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Embracing Asylum Seekers and Refugees: Jeremiah 29 as Foundation for a

Christian Theology of Migration and Integration

C. A. Strine

University of Sheffield

1: Introduction

The book of Jeremiah has a long heritage in Christian political thinking. For instance, the fundamental divide between the City of God and the earthly city that animated Augustine's seminal approach to politics depends on many texts, but none more crucially than Jer 29. The earthly city appears throughout as Babylon; this relates to its metaphorical role in the Book of Revelation, but Augustine critically notes how Jer 29 originates this idea. 'While the two cities are intermingled, we also make use of the peace of Babylon,'[1] he comments regarding the epoch when the people of God coexist with those estranged from God. Even though this existence is temporary, like a pilgrimage that will soon end, Augustine admonishes his audience to support those who sustain this peace. His basis is the so-called letter to the exiles in Jer 29 that commands those deported from Jerusalem to pray for the peace of Babylon (Jer 29:7), 'the temporal peace which is for the time being shared by the good and the wicked alike.'[2]

Recently, Luke Bretherton has drawn on this particular aspect of Augustine's political theology as a guide for his own influential thoughts on what might comprise a faithful Christian engagement with politics and society writ large. Bretherton's appropriation of Jer 29 emerges from Augustine, but it is inflected through John Calvin and John Howard Yoder.[3] Bretherton thus conceptualizes Jer 29 as a text that

confronts its audience with the need for repentance and relearning obedience to God, a passage that desires to see its audience render themselves 'obedient to God' and to demonstrate 'that they were really penitent.'[4] Indeed, following Yoder, he frames Jer 29 as a text that suggests 'exile in Babylon as a return to the true vocation of the people of God.'[5]

Bretherton applies his approach to various issues, including the treatment of refugees by nation states.[6] He maintains that refugees are by definition the product of political entities, and therefore demand inclusion into a new polity. Nation states bear a direct and unavoidable responsibility to admit refugees. When political entities fail to do so, Bretherton calls on the church to resist this act by welcoming refugees, highlighting how the sanctuary movement in the United States is an example of precisely this approach. Beyond simply attempting to change policies—though this is a desirable outcome—the practice of providing sanctuary upholds refugees 'as persons able to express themselves within and act upon a common world.'[7] Drawing on Giorgio Agamben, Bretherton characterizes this care for others as 'hallowing bare life,' an action that points to the value of refugees as persons even if they are not citizens of a nation state, which serves as the *sine qua non* for governmental support.

It is surprising that Bretherton advances his argument without any direct appeal to Jer 29, a text explicitly about the experience of involuntary migrants that he self-consciously places at the center of his approach to politics. This belies both the emphasis he places on its place in Christian cosmopolitanism, wherein it highlights the responsibility that the people of God have to seek the welfare of others, and also its socio-historical background, in which it speaks specifically to the way that involuntary migrants should respond to that experience. Bretherton's treatment of the

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Faithful Witness (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 5-6.

[4.] John Calvin, Commentary on Jeremiah and Lamentations, Jer 29:3-6 (https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom19.xii.iv.html; accessed 24 July 2017).

[5.] Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 5.

[6.] Originally Luke Bretherton, "Duty of Care to Refugees, Christian Cosmopolitanism, and the Hallowing of Bare Life," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19:1(2006); republished with some additions in ch. 3 of Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 126-74.

[7.] Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 159.

duty of care to refugees employs political science, philosophy, and theological reflection to make its case, but it does not invoke the ideal biblical text for analyzing the situation and mounting a Christian response to it.

When one approaches Jer 29 as a historically aware and socially rooted response to the lived experience of involuntary migration, one sees that this text offers important principles for a political theology of migration and the integration. This article shall argue that Jer 29 offers three principles for a constructive theological approach in which both *hosts and migrants* have obligations to embrace others across enduring lines of difference.[8] This conclusion is entirely consonant with Bretherton's, but supports its position through engagement with the biblical text and the social scientific study of migration. The argument extends Bretherton's prior work in at least two ways: one relating to the way in which nation states should settle refugees, and another addressing the rise of neo-nationalist and anti-immigrant rhetoric.

The argument first situates the statements of Jer 29 about involuntary migration within the larger context of the Hebrew Bible, showing specifically that its views are contested and that they contrast with an important counter-text, the book of Ezekiel. Second, the article explores how the perspective articulated in Jer 29 eventually gains traction in the New Testament, and thus as a central tenet for a constructive, Christian approach to the issues of migration and integration. Third the article outlines the three principles that produce obligations for both hosts and migrants. This final step constitutes a constructive theological case for how to approach the already prevalent and continually expanding challenges around migration and integration, offering both arguments against the rising number of refugees placed in camps and also reasons why neo-national responses cannot be reconciled with a Christian approach to the Bible. The neo-national tendency—hardly unknown among Christians—demands a theological response that articulates how the

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[8.] The phrase 'enduring lines of difference' originates with Matthew Croasmun at the Yale Center for Faith and Culture. Croasmun has developed this idea with regard to the Life Worth Living initiative, which draws upon a range of philosophical and religious traditions to help students develop habits of reflection that will equip them for the life-long process of discerning what constitutes a good, flourishing life.

beloved promise that God is 'mindful of the plans I have made concerning you... plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a hopeful future' (Jer 29:11) depends upon an openness on all sides for embracing outsiders across enduring lines of difference.

2: Migration and Supra-nationalism in Jeremiah: Integration for Flourishing

It is no overstatement to say the Book of Jeremiah is in thrall to migration. The impending siege and eventual destruction of Jerusalem with its associated involuntary migrations, forced deportations, and subsequent hopes for return permeates the book. Indeed, Jer 5:19 summarizes YHWH's punishment on the people as serving foreigners 'in a land that is not your own.' Jeremiah is indelibly shaped by the involuntary migrations surrounding the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 587 BCE.

Jeremiah is hardly unique within the Hebrew Bible on this account. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles, a large number of Psalms, Esther, and Ruth all deal with this issue in some way or another. Despite the pervasive impact of involuntary migration on the Hebrew Bible, scholars generally refer to this phenomenon in an undifferentiated way as 'exile.' That term not only occludes massive differences in experience and social setting presumed by these different texts, it fails to appreciate the significant gains made in the social scientific study of involuntary migration where much greater analytical specificity prevails. The *modus operandi* in the social scientific study of involuntary migration includes identifying and analyzing the related, but not identical, range of experiences that can be grouped together under the broad umbrella of involuntary migration.

Just one relevant distinction from the social sciences is the divergent nature of involuntary migration that results from living in a large, multicultural urban area with that which ends with migrants living in an isolated, monocultural 'camp' setting. Precisely these two divergent experiences appear in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Indeed, these contrasting settings correlate directly with fundamentally

different viewpoints about how to deal with host communities. In short, while Ezekiel depicts forced deportation to an isolated work camp that generates a strongly ethnocentric and nationalistic response, key texts in Jeremiah reflect involuntary migration to a large, cosmopolitan city, which produces a pragmatic, open attitude towards integration with outsiders and social cohesion.

(a) Jeremiah: The City of Babylon
The book of Jeremiah resists singularity and coherence. One could call its collection of variegated material a patch work quilt, but that would be unfair to even the most randomly cobbled together quilt.[9] Nevertheless, within Jeremiah one finds that Jer 29 and 35 cohere and together advocate an approach for how migrants can maintain a communal identity that engages in open, positive interaction with outsiders, does not disregard tradition, and enables mutual flourishing for hosts and migrants.

To appreciate what Jer 29 and 35 say about life in Babylon, it is first necessary to establish the importance of the city as an urban, multicultural space. The role of the city first emerges in Jer 24, an earlier text to which chs. 29 and 35 have resonances. Neither the term Babylon (בבל)[10] nor Chaldea (כשדים)[11] appears prior to Jer 20, a lacuna that reflects the centrality of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 1–25. Starting with ch. 20 Babylon and Chaldea rise in prominence, with Jer 24 indicating they are not simple synonyms. Chapter 24 begins thus (v. 1):

> The LORD showed me two baskets of figs, placed in front of the Temple of the
> LORD. This was after King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon had exiled King

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[9.] I have borrowed this analogy from Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 322, who uses it to speak of Ezek 36.

[10.] בבל occurs 169 times: 20:4–6; 21:2, 4, 7, 10; 22:25; 24:1; 25:1, 9, 11–12; 27:6, 8–9, 11–14, 16–18, 20, 22; 28:2–4, 6, 11, 14; 29:1, 3–4, 10, 15, 20–22, 28; 32:2–5, 28, 36; 34:1–3, 7, 21; 35:11; 36:29; 37:1, 17, 19; 38:3, 17–18, 22–23; 39:1, 3, 5–7, 9, 11, 13; 40:1, 4–5, 7, 9, 11; 41:2, 18; 42:11; 43:3, 10; 44:30; 46:2, 13, 26; 49:28, 30; 50:1–2, 8–9, 13–14, 16–18, 23–24, 28–29, 34–35, 42–43, 45–51:2; 51:6–9, 11–12, 24, 29–31, 33–35, 37, 41–42, 44, 47–49, 53–56, 58–61, 64; 52:3–4, 9–12, 15, 17, 26–27, 31–32, 34

[11.] כשדים occurs 46 times: 21:4, 9; 22:25; 24:5; 25:12; 32:4–5, 24–25, 28–29, 43; 33:5; 35:11; 37:5, 8–11, 13–14; 38:2, 18–19, 23; 39:5, 8; 40:9–10; 41:3, 18; 43:3; 50:1, 8, 10, 25, 35, 45; 51:4, 24, 35, 54; 52:7–8, 14, 17.

Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim of Judah, and the officials of Judah, and the craftsmen and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to *Babylon*.

On its own, this is hardly illuminating; the deportation of the Davidic king to Babylon is reported many times. However, compare verse 1 with verses 5-7:

Thus said the LORD, the God of Israel: As with these good figs, so will I single out for good the Judean exiles whom I have driven out from this place *to the land of the Chaldeans*. I will look upon them favorably, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not overthrow them; I will plant them and not uproot them. And I will give them the understanding to acknowledge me, for I am the LORD. And they shall be My people and I will be their God, when they turn back to me with all their heart.

William McKane is one commentator who grasps the subtle yet important distinction between Babylon (the city) and Chaldea (the surrounding lands). He recognizes that Jeremiah views Babylon, the city, and the land of Chaldea more broadly as distinct social settings.[12] Mark Leuchter also apprehends the distinction, remarking that '[a]t every turn, [Jer 26-45] addresses the Judean community in Babylon arising from the various deportations to that *city*.'[13] McKane and Leuchter alert the commentator to the importance the *city of Babylon* plays. To read Jer 29 with sensitivity to its ancient context, one needs to envision an audience familiar with a large metropolitan area that includes people from both the host and other foreign societies.

(b) Jeremiah: A Tale of Two Cities
While Jer 24 employs the image of good figs and bad figs to denote those whom YHWH will 'single out for good' (24:4) and those who will be judged, what it fails to do is specify what makes a Judahite exile who has been forcibly displaced to Babylonia (24:5) a good fig. It is ch. 29 that addresses this conundrum.

[12.] Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), II:233, notes that S, V, and LXX^A have city, not land, in v. 8, strengthening the distinction between the urban Babylon and the remaining areas around it.
[13.] Mark Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile in Jeremiah 26–45* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 145. Emphasis added.

Chapter 29 verses 1-14 preserve 'a letter' from the prophet Jeremiah 'to the priests, the prophets, the rest of the elders of the exiled community, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had exiled from Jerusalem *to Babylon*' (29:1).[14] After alluding to ch. 24,[15] the 'letter' encourages these involuntary migrants in the city of Babylon to 'build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit,' to marry themselves and to marry off their children in order to multiply the community. The advice finishes by commending the Judahites to 'seek the welfare (שלום) of the city (עיר) to which I [YHWH] have exiled you and pray to YHWH on its behalf,' for it is there 'you shall prosper.' The second part of the letter (vv. 10-14) offers hope that this situation will not last indefinitely, but that after 70 years YHWH will regather them to 'this place,' a reference not only to Jerusalem, but likely to its temple in particular. In doing so, it provides the impetus for the community to retain its identity, to maintain their uniqueness by continued fidelity to YHWH, their patron deity who they are to call on, pray to, search for, and seek (v. 13) without hostility to outsiders.

McKane again grasps that these are not practical steps for living *per se*, 'but that they are expressions of "integration" and are used to project Jeremiah's advice that the exiles should take a long-term view of their residence in Babylon.'[16] The instructions encourage the Judahite involuntary migrants living in this urban, cosmopolitan environment to actively engage with people outside the Judahite enclave.[17] Jeremiah 29 advocates openness to outsiders, a positive and hopeful

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[14.] On whether or not an actual letter is contained here, see Daniel L. Smith, *Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* (Bloomington, Ind.: Meyer Stone, 1989), 128-32, and John Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations: A Sociological, Literary, and Theological Approach on the Displacement and Resettlement of the Southern Kingdom of Judah* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 119-33.

[15.] Jeremiah 29 makes further allusions to Jer 24. Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, II:222-7, argues that Jer 24 and 29 are paired at the ends of a chiasm; cf. Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile*, 49.

16. William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), II:742-3; cf. Dalit Rom-Shiloni, "Ezekiel and Jeremiah: What Might Stand Behind the Silence?," *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 1(2012), 225, and John Hill, "'Your Exile Will be Long': The Book of Jeremiah and the Unended Exile," in *Reading the Book of Jeremiah: A Search for Coherence*, ed. Martin Kessler (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 149-61.

[17.] Louis Stulman, *Jeremiah* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2005), 252-57. By contrast, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity: Identity Conflicts Between the Exiles and the People Who Remained (6th-5th Centuries Bce)* (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 237, focuses only on the dynamic between the community in Babylon and those remaining in Judah, thereby missing how

attitude to what might come from those interactions.

Though not a simple binary opposition, it remains the case that involuntary migrants throughout history generally reside either in isolated settlements set apart for them—what we now call camps— or they live in urban areas where they interact with members of outside groups. Elizabeth Colson observes about involuntary migrants that '[t]hose in the official settlements [e.g., camps] were less likely to develop reciprocal ties, and so trust relationships, with neighboring hosts.'[18] By contrast, those living in close proximity with outside groups generally respond in the opposite way.

Lisa Malkki's work among the Hutu displaced from Burundi during the 1990s illustrates this dynamic best. Two distinct groups of Hutu settle in Tanzania as involuntary migrants: one community lives in an urban center, inherently mixing with other groups; another community resides in a government run camp in a remote area, essentially cordoned off from outsiders. Malkki's research demonstrates that '[i]t is the Hutu "spatially isolated and insulated" in Tanzanian camps... who have constructed a new nationalism complete with a mythical past that demonizes the Tutsi [who persecuted them] and looks forward to a future in a Burundi cleansed of Tutsi.'[19] Trenchant nationalism characterizes their response to involuntary migration. By contrast, the Hutu living in the urban, integrated setting develop 'rival constructions of order and morality' that tend towards pragmatically managing their identity. Instead of identifying as refugees, they shape their identity to support 'key axes of assimilation' with the wider population.[20] These Hutu exhibit an openness to

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strongly Jer 29 advocates positive engagement with the host population. Thus, while she is correct that this text shows a strong preference for the community in Babylon over against the community still in Judah, her characterization of the text as 'divisive rhetoric' is incompatible with its meaning within the broader context that it itself envisions.

[18.] Elizabeth Colson, "Forced Migration and the Anthropological Response," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 16(2003), 7-8.

[19.] I use this summary of Maliki's work by Colson (Colson, "Anthropological Response," 10) because it succinctly communicates the importance of her research. See also Julie M. Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), especially her concluding remarks on p. 220.

[20.] Liisa H. Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 153-54. The three key axes are intermarriage, pursuing legal naturalization, and personal socioeconomic opportunities.

positive engagement with outside groups.

Lest it escape recognition, comparing Jeremiah to the findings from Colson and Malkki highlights that Jer 29 fits easily into a cross-cultural and cross-temporal pattern illuminating how the social setting in which involuntary migrants find themselves strongly influences their views on engagement with outsiders. Specifically, migrant communities who reside in integrated living environments commonly respond with a pragmatic approach to identity, a willingness to see ethnic boundaries as movable or porous, and an openness to engaging with other groups in order to succeed socially and economically in their new context.'[21]

Others have examined the importance of migration to interpreting Jer 29,[22] with Daniel Smith-Christopher's influential book *Religion of the Landless*[23] offering a helpful argument that Jer 29 promotes non-violent resistance against the Babylonians. The call to non-violent resistance opposes the militant message of the prophet Hananiah, concludes Smith-Christopher.[24] Though he is correct that Jer 29 does not advocate violence, Smith-Christopher relies too heavily on potential allusions to warfare in Deut 20 for his interpretation.[25] Thus, while Smith-Christopher observes the core idea that Jer 29 prohibits conflict with others, he does not see how the text admonishes its audience to think and act beyond existing communal boundaries in an open, pragmatic way. Instead of simply offering advice for how to deal with those within the community creating conflict, Jer 29 calls for a far wider field of action. As Leuchter observes, '[o]ld ... ways of life rooted in the hills of Judah were not only illusory but an affront to divine will. *YHWH's plan for Judah was to be found by the rivers of Babylon.*'[26] Not just by the rivers of Babylon, but in the urban center itself, where Jeremiah calls for the involuntary migrant Judahites to live with openness to

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[21.] cf. Colson, "Anthropological Response," 9, who summarizes the issue by writing 'The ethnographic record points to camps and resettlement communities as seed beds most conducive to the growth of memory and the pursuit of the myth of return.'
[22.] Han, *Exile as Forced Migrations*, 156, esp. pp. 107-19, 154-8.
[23.] Smith, *Religion of the Landless*, esp. pp. 132-37.
[24.] Smith, *Religion of the Landless*, 135.
[25.] cf. Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 5, especially note 11, which discusses Smith-Christopher's argument.
[26.] Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile*, 49.

the opportunities presented by the cosmopolitan *city* of Babylon without giving up their allegiance to YHWH.

(c) Jeremiah 35: The Rechabites

The instructions of Jer 29 transform into a parable-like narrative about the Rechabites in Jer 35. YHWH's prompt for Jeremiah to visit the Rechabites in the Jerusalem temple comes unexpectedly. Since the Rechabites have not yet appeared in the book, why introduce this peculiar group now? Verse 13 explains specifically: the Rechabites offer a lesson for the Judahites 'about obeying my commands—declares YHWH.'

To understand the lesson, one must carefully examine the story. Jeremiah goes to see the Rechabites in the temple, presents them with wine, and invites them to drink it. The Rechabites demur by invoking their eponymous ancestor, Jonadab ben Rechab, who commanded them 'You shall never drink wine, either you or your children' (v. 6). Unprompted, they also announce that Jonadab prohibited them to 'build houses or sow fields or plant vineyards... but you shall live in tents all your days, so that you may live long upon the land where you sojourn' (גור; v. 7).[27] The Rechabites explain that they have obeyed the command not to drink, but confess disobeying the instruction to remain גרים because 'when King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon invaded the country, we said, "Come, let us go into Jerusalem because of the army of the Chaldeans and the army of Aram." And so we are living in Jerusalem' (v. 11).

This ancillary information is crucial to interpreting vv. 12-16.[28] YHWH's declaration that 'the commands of Jonadab ben Rechab have been fulfilled' (v. 14) accounts for the prohibition against wine *and nothing else*. Neither the prohibition against settling in Jerusalem nor the Rechabites admission they have breached this instruction appears. Why the omission?

[27.] On the promise to the Rechabites, see Jon D. Levenson, "On the Promise to the Rechabites," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 38:4(1976), 508-14.
[28.] William McKane, "Jeremiah and the Rechabites," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 100, no. 3 (1988), 117-18.

Leuchter recognizes the importance of this command: remarking that the Rechabites' 'shift from tent dwelling *to urbanization in Jerusalem*,'[29] he explains that 'the merit of sustaining tradition through adaptation in times of need does not imply a lack of conviction.'[30] Correct though Leuchter is, one can go further. Note the reason the Rechabites offer for settling in Jerusalem: 'when King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon invaded the country, we said, "Come, let us go into Jerusalem."' The Rechabites are involuntary migrants.[31] Not in Jerusalem by choice, but because of a political and military situation beyond their control, the Rechabites correlate to the forcibly displaced Judahites now in the city of Babylon. In this respect, Steed Vernyl Davidson is correct that the Rechabites adherence to such 'quaint practices' serves to highlight the 'lack of devotion' among the Jerusalemites.[32] His further contention, however, that Jer 35 'focuses attention on the vulnerability rather than on the success of their social organization'[33] overlooks how the Rechabites constitute the model for the Judahites forcibly deported to Babylon.

Textual connections between Jer 29:5-7 and Jer 35[34] underscore that the Rechabites represent a faithful response to involuntary migration into an urban setting, which simultaneously encourages integration into the new context alongside adherence to tradition insofar as necessary to retain cherished aspects of one's identity.[35] Chapter 35 reinforces the message of 29:5-7: it explicates being a 'good'

[29.] Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile*, 97. Emphasis added.

[30.] Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile*, 98; contrast this with Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (London: SCM, 1986), 655-56, who think this is an 'irony' caused by editing of the passage.

[31.] More specifically, they are conflict-induced, internally displaced, involuntary migrants. Both McKane, "Rechabites," 118, and Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (London: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 392, recognize that the Rechabites are refugees, though neither pursues the insight further.

[32.] Steed Vernyl Davidson, ""Exoticizing the Otter": The Curious Case of the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35," in *Prophecy and Power: Jeremiah in Feminist and Postcolonial Perspective*, ed. Christl M. Maier and Carolyn J. Sharp (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 202.

[33.] Davidson, "Otter," 203.

[34.] cf. William Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1989), II: 23.

[35.] Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 291-94. Though Stulman sees the passage dealing with 'the moral formation of refugees who had undergone enormous hardship and were facing the challenge of forging a new identity,' he makes no comment on the silence of the passage regarding their residence in the urban context of Jerusalem.

fig as pursuing an open, engaging approach to outsiders that allows for—indeed
requires—a level of flexibility with tradition and a pragmatic approach to drawing
identity boundaries. *Pace* Davidson, the Rechabites appear from out of nowhere in Jer
35 precisely because they offer a successful model for how a community should
respond to involuntary migration. Or, as Leuchter concludes, '[t]he Rechabites
demonstrate true piety by adhering to the spirit of their father's mandate in the face of
shifting tides.'[36]

(d) Sharper Relief: Contrasting Jeremiah to Ezekiel's Neo-nationalism
In order to appreciate the distinctiveness of the approach advocated by Jer 29 and 35,
it is necessary to offer a comparison. Since scholars often note the substantial
similarities between Jeremiah and Ezekiel,[37] it is the ideal comparison.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel share distinctive images (like the eating of a scroll: Jer
15:16; Ezek 2:8-10), metaphors (e.g., the prophet as watchman: Jer 6:17; Ezek 3:17-
21, 33:1-9), and a critical view of the Judahites, who are admonished with those
metaphors in nearly identical ways (e.g., irresponsible shepherds: Jer 23:1-8; Ezek
34:1-16). Dalit Rom-Shiloni concludes there is 'fairly clear evidence of indirect
connections between the prophets (and/or their presumed schools), and some even
proceed to suggest direct influence of one prophet on the other.'[38]

And yet, Walther Zimmerli explains that 'a special problem' remains, namely,
that despite all the similarities in language, metaphor, and imagery there are 'deep
differences between the two figures, which can be seen at many points.'[39] Rom-
Shiloni probes that insight and concludes that 'the profound differences between
Ezekiel and Jeremiah in the use of [earlier] traditions cannot be overlooked' because

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[36.] Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile*, 98.
[37.] The topic is treated in every commentary, and even in a monograph by John W. Miller, *Das Verhältnis Jeremias und Hesekiels sprachlich und theologisch untersucht mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Prosareden Jeremias* (GTB 28; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1955).
[38.] Rom-Shiloni, "Silence," 213.
[39.] Walther Zimmerli, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24,* trans. Ronald E. Clements (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1979), 44, 45.

there is 'a great ideological distance between the two contemporary prophets of YHWH.'[40]

Perhaps the single sharpest difference between the two texts resides in the massive contrast between the command to 'seek the peace of the city' in Jer 29 and what Rom-Shiloni terms the 'extreme exclusivity' of Ezekiel.[41] The two books, for all their similarities, have polar opposite views about open, positive engagement with the host population in Babylonia. Ezekiel cannot even fathom reconciliation among divergent Judahite perspectives, let alone positive engagement between the Judahite community in Babylonia and the Babylonian hosts.[42] Two passages reflect Ezekiel's attitude.

Ezekiel 11:14-21 offers a purported saying from those still living in Jerusalem, who claim that their residence there shows that YHWH prefers them and has rejected the involuntary migrants among whom the prophet lives. Ezekiel rejects this claim and explains that YHWH now resides with his community as a מקדש מעט, a small or reduced sanctuary. The rhetoric both encourages the involuntary migrants into a closed community including only a subset of Judahites, let alone outsiders, who should continue on as much like they had in Jerusalem as possible.

The *Unheilsgeschichte* of Ezek 20 gives a scathing account of Israel's behavior that includes negative details found nowhere else. First, the passage elaborates how past behavior warranted Jerusalem's defeat and the involuntary deportation of Ezekiel and his compatriots (vv. 3-31). This diatribe includes a threefold assertion that YHWH's treatment of the people seeks to keep YHWH's name from being profaned among the nations observing (20:9, 14, 22). The insular, ethnocentric attitude that lies just below the surface here punctures it in v. 32, which

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[40.] Rom-Shiloni, "Silence," 228-29.

[41.] Rom-Shiloni terms Ezekiel's ethnocentrism as 'extreme exclusivity,' a helpful way of describing its primary position (Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 139-97), though she recognizes some of the later material in the book softens that rhetoric somewhat, allowing for somewhat more inclusive exclusivity. The situation in Jeremiah, with its various layers of redaction and different social settings for those redactions, is far more complex (Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 198-252).

[42.] cf. C. A. Strine, *Sworn Enemies: The Divine Oath, the Book of Ezekiel, and the Polemics of Exile* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), especially pp. 228-68 on Ezekiel's hidden polemic against the Babylonians.

opens a short disputation against some Judahite involuntary migrants that want 'to be like the nations, like the families of the lands' by worshipping 'wood and stone.' Aggrieved promises of judgment from YHWH follow, explaining that such transgressors have no place with YHWH. Indeed, Ezek 20:39 casts off such people by stating that anyone who considers the idea of religious assimilation should stop worshipping YHWH because they profane YHWH's holy name.[43] Needless to say, this is a long, long way from praying for the welfare of the city of Babylon.

In light of this attitude, it is necessary to examine the audience that the book of Ezekiel envisions. At its outset, Ezekiel addresses a community of involuntary migrants by the Chebar canal (Ezek 1:3). This 'obscure body of water' is 'near' Nippur,[44] but not in the city. Ezekiel 3:15 locates the community of Judahite 'exiles' in Tel Abib. Whatever that name means, scholars agree that Tel Abib identifies a remote, perhaps recently destroyed, area outside of Nippur.[45] Ezekiel 3:22 reinforces the impression, describing the prophet going out אל הבקעה. This valley or plain is probably not a specific location, but as Daniel Block observes, a symbolic space, 'wasteland, an appropriate place for a private meeting with God.'[46] In other words, the prophet and the community amongst whom he lives inhabit an environment distant from other people.[47]

These geographical notes, though imprecise, resonate with other non-biblical texts, namely, the āl-Yāhūdu corpus. These records provide essential external

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[43.] cf. C. A. Strine, "The Role of Repentance in the Book of Ezekiel: A Second Chance for the Second Generation," *Journal of Theological Studies* 63(2012), 467-91.

[44.] Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1983), 40; cf. Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 84.

[45.] For various views of Tel Abib's meaning and location, see Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 135-36, Walther Zimmerli, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24,* trans. Ronald E. Clements (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1979), 139, Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 71, and C. A. Strine, "Ezekiel's Image Problem: The Mesopotamian Cult Statue Induction Ritual and the *Imago Dei* Anthropology in the Book of Ezekiel," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 76:2 (2014).

[46.] Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 153.; cf. Strine, "Ezekiel's Image Problem." GET PAGE.

[47.] cf. I. Eph'al, "On the Political and Social Organization of the Jews in Babylonian Exile," in *Deutscher Orientalistentag Vorträge*, ed. Fritz Steppat (Weisbaden: Franz Steiner, 1981) and Laurie E. Pearce, "New Evidence for Judeans in Babylonia," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 407-08.

evidence that reinforces the sense given by Ezekiel. Locating Judahite involuntary migrants in an area roughly bounded by Nippur, Karkara, and Keš—a rural locale in which it is likely forced deportees worked on large irrigation projects directed by the imperial Babylonian apparatus—the texts offer insight into financial transactions and social structure.[48] Laurie Pearce instructively observes that 'Ezekiel's appearance in the town on the Chebar canal might reflect the early settlement of members of the Jerusalem elite in the Nippur countryside, outside of the urban environment of Babylon or other cities.'[49] In short, Pearce's analysis of the non-biblical texts complements the evidence within Ezekiel that suggests it envisions a community living in an isolated, mono-cultural context, one that contrasts sharply with the social setting imagined in Jer 29. While one cannot anachronistically transfer the concept of the contemporary refugee camp to this context, the term camp, with its connotations of residence for dislocated people, external administration, and isolation from others offers a useful shorthand for this context.[50] One might, then, locate Ezekiel in 'Camp' Chebar.

Recall here the findings of Colson and Malkki introduced earlier: it is common to find isolated communities of migrants reinforcing national identities and rejecting positive engagement with outsiders. Ezekiel's trenchant nationalism fits nicely into their schema when one observes that the book envisions an audience captured and placed in a remote, isolated, mono-ethnic setting. The strongly nationalistic and ethnocentric approach advocated by Ezekiel—its so-called 'extreme exclusivity'—correlates directly to what social scientists observe among many migrant groups living in an isolated context.

In sum, Ezekiel's attitude towards the host community in Babylonia is antithetical to the one advanced in Jer 29 precisely because it arises from and

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[48.] Cornelia Wunsch, "Glimpses on the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia," in *Arameans, Chaldeans, and Arabs in Babylonia and Palestine in the First Millennium B.C*, ed. Angelika Berlejung and Michael P. Streck (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 252-53; cf. Laurie E. Pearce, "Continuity and Normality in Sources Relating to the Judean Exile," *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 3(2014), 170-71.
[49.] Pearce, "Continuity and Normality," 181.
[50.] cf. David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 254-55.

responds to a social setting that is wholly different to the integrated, urban, multicultural context that features in Jeremiah's letter to the exiles.

3: Christian Reflections on Nationalism: Jeremiah 29's Unlikely Ascendency

If space allowed, one could trace the conflict between the opposing positions in Jeremiah and Ezekiel through early Judaism, finding that Ezekiel's extreme exclusivity tends to dominate. That is hardly unique to Judaism; indeed, the dispute between various forms sectarianism and more open, integrationist views occurs in the New Testament too. It is worth briefly tracing this issue in the New Testament in order to understand that when the open, pragmatic views of Jer 29 eventually dominate in the Acts of the Apostles, various epistolary texts, and in the book of Revelation it is not without challenges.

(a) Jesus: Nationalist or Supra-nationalist?
The Gospel of Matthew, according to Luke Timothy Johnson, 'shows a constant concern for the identity and integrity of the messianic community' that created for it 'a tension between particularity and universality.'[51] Matthew states explicitly that Jesus' message was for Israel only (2:6; 9:36; 10:5-6, 23; 19:28) and even disparages Gentiles as dogs and swine (7:6). In one place, it suggests that a troublemaker within the community needs to be cast out and should 'be to you as a Gentile' (18:17). Insofar as these texts are concerned, Jesus appears to adopt the ethnocentricity of Ezekiel.

Of course, Matthew is just one of four Gospels, and most scholars would now argue that it came later than and depends upon the Gospel of Mark, where a rather different ethos emerges. Mark does not present Jesus embracing Gentiles from the outset, but once Jesus travels into a Gentile dominated area in Mark 5 non-Israelites are welcomed into the community and integrated into it.[52] For Mark, both space and

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[51.] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation (Revised Edition)* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999), 204.
[52.] Kelly Iverson, *Gentiles in the Gospel of Mark: 'Even the Dogs Under the Table Eat the Children's*

markers of identity for the people in those spaces are significant. It is notable, then, that Mark 5 presents Jesus crossing a geopolitical boundary (the sea, 4:35; 5:1) and a traditional identity diacritic (a place where they raise swine, 5:11-13) to openly, positively, and pragmatically embrace outsiders with his ministry.[53] Mark depicts Jesus of Nazareth as open to outsiders, an attitude that resembles the ethos of Jer 29.

And yet, when one returns to Matthew with the perspective of Mark in mind one finds that Matthew is not entirely ethnocentric. Matthew's account includes material that moderates the nationalistic rhetoric: some texts speak of Jesus as a messianic servant who is hope and light to the Gentiles (4:15-16; 12:18-21) and Jesus declares to the Roman centurion that 'I have not seen such faith in Israel' (8:10). Perhaps most well known, Matthew ends with the great commission, extolling the early Christians to 'go, make disciples of all nations' (28:19). Early Christianity obviously struggled to work out this issue in its infancy.

(b) Pauline Supra-nationalism
The Pauline material in the New Testament offers further evidence of this debate, but also indicates that Paul instigated a decisive inflection in the discourse.

Albeit not Pauline material *per se*, Luke's Acts of the Apostles foregrounds Paul's influence on early Christianity. Acts depicts the so-called Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) as the critical juncture where the nascent Christian movement rejects nationalistic ideology. Debate about whether or not Gentile believers to this new, Jewish movement needed to be circumcised that began with Peter's visit to Cornelius in Acts 10 reaches a head in Acts 15. The chapter opens with the remark that 'certain individuals came down from Judea [to Antioch] and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved"' (Acts 15:1). Paul, never one to avoid argument, objects to this form of Jewish sectarian inclusivity; resolution is not forthcoming, so Paul takes the matter to the

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Crumbs' (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2007), 182.
[53.] Iverson, *Gentiles*, 15-19.

apostles and elders in Jerusalem for resolution. Luke depicts the council siding with Paul, choosing not to require Gentile men to be circumcised. The council, in short, determines Christianity will be a community that integrates people across a line of enduring difference, indeed one remaining indelibly visible.

The Epistle to the Galatians offers another perspective on the issue. Chapter two recounts the conflict between Paul and Peter over Peter's refusal to share a meal with the uncircumcised Gentile believers in Galatia. Paul lashes out precisely because he sees Peter reverting to what he believes is a form of Jewish ethnocentrism and not embracing the demand to integrate with Gentile believers across the enduring line of difference symbolized in male circumcision.

Then there is the classic Pauline text on relating to foreign powers, Romans 13. Paul's reflections in Rom 13 are surprisingly reminiscent of Jer 29. Bretherton remarks as much, writing that Rom 13:1-7 'directly echoes Jeremiah 29 in its advice to a fearful, oppressed, and diaspora community gathered in a pagan city.'[54] Not only does Paul encourage the believers in Rome to be subject to the governing authorities and not to resist them lest they be punished, but, like Jer 29, he extols them to pay their taxes and to honor those to whom honor is due because they are God's servants. Romans 13 does not state explicitly that such conduct will promote the flourishing of the city, and so the Christians therein, but what else could be the implication that this conduct constitutes fulfilment of Torah (Rom 13: 8-10)?

(c) Christian Identity as Migrant, Supranational Identity
Beyond this Pauline material that supports building a community across enduring lines of difference, other New Testament passages frame Christian identity as an experience of migration that calls for open, positive engagement with outsiders.

One Peter starts by referring to its audience as exiles or refugees (παρεπιδήμος) in a diaspora. In fact, the instructions of this letter make even greater sense when read

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[54.] Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 5.

in light of what has already been introduced regarding migrants living in integrated, multicultural settings. One Peter three extols the community not to repay evil for evil. To explain what it means to persevere amidst persecution in this way, the author quotes Ps 34:12-16, which says 'turn away from evil and do good... let them seek peace and pursue it' (1 Pet 3:10-11). Albeit occurring in a different passage, the call to seek שלום drawn from Ps 34 provides an unmistakable echo to the same goal as set out in Jer 29.[55]

The Epistle to the Hebrews confirms this outlook from another perspective. Chapter 11 catalogues ancestors who are models of faithfulness: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob feature, before the author stops to reflect on their shared characteristics.

> [13] They confessed that they were *strangers and foreigners* on the earth, [14] for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. [15] If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. [16] But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

Not only does Heb 11 describe these exemplary ancestors as 'strangers and foreigners on the earth' (Heb 11:13), but also as those who are waiting for a city that God has prepared for them. Knowingly or unknowingly, the author speaks of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—which Genesis depicts as migrants who openly and pragmatically engage with people outside their community—as paradigms of the Christian life. The resonance to Jer 29 is conspicuous, even if it was entirely unintended by the author.

Finally—canonically and in this discussion—the book of Revelation enshrines a similar vision of the ideal community. So much about this text remains unclear, but it is plain that it visualizes an eschaton containing 'a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation (ἔθνος), from all tribes (φυλή) and peoples (λαός) and

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[55] It is worth noting that the two passages use different Hebrew verbs, Jeremiah with דרש and Ps 34 with בקש. The semantic range of the two clearly overlaps, so the meaning is almost indistinguishable.

languages (γλῶσσα), standing before the throne and before the Lamb' (Rev 7:9). This multicultural multitude, with its lines of enduring difference, will reside in 'the holy city Jerusalem' (Rev 21:10). In the end, one finds an urban, multicultural, integrated social setting reminiscent of what Jer 29 envisions and advocates.

The New Testament does not offer a systematic exposition on the issue of migration and integration, but three main points arise from these texts. First, there is strong evidence the early community of people following Jesus of Nazareth were at odds over whether or not to adopt a nationalistic attitude of sectarian inclusivity resembling the position advocated in Ezekiel, *mutatis mutandis*. Second, that debate reached a decisive inflection point, after which texts strongly tend to an open, positive, pragmatic engagement with outsiders across enduring lines of difference as promoted by Jer 29 and 35. Third, early Christianity eventually found it amenable to characterize Christian identity as rooted in and analogous to the experience of migration. Indeed, Rom 13, 1 Pet, and Heb 11 commend people who respond in a way strongly similar to the approach advocated in Jer 29 and 35. In short, the New Testament advocates living in a way that promotes cohesion and flourishing wherever you find yourself by openly and positively engaging with outsiders across enduring lines of difference.

All this is succinctly stated in the second century CE text the Epistle to Diognetus. 'Christians,' it remarks 'are indistinguishable from other [people] either by nationality, language or customs.'

> [t]hey do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life. … And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country.[56]

[56.] http://www.vatican.va/spirit/documents/spirit_20010522_diogneto_en.html; accessed 11 Feb 2017. For a critical edition of the text, see Clayton N. Jefford, *The Epistle to Diognetus (with the Fragment of Quadratus)* (Oxford Apostolic Fathers; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Thanks to C. B. Hays for pointing me to this quotation.

4: Jeremiah against Neo-nationalism

Returning to Jer 29 with greater historical, social scientific, and exegetical perspective on it and an increased awareness of how key New Testament ideas on migration, integration, and political power relate to it, it is now possible to expound two principles regarding the obligations of migrants and one principle regarding the duties of hosts. These principles offer the basis for a Christian political theology on migration and integration in which all parties—hosts and migrants—bear obligations.

As noted in the introduction, these three principles produce a position that is consonant with Bretherton's work on the duty of care for refugees. They do so, however, from an entirely different basis and perspective. On one hand, this strengthens the case for Bretherton's view, in itself a welcome result. On the other hand, this approach extends Bretherton's arguments, both in the way societies should settle refugees and also against any neo-national rhetoric appealing to so-called Christian values.

(a) Principles 1 and 2: Embracing Others across Enduring Lines of Difference
Principles one and two arise from a close reading of Jer 29:1-14, the first in vv. 1, 4-7

> [1] This is the text of the letter which the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the priests, the prophets, the rest of the elders of the exile community, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon — ... [4] Thus said the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, to the whole community which I exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon: [5] Build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit. [6] Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there, do not decrease. [7] And seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to the LORD in its behalf; for in its prosperity you shall prosper.

There is an obligation for migrants—involuntary in this case, but by extrapolation, also those moving more voluntarily—to settle into their new homes, to expand their families, and to seek the flourishing of the wider community by openly engaging with

those outside the migrant community. Migrants are obligated to seek to integrate into their host community. This must not be elided or diminished.

This focus on migrants rather than hosts is a stark contrast to Bretherton's work—which concentrates entirely on the role of hosts, whether they be host nation states or citizens of host countries. Hosts will receive further attention below, but it is worth underscoring that Jer 29, a passage so critical to Christian political theology from Augustine onwards, speaks from the perspective of the involuntary migrant and directly to the responsibilities of such communities. Any constructive position on involuntary migrants and the status of asylum seekers and refugees should address their duties *alongside* those of hosts.

Of course, a legitimate fear accompanies the mention of obligations for migrant groups to integrate with their hosts: Will integrating into a new community in this way require abandoning cherished parts of a unique identity and communal life?[57] The second principle, in vv. 8-14, addresses this concern.

> [8] For thus said the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel: Let not the prophets and diviners in your midst deceive you, and pay no heed to the dreams they dream. [9] For they prophesy to you in My name falsely; I did not send them — declares the LORD. [10] For thus said the LORD: When Babylon's seventy years are over, I will take note of you, and I will fulfill to you My promise of favor — to bring you back to this place. [11] For I am mindful of the plans I have made concerning you — declares the LORD — plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a hopeful future. [12] *When you call Me, and come and pray to Me, I will give heed to you.* [13] You will search for Me and find Me, if only you seek Me wholeheartedly. [14] I will be at hand for you — declares the LORD — and I will restore your fortunes. And I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places to which I have banished you — declares the LORD — and I will bring you back to the place from which I have exiled you.

Jeremiah 29 outlines how to maintain the essential component of Judahite identity at the same time as they willingly integrate into the new host community. Judahites have been and should always remain worshippers of YHWH. To continue to call on YHWH,

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[57.] cf. Bretherton, "Duty of Care," 59-60.

to pray to YHWH, to search for YHWH, and to seek YHWH wholeheartedly is to remain steadfast to the cherished core of their communal distinctiveness.

Recall how Jer 35 expounds Jer 29: the Rechabite paradigm explains that one can and should remain committed to their communal heritage, to crucial aspects of difference, but do so in a way that is pragmatic, open to new contexts, and amenable to YHWH's promise 'that you may live long in the land where you sojourn' (Jer 35:7).

In order to synthesize these two principles into a theological foundation for responding to the situation of involuntary migration, one must see that it requires all parties to go beyond the idea of peaceful co-existence often advocated. Neither Jeremiah and nor the New Testament texts that share its ethos will abide this result. Here, the work of Miroslav Volf is instructive.

In his seminal treatment of forgiveness *Exclusion and Embrace*, Volf remarks:

> Forgiveness is necessary but will it suffice? ... [forgiveness] leaves a distance between people, an empty space of neutrality, that allows them to go their separate ways in what is sometimes called 'peace'... A clear line will separate 'them' from 'us.' They will remain 'they' and we will remain 'we,' and we will never include 'them' when we speak of 'us.' ... But a parting of ways [such as this] is clearly not yet peace.[58]

Volf carefully explains the danger of a peaceful co-existence in which communities separated by enduring lines of difference agree to live separately and without enmity: the distance generated by 'going separate ways' cannot persist if communities are to experience peace—the mutual flourishing envisioned in Jer 29. Cohesion and mutual flourishing does not, indeed cannot, exist in this demilitarized zone between parties. Without invoking political language *per se*, the rhythmic drumbeat of 'us' and 'them' in Volf's discussion echoes the rhetoric of nationalism. More is required of all parties in the vision of Jer 29 and 35.

[58.] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1996), 125-26.

'Much more than just the absence of hostility sustained by the absence of contact' writes Volf, before continuing to say that '*peace is communion between former enemies.*'[59] For Volf, such communion is encapsulated in the image of an embrace between two people. First, Volf locates that image in the very nature of the Trinity, and then he employs it to explain the necessary conditions for true flourishing to materialize among communities separated by enduring lines of difference.

Volf develops his 'theology of embrace' through a non-hierarchical trinitarian conception, namely:

> that the life of God is a life of self-giving and other receiving love. As a consequence, the identity of each Trinitarian person cannot be defined apart from other persons... This is what the patristic idea of perichoresis sought to express—"co-inherence in one another without any coalescence or commixture."[60]

Esoteric as coalescence and commixture are, the essential idea remains simple: the embrace of one member of the Trinity by another does not obliterate personal identity. Embrace expresses integration without the loss of difference. Fundamentally, this is what Jer 29 and 35 advocate and illustrate.

Whereas Volf directs his powerful metaphor of embrace towards the past in order to deal with ruptured relationships, this vision of mutual enfolding works equally well in a future orientation intended to prevent the isolation of communities that precludes mutual flourishing. In short, the embrace metaphor expounds the two obligations of migrants in Jer 29.

Bretherton draws near to this issue when he discusses Volf's concepts of exclusion and embrace, asking whether showing hospitality to others—even if it results in quarrels—reinforces exclusion or upholds a positive, creative differentiation

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[59.] Volf, *Exclusion*, 126.
[60.] Volf, *Exclusion*, 127-28, following Prestige.

between things. He resolves that there is a benefit from engaging strangers in this way, but focuses on the check these acts place on an 'economy of scarcity' that leads to policies meant to prevent migration.[61] Bretherton is aware that migrant groups have fears about the process of integration, but only addresses it tangentially by commenting that 'a process of grieving is necessary as both guest and host emigrate from the familiar.'[62] Ultimately Bretherton relegates the issue to eschatology, remarking that an account of loss and grief is necessary to accommodate such integration. More can be said here if one presses on with Volf's embrace analogy.

Volf helpfully disarticulates an embrace into four acts: opening the arms, waiting, closing the arms, and opening the arms again. With the closing of the arms '[i]n an embrace a host is a guest and a guest is a host... I must keep the boundaries of my own self firm' in the embrace.[63] It will not do to engage 'in a self-destructive act of abnegation,' but embrace means 'the identity of the self is both preserved and transformed.'[64] The embrace does not 'make the two bodies one'; rather, 'the opening of the arms [at the end of the embrace] underlines that, though the other may be inscribed into the self, the alterity of the other may not be neutralized by merging both into an undifferentiated "we."'[65]

Volf recognizes the risk of an embrace too, accepting that 'a genuine embrace cannot leave both or either completely unchanged.'[66] This point takes the argument full circle, precisely to the point of departure in which a migrant community resisted this course of action because of a fear of losing essential parts of their identity. If that fear is easily identifiable, Volf's embrace metaphor frames the less obvious fear that results from the alternative of isolationism. To part ways—even amicably—carries immense risk, namely, fostering sectarian isolationism that produces the preconditions for trenchant nationalism. One may preserve their identity, but by disengagement

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[61.] Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 149.
[62.] Bretherton, "Duty of Care," 60.
[63.] Volf, *Exclusion*, 143.
[64.] Volf, *Exclusion*, 143.
[65.] Volf, *Exclusion*, 144.
[66.] Volf, *Exclusion*, 147.

create an unbridgeable distance which can only be traversed by shouts motivated by trenchant, perhaps even militant, nationalism.

Cognizant of both fears, Jer 29 aspires to a theology of migration and integration that overcomes both concerns. Jeremiah 29 commends an embrace across enduring lines of difference that does not obliterate those differences. Each community remains distinct; they close their arms and open them again, remaining a unique body, an identifiable community.[67] The one who risks embracing the outsider is indeed transformed, but not subsumed. And, having taken this risk, one gains the hope of mutual flourishing for all.

(b) Principle 3: Life in Integrated Contexts
Finally, Jeremiah 29 implies a third principle. Unstated, this principle constitutes the necessary precondition for the theology of migration and integration just discussed. To wit, if societies desire the sort of open, multicultural, positive engagement between different communities across their enduring lines of difference that can produce cohesion and mutual flourishing, then they must find ways for migrants to live in environments where interaction with outside groups is not only possible, but to some extent inevitable.[68]

Recall the social scientific findings: migrant communities situated in multicultural settings where interaction with others occurs are far more likely to build reciprocal ties of trust with outsiders and to positively engage with them. This integration does transform their unique identity in some way, but it does not erase enduring lines of difference. Indeed, the Hebrew Bible offers evidence that this dynamic has existed for millennia as exemplified by divergent the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

The final principle, therefore, requires those who live in societies that, by possession of greater resources and social stability, function as hosts for migrants to

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[67.] cf. Bretherton, "Duty of Care," 48.
[68.] cf. Bretherton, "Duty of Care," 49.

promote policies, practices, and initiatives that encourage the settlement of migrant groups amongst their new hosts. Those who aspire to see the mutual flourishing central to the theology of migration and integration in Jer 29 must pursue strategies that enable migrants to live in contexts where it is possible for there to be an embrace across enduring lines of difference.

Here, the present argument goes beyond what Bretherton has advocated in one important way. This aspect of Jer 29 indicates that a Christian theology of migration and integration aware of and indebted to the Bible must go beyond advocating that nation states accept responsibility for involuntary migrants, but must also call for them to be settled in places that promote interaction with host communities. It will not suffice for nations to relegate asylum seekers and refugees to camps, ghettos, or enclaves. That strategy—reflected in the proliferation of refugee camps to house involuntary migrants—may be preferable to polities for various reasons (e.g., speed, cost), but it fails to address the fundamental duty of all parties to seek the welfare of the other. Isolated communities like refugee camps neither allow for the 'hallowing of bare life' that Bretherton advocates nor enable migrants to discharge their duty to embrace other communities across enduring lines of difference. Voluntarily making resources available to settle refugees in camps might constitute a nation state taking some measure of responsibility to offer a political solution to the political problem of refugees—the measure that Bretherton's argument puts in place. Yet, this response is far more likely to generate negative attitudes towards outsiders, to harden communal boundaries, and to undermine the possibility for a positive embrace across enduring lines of difference between communities. The settling of refugees—indeed of any community of migrants—in such isolated settings threatens human flourishing and the welfare of whole societies. A socio-historically informed understanding of Jer 29 articulates that the responsibilities of host institutions/individuals and migrant communities/individuals requires nation states to respond to asylum seekers and refugees by placing them in contexts that promote engagement between the two.

For those who reside at the intersection of involuntary migration and political

power, Jer 29 and its reception in Christian thought generates an obligation to advocate for and actively support strategies that enable migrants to live in contexts where it is possible for there to be an embrace across enduring lines of difference. At stake is the opportunity to replace a climate likely to produce neo-national movements and exclusionary migration policies with one that has the potential to foster cohesion, wellbeing, and mutual flourishing. In the intermingling of people, through the embrace of communities across enduring lines of difference, there is the prospect of peace to be shared by all, 'the good and the wicked alike.'[69]

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[69] Augustine, *City of God*, XIX, 26.