descriptions of the proselytes in Philo help us to consider the exhortations of 1 Peter in context.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We set out to investigate the possible social background of the much-discussed terms *πάροικος* and *παρεπίδημος* in 1 Peter. Suggesting that they are to be read as metaphors, having the Jewish institution of proselytism as a main part of the book's social background—that is, as a main part of its social source of domain—we first looked at how the recipients of 1 Peter had been described in recent research. Investigating, then, the use of the Hebrew terms *גר* and *גר ותושב*, in the Hebrew Scriptures and their Greek equivalents in the LXX and in the works of Philo, we found it plausible that the use of these terms in these works should be considered not just to denote strangers but in some cases to be related to what we may call proselytes. Hence, they should be read as belonging to the conceptual and semantic field of "proselytism." Accordingly, the descriptions of proselytes in Philo and other diaspora works such as *Joseph and Aseneth* should be considered important in understanding the social aspects of the early Christians described in 1 Peter. Investigating the relevant expressions in 1 Peter in light of Philonic and other descriptions of proselytes, we found that the central aspects of leaving polytheism for monotheism, leaving one's country, family, and kinfolk, becoming enemies of families and friends at the risk of one's own life, and entering a community of fictive kinship and brotherly love were all categories and aspects valuable for illuminating the conditions of the recipients of 1 Peter as perceived by the author. Hence, my conclusion is that considering proselytism as a major part of the source domain for understanding the role of the metaphors *πάροικος* and *παρεπίδημος* in 1 Peter enhances our understanding of the way that the author of this letter perceived the social conditions of its recipients.