Research Article

Christopher M. Hays*

What is the Place of My Rest? Being Migrant People(s) of the God of All the Earth

Abstract: This article provides a theological reading of Acts 6–7, combining biblical and social-scientific insights to support constructive Christian engagement with the phenomena of twenty-first century migration. It responds broadly to US-American migratory phenomena, while drawing on insights from the Bible, migration studies, and the author's own work with Colombian victims of forced migration. The article begins with an exegetical examination of the dispute between Hebrews and Hellenists in Acts 6 and Stephen's speech in Acts 7, arguing that migratory issues underlie both the conflicts in these texts and the theological arguments Stephen adduces in his own defense. These biblical-theological reflections are then supplemented with an introduction to two social-scientific concepts that have been influential in migration studies, specifically, the notions of identity hybridity and migrant integration (as opposed to assimilation). The article demonstrates how the book of Acts reflects the benefits of healthy forms of identity hybridity and migrant integration and commends similar approaches for contemporary migrants and Christian communities in the Americas (both the United States and Colombia).

Keywords: Acts of the Apostles, Stephen, migration, identity hybridity, assimilation, integration, John W. Berry

1 Introduction: *Ni chicha, ni limonada*

The United States' anxiety about immigrants is hardly new. Already in the 1700s, Benjamin Franklin fretted about hordes of migrants laying siege to New England's ports, supposedly corroding their way of life. He wrote:

> Those who come hither are generally of the most ignorant Stupid Sort of their own Nation [...] They come in droves [...] Few of their children in the Country learn English [...] they will soon so outnumber us, that all the advantages we have will not [...] in My Opinion be able to preserve our language, and even our Government will become precarious.[1]

It may be the source of some mirth to know that these putatively ignorant multitudes, so feared by this Founding Father of the United States, were none other than German immigrants – hardly the demographic that currently arouses North American anti-immigrant sentiment!

In spite of the fear of immigrants that runs deep in the American psyche, the United States continues to be the most-favored destination of potential migrants.[2] It has received by far the largest share of the world's

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1 Franklin, "Letter to Peter Collinson."
2 Esipova et al., "Number of Potential Migrants Worldwide Tops 700 Million."

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* Corresponding author: Christopher M. Hays, Fundación Universitaria Seminario Bíblico de Colombia, Medellín, Colombia; Research associate, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa, e-mail: cmhays@gmail.com

migrant population, such that expatriates now constitute 15% of the nation's phonebook.[3] Yet, though the United States may be a nation of immigrants,[4] it is a nation in which immigrants often feel that they do not fully belong – even as their homeland becomes increasingly foreign to them. The immigrant to the United States is, to use a Spanish phrase, *ni chicha, ni limonada*:[5] not what she was when she left her birthplace, but not what the putatively "typical" (read: "white") United States citizen is, either. From one theological angle, that is a good thing. Would that all Christians knew themselves to be migrants: *ni chicha, ni limonada*.

While one ought to be loath to imply that the prejudice against immigrants is good, or that the psychological trauma that often accompanies migration is good, in what follows it will be argued that aspects of the migrant experience of being *ni chicha ni limonada* resonate with the sort of Christian self-understanding cultivated by the New Testament. To make this case, I will reflect on the book of Acts, in particular, the Stephen narrative (Acts 6–7), from which I will draw out three themes that are neuralgic for Christian engagement with twenty-first century migration:

(1) to be a member of the people of God is to be a migrant;
(2) any ground can be holy ground; and
(3) passion for one's homeland can, potentially, become spiritually dangerous.

Following these exegetical explorations, I will connect the Stephen narrative with social-scientific scholarship about:

(1) identity hybridity (as explored in the sociological guild) and
(2) profiles of migrant acculturation (as schematized by cross-cultural psychologist John W. Berry).

With regard to the first of these, the article will describe how migration often catalyzes the formation of new, hybrid identities that can be beneficial for the migrant and for the broader culture. These elucidations help to explain the efficacy of hybrid figures, such as Stephen and Paul, in the expansion of the Way of Jesus.

With regard to the second, cross-cultural psychological insights on migrant acculturation will illuminate aspects of migrant behavior that are both apparent today and on display in Acts 6–7. Furthermore, these social-scientific insights will be brought to bear on select aspects of contemporary migration within the Americas, specifically, the United States and Colombia.

In brief, I argue that a theology informed by the Stephen narrative – which recognizes that all the peoples of God are migrants and that no terrestrial homeland is absolute – can generate a robust Christian concept of identity hybridity, fostering healthier integration of migrants and dominant communities.[6]

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3 Migration Policy Institute, "Top 25 Destinations of International Migrants."

4 This applies in terms of both recent history and colonial history, in which (it should not be elided) the voluntary immigration of Europeans was accompanied by the forced immigration of enslaved Africans and the forced displacement of Native Americans.

5 "Neither *chicha*, nor lemonade." *Chicha* is a traditional drink from the Andes, made most often from fermented maize. The phrase is broadly equivalent to "neither fish nor fowl," although the English idiom does not carry the same deprecatory nuance that the Spanish phrase often implies. The Spanish expression, complete with the potentially disparaging undertones that accompany it, is felicitous as an accompanying trope for the present essay because it highlights the way that immigrants feel themselves to be or are seen by non-immigrants as inferior or problematic because of their migrant and hybrid status.

6 While "host community" might be the more common phrase in theological discourse on migration, the host/guest distinction between natives and migrants suffers from certain infelicities. As the World Council of Churches document "Together Towards Life" (§71) points out, "God's hospitality calls us to move beyond binary notions of culturally dominant groups as hosts and migrant and minority peoples as guests. Instead, in God's hospitality, God is host and we are all invited by the Spirit to participate with humility and mutuality in God's mission." On this point, see Udayakumar, "Challenges from Migrants," 89–91. On the use of the terms "dominant" and "non-dominant," see Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," 8.

2 The Stephen narrative (Acts 6–7): A migration-centered reading

We begin with the story of Stephen, as narrated in the Acts of the Apostles. Attention will be focused only on the characters and events as they are presented by the Lukan literary work in the form that is presently considered canonical. This is not to deny that Acts 6–7 is susceptible to interrogation in relation to its literary strata and sources, the historicity of its protagonist,[7] or the author's ideologically charged interpretation of the events narrated therein.[8] Such lines of inquiry are not, however, the focus of the present article, which is interested in how the canonical Stephen narrative might productively be read in conjunction with insights from cross-cultural psychology and sociology in order to contribute to Christian theological reflection on twenty-first century migration.

2.1 Background: Tensions between migrants and non-migrants in Acts 6–7

Acts introduces the character of Stephen in the context of a conflict resulting from the migration of Hellenistic Jews to Jerusalem (Acts 6:1–7). In the first century, it was common for Greek-speaking Jews (called "Hellenists" in Acts) who were raised in the diaspora to migrate to Jerusalem as adults, in order to dwell near God's temple.[9] Although ethnically Jewish, they grew up in Gentile nations speaking Greek, which created linguistic and cultural barriers between themselves and the local Aramaic-speaking population (referred to in Acts 6 as the "Hebrews").[10]

After the resurrection of Jesus, some of these Greek-speaking Jews joined the apostolic community in Jerusalem. There, they discovered that even the Christian Judeans were not immune to prejudice against migrants: local "Hebrew" Christians providing charitable assistance to the community's widows were passing over the foreign-born, Greek-speaking widows when making their daily distributions. Other Hellenists complained to the apostles, who took speedy action to eradicate this discrimination by appointing seven deacons to oversee the care of all the widows, immigrant, and otherwise. The deacons' names were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus (Acts 6:5).

What a modern reader might not hear in this list of names is something that no first-century reader would have missed: they are all Greek. This indicates that the people appointed to oversee the care of widows – both the Hebrew and the Hellenist widows – were themselves all Hellenists (except for Nicolaus,

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7 Scholars such as Shelly Matthews, for example, have questioned whether Stephen is in fact an historical figure, noting *inter alia* that it is "remarkably coincidental for the first of the Christian martyrs to have borne the name that comes to be identified as the reward for those whose testimony to Christ results in the [*sic*] death;" Matthews, *Perfect Martyr*, 19. Matthews goes on to argue that Acts (which she views as a second-century document responding in part to emerging Marcionite theology) constructs Christian identify *vis-à-vis* the Roman Empire in part through the vilification of the Jews and in ways that lay the groundwork for the Christian anti-Semitism and violence that marked much of the ensuing history of the Church (see, in summary, Matthews, *Perfect Martyr*, 130–4). For alternative interpretations of how Luke represents the relationship between the Church and the Roman Empire, see, e.g., Walton, "State They Were in," 1–41; Strait, "Proclaiming Another King," 130–45.

8 For a learned and wide-ranging analysis of the genre of Stephen's speech and the way it generates a charged political narrative, see Dinkler, "Politics of Stephen's Storytelling," 33–64.

9 Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, 226–7. As will be explored below, these Hellenists had "hybrid identities." While they were hybrid figures prior to migrating to Jerusalem (as Greek-speaking Jews living in the Diaspora), their identity would have acquired additional dimensions of hybridization after migrating to Jerusalem and being obliged to live in a new cultural and linguistic environment. On diaspora Jews wanting to be buried in the land, see, e.g., Josephus, *Ant*, 20.95; and further Keener, *Acts*, 1348.

10 That there is a linguistic component underpinning the terms "Hebrew" and "Hellenist" is today uncontroversial (owing to the work of, e.g., Hengel, "Zwischen Jesus und Paulus," 157–72; Larsson, "Hellenisten," 205–11; Pesch et al., "Hellenisten," 87–92; Hill, *Hellenists*, 22–4). Nonetheless, the fact that these linguistically and ethnically redolent labels are applied to groups that modern readers simply lump together as "Jews" speaking different languages reveals the plasticity of notions of ethnicity and highlights how early Christians were enmeshed in contested ethnic negotiations that went far beyond one's familial lineage. For a nuanced exploration of these dynamics, and the way in which the concepts of Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλλην are developed in Acts, see Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations*, 11, 23, 54–9, 73–118.

whom the text specifies was simply a Gentile).[11] In other words, the apostles appointed migrants as deacons to care for migrants and non-migrants alike.[12]

One of those deacons was Stephen. Acts goes on to reveal that Stephen was a formidable preacher, and that his message awakened the ire of "the synagogue of the Freedmen [...], Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others of those from Cilicia and Asia" (6:9). That is to say, Stephen angered a group of former slaves ("Freedmen") and other immigrants.[13] Why? For "speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God," preaching that the temple would be destroyed and that customs handed down from Moses should be changed (6:11–14). Perhaps because they had invested everything in leaving the diaspora behind and migrating to Jerusalem, these Hellenistic Jews were as ardently invested in the Holy Land and the Holy City as any native-born Jew – not unlike some second-generation migrants in the United States, who become hostile to new migrants.[14] Irate at Stephen's preaching, the freedmen and Hellenists dragged Stephen before the Sanhedrin – the same court that had conspired against Jesus some months beforehand – and cried, "This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law" (Acts 6:13).[15]

The basic gist of the charges was true: Stephen was echoing Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (Luke 21:20–24 and parallels).[16] When the High Priest inquired of Stephen, "Are these things so?" (7:1), the immigrant preacher did not deny the accusations. Rather, Stephen responded by explaining that his proclamation of the impending destruction of the Holy City and the looming expulsion of the people from the Promised Land did not make him a traitor to his people, because God had for centuries engaged with the children of Abraham outside of the land. In short, Stephen defended himself by telling the story of God's people in terms of migration.[17]

2.2 The migrant people of God

Stephen opens his discourse by recalling that God's people were migrants long before they took ownership of the Promised Land.[18] From the outset, he harps on the theme of being *outside* the land, beginning with Abraham (and tweaking the facts slightly, to favor his argument).[19] When God first spoke to Abraham, Stephen explains, the patriarch was not in the Promised Land but rather in Mesopotamia, in the land of the Chaldeans; according to Stephen, this happened even before he lived in Haran (Acts 7:2). God told the

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11 Nicolaus is called a "proselyte from Antioch," which is to say that he was a Gentile who had previously converted to Judaism and thereafter became a Christian.

12 In a previous work I argued that, while most of the seven were Hellenists, Phillip probably was not; Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, 230. I now am inclined to see Philip as a Hellenist as well, in part because John 12:20–1 includes the rather odd note that some Greeks who wanted to see Jesus went first to Philip, who was from Bethsaida (probably Bethsaida Julias, a Hellenistic city), to arrange an introduction. This desire for Philip to act as a broker between the Greeks and Jesus would make more sense if Philip were himself a Hellenistic Jew. See further Burge, *John*, 77, 343.

13 As Willie Jennings points out, "Stephen's words and ministry are opposed not by evil God-haters but by faithful Jews who understood slavery [...] and their commitment to Israel and its way of life was woven into their legacy of hard-won freedom;" Jennings, *Acts*, 66.

14 Cf. Polhill, *Acts*, 185. For an extensive description of early Jewish land theology, see Keener, *Acts*, 2:1345–51.

15 "The freedmen saw their fears collapse onto their faith, and they descended into worldly captivity by taking on themselves the same political operation that brought on the torture and assassination of Jesus;" Jennings, *Acts*, 67.

16 Even if the charges are "garbled" and incendiary, as F. F. Bruce points out; Bruce, *Acts*, 141.

17 Cf. Buchholz, "Theological Meaning of Migration," 94.

18 So also Polhill, *Acts*, 188; Buchholz, "Theological Meaning of Migration," 101. For a wider-ranging exploration of the theme of migration across Acts, see Stenschke, "Migration and Mission," 129–51. Cf. Pohl, "Biblical Issues in Mission and Migration," 5–7.

19 For a more detailed analysis of how Luke retells components of the Abraham, Joseph, and Moses stories, see Whitenton, "Rewriting Abraham and Joseph," 149–67; Boesenberg, "Retelling Moses's Killing," 148–56. In focusing on the people's history outside the land, Luke also "anticipates and legitimizes the developments, which immediately follow it, i.e., the movement of the Gospel and its heralds beyond the confines of Jerusalem;" Stenschke, "Migration and Mission," 134.

patriarch, "leave your country […] and your relatives and go to the land I will show you" (7:3). After this, Abraham went to Haran, which was also not in the Promised Land. There his father died, upon which occasion God relocated him to "this country in which you (ὑμεῖς) are now living" (v. 4).[20]

Intriguingly, although Stephen's narrative directly quotes Genesis 12:1 (in Acts 7:3), the deacon actually departs from the chronology of Genesis 11–12, which indicated that God only called Abraham *after* he had moved to Haran. Stephen thus adjusts the timeline of Genesis 11–12 in order to emphasize the extent of Abraham's life and interaction with God *outside* the land.[21] Stephen then hastens to add that, even when Abraham came to dwell in the land, he never owned even a square foot of it (7:5). Again, this is not entirely accurate; Stephen himself later mentions the tomb that Abraham bought for Sarah (7:16). But the point, for Stephen, is that Abraham never properly possessed the land that was so precious to his descendants. Even as he narrates the promise of the land, Stephen effectively undercuts its importance.

Stephen doubles down on this point by adding that, even though God had promised *eventually* to give the land to Abraham's offspring, the first several generations of Abraham's "descendants would be resident aliens (πάροικον) *in a country belonging to others*, who would enslave them and mistreat them during 400 years" (7:6, citing Gen 15:13).[22] This unpleasant prognostication came to fulfillment in the life of Joseph, the first of the Israelites to be a victim of human trafficking. Sold by his brothers, Joseph is trafficked into Egypt and somehow finds his way out of enslavement and imprisonment and into power, because (even in Egypt) "God was with him" (7:9–10).[23] As a result, Joseph's rise to preeminence occurs in time for him to receive his father and the rest of his brothers, who are environmental migrants forced by the famine to look beyond their home country for food (7:11–16). Once again, Stephen's selectivity in this narrative is artful: he does not discuss the patriarchs' years in the Promised Land, but focuses instead on the conditions that drove them abroad, into the diaspora, where they all died.

It is only upon narrating the death of the patriarchs that Stephen admits they had come to own a tiny plot of land, specifically, a tomb. Yet, even in this detail, Stephen avoids ceding "ground" to his opponents: Stephen claims that the patriarchs' bodies "were brought back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem" (7:16). This is another bit of legerdemain: it was not Abraham who bought a tomb from the sons of Hamor in Shechem, but Jacob. Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite (Gen 23:9–16; 33:19).[24] This is no trivial oversight, because the cave of Machpelah was located in Hebron, near Jerusalem. Eager to distance Abraham from the land to which his opponents bear such jingoistic loyalty, Stephen claims that the patriarch bought a tomb in Shechem, that is, in Samaritan territory.[25]

Having told the stories of Abraham, the opportunist economic migrant; Joseph, the victim of human trafficking; and Jacob, the environmental migrant, Stephen then turns to the most famous migrant of all the Old Testament, a criminal fleeing prosecution: Moses.[26] Stephen narrates how Moses was born a foreigner in Egypt (7:20–21), yet became a beneficiary of all the advantages Egypt had to offer. When he grew up, however, Moses decided to reconnect with his Israelite roots. Upon visiting the Israelites, Moses witnesses

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20 With the second person pronoun and verb, Stephen distances himself from the land and his audience, in spite of the fact that *he also* lives in the same land; Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, 278. Given the concision with which Stephen goes on to describe the rest of the events of the Old Testament, it is striking that he dedicates so much time to Abraham's migration. Since Luke's account of Stephen's defense occupies about 50 verses, and yet provides an overview of the majority of Israel's history, the speech is inevitably selective; the key to its interpretation is not in what Stephen assumes, but in what he chooses to emphasize. On the death of Terah with Abraham in Haran, see Whitenton, "Rewriting Abraham and Joseph," 152, 58, 60, 63–5.

21 This is not to deny that there is some biblical justification for this exegetical expansion (see Gen 15:7; Neh 9:7). For further detail, see Conzelmann, *Acts*, 51–2; Bruce, *Acts*, 146; Keener, *Acts*, 1355–7; Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, 278.

22 On the use of the term πάροικον in the Septuagint, see Keener, *Acts*, 1359.

23 Buchholz, "Theological Meaning of Migration," 101–3.

24 Keener, *Acts*, 1370.

25 Polhill, *Acts*, 193; Gaventa, *Acts*, 123.

26 On the patriarchs, see Strine, "Migration, Dual Identity and Integration," 103–20.

an Egyptian beating one of his kinsmen and kills the Egyptian, surmising that the Israelites would see this act of disproportionate violence as evidence that Moses was *stellar* leadership material (7:24–28).[27] The Israelites were (unsurprisingly) unconvinced, so "Moses fled and became a resident alien (πάροικος) in the land of Midian," where he intermarried with a foreign native and bore two sons (7:29). Basically: Moses hops the border to escape a murder rap.

Perhaps this seems like a gauche point for me to emphasize, given that I am a citizen of the United States, in which some are prone to depicting (non-white) immigrants as dangerous criminals – an insidious caricature quite contrary to the preponderance of statistical evidence.[28] A pro-migrant activist might well be tempted not to mention that some migrants do commit illegal acts, anxious that such an admission would cede too much ground to fear-mongering anti-immigration voices.

But it would be less than truthful to sweep under the rug the reality that some migrants, albeit a very small proportion, are actually dangerous – even if they were brought to crime or violence by desperate circumstances – especially when one thinks about the ethical obligations incumbent upon those of us who actively mobilize others in support of migrant communities.[29] In Colombia, where I lead a project working with victims of forced displacement, there are in fact some guerrillas and paramilitary fighters hidden among the population of 8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), and some of these do continue to perpetrate acts of violence against other members of the IDP community. But the project does not for that reason avoid working with the displaced community. The project's Christian participants believe in the sort of redemptive transformation exemplified by Moses: the migrant murderer who became a liberator. Christianity has always been a religion of criminals – both those who are truly guilty (like Moses and Paul) and those who are unjustly accused (like Jesus, Joseph, and Stephen). Christianity has deep roots as a religion of *transformed* criminals; any "Christianity" that will write off a human being because they have committed a crime needs to reckon seriously with the fact that the same logic would foreclose the possibility of divine redemption for some of the most central protagonists of the Jewish and Christian Scripture.

Murder and the flight to Midian do not tell the whole story of Moses' experience as a migrant, either. A generation later, he returns to Egypt to lead the people – not into the Promised Land, but into the wilderness, where they spent another 40 years. Moses the migrant thus leads Israel in exchanging one sojourn for another (7:36). At this juncture of the narrative, just before the Conquest, Stephen turns his audience's gaze beyond the possession of the land and toward the exile, when the people of God would once again become forced migrants – this time due to international war.

Stephen makes this point via a rather unexpected exegetical maneuver, namely, by narrating the golden calf incident. He explains that Israel's history of idolatry started in the wilderness of Sinai and thus ensured, even before entering the Promised Land, that Israel would be forced to abandon it again.[30] That is, the exile was foretold during the exodus (cf. Deut 28:63–68).

To make this case, Stephen cites Amos 5:25–27:

> Did you offer to *me* slain victims and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? No; you took along the tent of Moloch, and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship; so I will remove you beyond *Babylon*.

The attentive reader will note that Stephen has once again fiddled with his source text. Amos 5:27 originally spoke of being removed, not "beyond Babylon" but "beyond Damascus," in keeping with the fact that he was prophesying to the Northern Kingdom, which was deported to Assyria, long before the rise of the

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27 See further Boesenberg, "Retelling Moses's Killing," 151–2.
28 Research indicates that immigrant crime rates are commensurate with or even lower than those of the non-migrant population; Nowrasteh, "By the Numbers;" Martínez and Lee, "On Immigration and Crime," 485–524; Mears, "Immigration and Crime," 284–8; Butcher and Morrison Piehl, "Crime, Corrections, and California," 1–23.
29 For information on why Colombian displaced persons are sometimes drawn into criminal activity, see Hays, "Collaboration with Criminal Organisations," 27–9.
30 So Bruce, *Acts*, 153.

Babylonian Empire.[31] Stephen, however, collapses the exiles of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, seeing them as part of the same theological cloth, and so explains that, because of their idolatry, both Israel and Judah secured their exile from the land even before they conquered it for the first time.[32]

In sum, Stephen narrates Israel's history as primarily a story of a migrant people living outside the land. He does this to reveal how risible it is that his migrant opponents accuse him of blasphemy (Acts 6:11) for saying that the temple would be destroyed and the people of Israel once again driven from Jerusalem. The people of God had always been migrants.[33]

2.3 Any ground can be holy ground

Throughout his speech, Stephen intertwines his point about the migrant identity of God's people with a theological reminder that God can be present with and speak to his people anywhere in the world: that the adoration of Israel's God was not possible *only* on Mount Zion. Thus, Stephen emphasizes that God spoke to Abraham multiple times, even before Abraham entered the promised land (Acts 7:2–8), and underscores that when Joseph was in Egypt, "God was with him" (7:9). God's capacity to act on Israel's behalf is therefore not geographically constrained.

Stephen also says that God addressed Moses "in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush" (7:30; so also 7:38), admonishing him to "Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is *holy ground*." Holy ground, Stephen explains, is any ground where God desires to be present – even a worthless patch of land in the middle of a Gentile desert dotted only by scrub brush. It need not be the Temple of Herod on Mount Zion.[34]

This point is driven home with the example of the tabernacle, a moveable temple.[35] Despite its lack of fixity, Stephen clarifies that the tabernacle was made according to a celestial blueprint that God revealed to Moses (7:44). John Polhill captures Stephen's point aptly, saying, "The tabernacle was the prototype of the true worship of God; for it symbolized God's movement with his people, a pilgrim people on the move, not tied down to land or place."[36] This sets up Stephen's justification of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, as he cavalierly brushes off the temple Solomon eventually built, because "the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands (χειροποίητοις)" (7:48).[37]

This is a rather shocking rhetorical move. God had promised that Abraham's descendants would "come out [of slavery] and worship me in this place" (7:8). Yet, when that promise is finally fulfilled in the temple, Stephen dismissively remarks that the people did not really need that place to worship God at all! The Old Testament narrative of a Promised Land and a return from exile to worship God in the Promised Land is here twisted inside out, on the basis that God is not merely God of the land, but God of all creation.

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31 The astrological deities mentioned by Amos are also more appropriate to the religions of Assyria and Babylon; see Keener, *Acts*, 1408–10.

32 The text probably also points beyond 70 CE, indicating that the diaspora following the conquest of Jerusalem effectively continues the same sort of exile with which Israel was previously punished; Bruce, *Acts*, 154–6.

33 The reader of the book of Acts should not forget that this story is being told by Stephen, a migrant, under the pen of Luke, a voluntary migrant (see below), to a church in the diaspora, and that the character about to enter the scene at the end of Stephen's speech is none other than the most famous apostolic migrant of the first century: Paul of Tarsus (Acts 7:58).

34 This is not to imply that Acts is critical of the temple itself. Luke emphasizes the frequency with which Jerusalem Christians worshipped, ministered, and participated in cultic activities the temple, both before and after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 2:46; 3:1–11; 5:12, 20–1, 42; 21:23–6; 24:18). Stephen's speech simply denies that the persistence of the Jerusalem Temple is a *conditio sine qua non* for the continued existence of the covenant people of God.

35 God's RV (or camper van), if you will. See further Buchholz, "Theological Meaning of Migration," 96–100.

36 Polhill, *Acts*, 204.

37 A certain hesitancy over the necessity of the temple is not entirely novel; Solomon himself had denied the adequacy of the temple for the worship of Yahweh (1 Kgs 8:27), and Jeremiah criticized his contemporaries' veneration of the temple (Jer 7; 26).

To justify this move, Stephen quotes Isaiah 66:1–2, in which God asks, almost sardonically, "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me […] or what is the place of my rest?" (7:48–50). In fact, by referring to the temple as χειροποίητος, "a thing made by human hands" (7:48), Stephen implies that the Jerusalemites' excessive estimation of the Jerusalem Temple is borderline idolatrous, insofar as the term χειροποίητος was "virtually a technical term in Greek-speaking Judaism for idols" and insofar as he has just narrated the golden calf incident as an event in which the people "offered a sacrifice to the idol and reveled *in the works of their hands*" (ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τῶν χειρῶν αὐτῶν; 7:41).[38]

In brief, Stephen justifies his pronouncement of the temple's destruction by reminding his audience that God's worship is not confined to Mount Zion – and, indeed, by averring that the temple leaders who became the "betrayers and murderers" of the Messiah deserved nothing short of renewed exile.[39] Through Stephen, Luke reminds his audience that neither the crucifixion of Jesus nor the diaspora existence of his Christian contemporaries falsifies the Christian claim that Jesus is the Messiah, who leads the people of God even when they sojourn outside the Promised Land. It would be a profound mistake to assume that suffering in general, or migratory existence in particular, belies a people's status as God's own. Rather, those whom God favors will often live suffering, live migration, and live diaspora. God will be with them there, using that suffering and diaspora to advance his Kingdom far beyond the borders of Judea (cf. Phil 3:20).

2.4 The danger of idolizing the homeland

Mentioning the idolatrous elevation of the temple brings us to a final key theme of Stephen's case: the danger of loving one's homeland too much.[40] Initially, this point is made ironically, with the example of the Israelites in the Exodus. They rebuffed Moses' attempt to lead them to the promised land because "in their hearts they turned back to Egypt" (7:39): back to their home in terrestrial slavery, back to their home in exile. They made a golden idol like those of Egypt and "reveled in the works of their hands" (7:41) such that "God turned away from them and […] handed them over to worship the host of heaven" (7:42), promising (in the words of Amos 5:27, already quoted), "I will remove you beyond Babylon." According to Stephen, God made the decision to send the Israelites to exile in Babylon even before they arrived at the Promised Land, precisely because of their Egyptian idolatry. Israel's patriarchs came from Babylon and were sent to Egypt, and when Jacob's descendants were brought out of Egypt, their hearts turned back to that land of slavery and the gods of their oppressors, such that God decided to send them right back to Babylon, whence they originally came.

Loving a homeland to the extent that one rejects God's messenger amounts to idolatry. Luke turns this point toward the first century context, indicating the same idolatrous approach to the homeland by fore-grounding the fact that Stephen was brought up on charges of *blasphemy* by Hellenists and freedmen (6:9–11): that is, by migrants and former slaves. Although Deuteronomy 10:19 enjoined "you shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt," in Acts 6:9 a group of former slaves and immigrants are depicted has having turned on another expatriate because he dared to suggest – like so many prophets before him – that God would expel them from their land.

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38 Keener, *Acts*, 1416. See, e.g., Lev 26:1 (LXX); Isa 2:18; 10:11; 16:12; 19:1; 21:9; 31:7; 46:6 (LXX); Dan 5:4, 23; 6:28 (LXX); Jdt 8:18; Wis 14:8.
39 In light of the susceptibility of this text to anti-Semitic appropriation, Willie Jennings underscores that this divine rebuke comes from the voice of a divine lover. "God's harsh words can never be separated from God's unremitting love for Israel. Nor may they ever be used by another. Only God may speak this way to Israel and of Israel;" Jennings, *Acts*, 72.
40 The ensuing section does not deny that loving one's homeland may be an entirely appropriate response to the way that God has engaged with a people in a specific place and blessed them with family and security in that place; for biblical and theological reflections on the topic of land from the perspectives of Majority World theologians, see, e.g., Green and Yeo, eds., *Theologies of Land*.

Stephen accordingly rebukes his contemporaries for behaving like *their* ancestors, shifting the possessive pronouns from first person plural (as in 7:39, "οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν;" cf. 7:2, 19, 38, 44–5) to second plural to create distance between himself and the non-Christian Jerusalem Jews:

> You are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as *your* ancestors (οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν) used to do. Which of the prophets did *your* ancestors (οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν) not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers (7:51–52).[41]

Although many commentators claim that Stephen addresses two separate topics in his speech – the rejection of Jesus and the prophesied destruction of the Holy City – these issues were one and the same for Stephen. In short, Stephen claims that it is the idolatrous nationalist theologies of the temple leadership and much of the Jerusalem population that misled them to the point of crucifying their Messiah. This idolatry will ensure their expulsion from the land – just as the idolatrous Israelites in the wilderness rejected their divine liberator for an idol and secured for themselves a future in exile.[42]

There is a distinct pastoral danger in choosing to discuss migration from this angle, because it fails to describe sympathetically the sorrow and the trauma that can result from the loss of one's homeland. The Bible has much to say about that (see, e.g., Ps 137). But that is not the message that Stephen spoke to his audience. Stephen reminds us that, as painful as it can be to migrate, God's people are migrants and God migrates with us, sanctifying our deserts.[43] On this earth we are always in Egypt, in Babylon, or in the wilderness, until our liberator brings us home.

3 Social-scientific contributions to a migration-centered reading of Acts

Up to this point, this article has attended to the Stephen narrative, listening to what a scriptural text preoccupied with the themes of land and movement has to say about migration. The following sections will examine how the witness of Scripture can both inform and be informed by two specific social-scientific

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41 Gaventa, *Acts*, 127, 29–30; Boesenberg, "Retelling Moses's Killing," 152; Dinkler, "Politics of Stephen's Storytelling," 59. This rhetoric is part of the way that Luke "interprets the Scriptural narrative to construct two streams within Israel, one that is faithful to Moses and one that has rejected Moses," in order to sustain early Christians' claim to a historic religious heritage despite their increasing marginalization by non-Christian Jewish leadership; Boesenberg, "Retelling Moses's Killing," 155. For balanced assessments of Luke's view of Christianity in relation to non-Christian Judaism, see Jipp, "Paul of Acts," 60–78; Keener, *Acts*, 459–91.

42 One cannot ignore the fact that the perspective espoused in the Stephen narrative ended up paving the way for anti-Semitic violence perpetrated by Christians, even if it would be unfair to expect Luke to have foreseen how his criticism of non-Christian Jews would eventually contribute to anti-Semitism, after the socio-political ascendency of Christians (so also Matthews, *Perfect Martyr*, 133). Although the present article engages with the Lukan perspective recorded in the Stephen narrative, it is worth pausing to highlight the complex religious and political circumstances that faced the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem in Stephen's time. The story of Stephen's death could be told otherwise (cf. Matthews, *Perfect Martyr*, 20–4 on ideology and the creation of historical narratives), from the perspective of the Jewish leaders left standing in the gap between an overwhelmingly powerful Empire and an insurrection-prone populace; these leaders were seeking to prevent the outbreak of yet another violent uprising that could lead to the destruction of the Jewish Temple, capital, and way of life (as indeed transpired in 70 CE). Presented from the angle of the chief priests, this would be the story of a hot-blooded religious radical whose invectives against the temple dishonored the hub of the people's religious life and whose sect was perpetually on the verge of igniting the wrath of Roman benefactors, on whose goodwill depended the safety and livelihood of the entire region.

43 For a further exploration of this theme in the New Testament, see, e.g., Carroll, *Bible and Borders*, 98–104.

insights concerning migration, namely, the notions of identity hybridity and migrant integration.[44] With regard to the former, I draw on sociological studies that explain how migrants fuse components of their dominant and non-dominant cultures to create new hybrid identities, then show how Acts highlights the missional efficacy of hybrid believers (such as the "Hellenists," Stephen, and Paul).

Thereafter, attention turns to the four acculturation profiles adduced by cross-cultural psychologist John W. Berry (marginalization, segregation, assimilation, integration). I will comment on some of the deleterious consequences of low-contact profiles, both in the contemporary United States and as reflected in the Acts 7 allusion to the Exodus generation, as well as on the benefits of fostering migrant integration, as depicted in Acts 6 and 11 and as observed in the contemporary case of the Nasa indigenous displaced people in Colombia. Ultimately, I will illustrate the pertinence of combining social-scientific categories with New Testament interpretation when generating readings of the Scripture that seek to respond constructively to twenty-first century migration.

3.1 Migrant identity hybridity and the book of Acts

Migration frequently generates deep identity crises in migrants, owing to a myriad of acculturative stresses (culture shock): the loss of relationships, geographic contexts, linguistic and non-verbal communicative capacities, vocational skills, and social competencies (*inter alia*) that had previously formed the migrant's sense of identity.[45] Those who acculturate to their new cultural context sometimes feel guilt over "abandoning" their previous culture. When unacculturated migrants see their children adapt effectively to the dominant culture, they often worry that their children are losing their inherited identity – a fear that I have witnessed repeatedly among indigenous and rural Colombians who have been displaced from their reservations and their farms by violence and driven into cities.

These identity crises and anxieties charge a high emotional toll to the migrant – sometimes devolving into psychopathologies – and hinder productive social integration in ways that can be deleterious to the dominant society as well.[46] Such acculturative stress derives in part from the supposition that human identity is somehow culturally fixed: an *essentialist* construal of culture that surmises that there is something basic, indivisible, and immutable about being Pakistani, or Polish, or Paraguayan. As such, the migrant often comes to feel that she can only adapt to her new national home by betraying her own essential cultural identity, losing her previous self and replacing it with something foreign.

Nonetheless, sociologists and psychologists have proposed that migrant identity (and, indeed, all human identity[47]) can be more helpfully conceived in non-essentialist terms. Specifically, identity can be *hybridized* – constructed in ways that expand one's self-understanding, rather than cutting away what one was prior to migration. Identity is not a "zero-sum game," in which to gain something new you have to

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44 Most biblical scholarship that has engaged with the concept of hybridity has taken an approach strongly informed by postcolonial theories and has focused, fruitfully, on topics like ethnicity and hierarchical power dynamics; see, e.g., Barreto, "Crafting Colonial Identities," 45–53; Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations*, 107–21; Marshall, "Hybridity;" Sals, "The Hybrid Story of Balaam," 315–35; Nadella, "Motif of Hybridity," 111–20. The present essay, however, delves into issues of hybridity and acculturation from the perspectives of social scientists who do not situate their research within the larger framework of postcolonialism as developed by critical literary theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. While the ideas explored in this article are certainly amenable to incorporation within a postcolonial frame, a systematic engagement with that body of theory exceeds the limits of the current undertaking.
45 See further Prasuna, "Discerning the Signs of the Times."
46 Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," 12–3, 29.
47 The foremost postcolonial theorist of identity hybridity is Indian English scholar Homi K. Bhabha; see most famously Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. Theological engagement with Bhabha's particular construal of hybridity would well exceed the confines of the present article, such that I will limit myself at present to referring to scholars of hybridity in the sociological and psychological disciplines. For one theological critique of Bhabha, with specific reference to its insufficiency for the United States Latin context, see Orlando Álvarez, *Latin@ Identity in Pneumatological Perspective*, 64–81.

jettison something old.[48] New linguistic capacities, cultural affections, and local traditions can be added to the migrant's repertoire of practices, preferences, and passions, without obliging her thereby to reject her previous tongue and traditions; the old and the new can be combined, fused into a new hybrid identity.[49]

To some degree, the process of post-migratory hybridity is inexorable, thrust upon the migrant by dint of his geographic relocation and new historical-cultural context: you cannot help but be changed by your environment. But major components of the hybridization process remain volitional.[50] You can choose much of how you will change, what you will adopt: you can decide to learn the language, or not; to explore the music of your dominant culture, or not; to adopt different social conventions, or not.[51]

Refusing these supplements to one's identity may help to preserve what one was – albeit at the expense of flourishing in one's new cultural context[52] – yet adopting new practices should not be felt as an act of self-betrayal.[53] Acculturation need not imply an either/or exchange; it can be a matter of both/and – if the migrant chooses to embrace the hybridization of her identity.[54]

People formed by multiple ethnicities or cultures are not patchwork humans, the personality equivalent of Frankenstein's monster, crudely salvaging and stitching together incompatible bits from distinct cultural donors. Hybridization can be fluid and organic, such that some migrants come to see themselves as "150%" humans. To use a Maori expression, hybrids can be *nga tangata awarua*, "people of two rivers."[55] While such hybridization does *change* the migrant, she arguably becomes more, not less.[56] *Ni chicha, ni limonada* – but perhaps a better cultural cocktail.

As sociologist Avril Bell explains, "Syncretic hybridities offer the means to construct a more inclusive identity. Such hybridizing aims to build community across differences that may otherwise divide and implicitly challenges essentialist accounts of what it might mean to be indigenous" – or American or Asian, Syrian or Sudanese.[57] Hybridization does not entail abandoning one's cultural identity, because cultures do not possess an immutable ontology; every culture is an amalgamated product of previous human migrations and historical developments, and thus a product that remains ever in flux. The migrant hybrid simply continues the process of cultural development. Indeed, in this capacity, hybridity reminds us that

> No culture is "pure" and no identity self-originating […] [W]e must remember our histories of migration. Rather than assert "racial" and cultural purity, we must acknowledge our mixed ancestry and cultural syncretism. Rather than hybridity

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48 Cf. Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," 9, on the distinction between additive and subtractive acculturation. Similarly, Hoon, "Assimilation, Multiculturalism, Hybridity," 161.

49 This is not to imply that the identities of non-migrants are somehow pure or unalloyed; every person's identity combines components from multiple familial and social contexts, such that all identities are hybrid. The aforementioned Pakistani, Polish, and Paraguayan identities are themselves the products of a confluence of anterior ethnic, cultural, linguistic (etc.) forces. Nonetheless, the present discussion is focused on the more dramatic processes of hybridization that occurs after and in response to migration, in which migrants often feel consciously that their identities are being lost or profoundly altered.

50 The language of "process" is intentional, insofar as hybridization, acculturation, and identity development are never *faits accomplis*; Hoon, "Assimilation, Multiculturalism, Hybridity," 161.

51 Bell, *Relating Indigenous and Settler Identities*, 61; Gans, "Towards a Reconciliation," 881.

52 Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," 29.

53 This is not to deny that losses accompany hybridization, too. "Hybridity is no panacea. Its practitioners do not dwell in some interstitial paradise. Hybridity and is practice exact a heavy cost. […] Hybridity is always a posture of necessary concession to the powerful even as it challenges their assertions of might […] Hybridity does not leave the colonized unscathed […] Hybridity always requires loss, but a loss the colonized deem necessary, perhaps even indispensable;" Barreto, "Crafting Colonial Identities," 119.

54 "Hybridity encapsulates the experience of multiple identification as well as the strategies of negotiation and points of tension that are involved in living between/across/within two (or more) cultural worlds;" Bell, *Relating Indigenous and Settler Identities*, 68.

55 I found these evocative images in Bell, *Relating Indigenous and Settler Identities*, 71–2.

56 It would be wrong to imply that *nothing* is lost in hybridization, especially for the migrant. "Additive acculturation" and "subtractive acculturation" are not simple binaries but represent two opposite extremes on a spectrum of acculturation, and migrants inexorably fall somewhere in the middle, albeit plausibly more to one side of the other.

57 Bell, *Relating Indigenous and Settler Identities*, 78.

being conceived of as a problem, threatening a loss of identity, the answer is to embrace and celebrate the hybrid nature of all identities.[58]

Although "hybridity" is modern terminology, it describes phenomena that have existed for millennia. The book of Acts exhibits hybrid protagonists whose very hybridities are vital assets for the people of God. Joseph and Moses were both hybrids – part Israelite and part Egyptian – and, precisely in their hybrid conditions, functioned as mediators between their families and Egyptian political power (Acts 7:10, 22).[59] Stephen was a cultural hybrid: a foreign-born, Greek-speaking Jew who migrated to Jerusalem. He was also something of a religious hybrid, fusing his Jewish heritage with the religious novelties of the Jesus movement. In this hybrid capacity, he was poised to undercut the religiously sanctioned nationalism and nativism of the Jerusalem leadership, and to communicate the global and migratory character of the people of God.[60] F. F. Bruce observed over 60 years ago that Stephen and the Christian Hellenists

> were also more far-sighted than the "Hebrews" in appreciating the supra-national and universal character of the gospel [...] The opening words of Stephen's defence imply that the people of God must be on the march, must pull up their tent-stakes as Abraham did, leaving national particularism and ancestral ritual, and go out where God may lead.[61]

Additionally, according to what remains the more widely held scholarly reconstruction, Luke, the author of Acts, was himself a hybrid: a Gentile convert to the Jewish sect called the Way (quite plausibly a God-fearer prior to that conversion), a doctor (according to tradition) from Asia Minor who became a migrant minister of the Gospel.[62] Luke adopted major components of Jewish ideology and cultural awareness, then articulated the message of the Way for a largely non-Jewish audience, functioning as the sort of cultural bridge that only migrants can be.

The Christian missionary movement outside of Jerusalem was catalyzed by the persecution that followed Stephen's martyrdom (8:4), such that it would not be a stretch to say that the first missionaries to Judea and Samaria were religious refugees from Jerusalem.[63] Likewise, the first Christian missionaries outside of Judea and Samaria were Hellenists (Acts 11:19; 15:3): Jews who spoke Greek and understood both Hebrew religion and Hellenistic culture. It is on this account that Christoph Stenschke observes that "The breakthrough to systematic *Gentile* mission was achieved by migrating refugees with cross-cultural experience!"[64]

Perhaps the ultimate example of a hybrid missionary is Saul/Paul of Tarsus, a man of multiple names, multiple homes, and multiple languages, which Luke foregrounds in Acts 21–22. When Paul is arrested in

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58 Ibid., 60.

59 Daniel Orlando Álvarez has engaged theologically – specifically, using the lens of pneumatology – with the notion of hybridity and identity in relation to Latin@ migrants in a US context. He argues for a particular construal of hybridity appropriate for the experience of Latins in the US, grounded particularly in conceptions of *mestizaje* and the lived realities of Latin migrants (*lo cotidiano*); Orlando Álvarez, *Latin@ Identity in Pneumatological Perspective*, 60–3. Orlando Álvarez make the case that the work of the Holy Spirit is to relativize essentializing and totalizing individual identities while simultaneously moving people into mutually hospitable relations with the other (especially the oppressed and marginalized other); Orlando Álvarez, *Latin@ Identity in Pneumatological Perspective*, 142–54, 64.

60 So Eric Barreto comments, "Hybrid identities pose a challenge to [...] homogenizing forces and embrace the complexities and ambiguities in which ethnic negotiations are struck and restruck;" Barreto, "Crafting Colonial Identities," 120.

61 Bruce, *Acts*, 143.

62 In recent years, an alternative posture has gained some ascendency, picking up Jacob Jervell's argument that "Luke" was a Jewish author (Jervell, *Theology of Acts*, 4–5) and advancing it especially on the basis of the author's knowledge of Jewish Scripture and ritual practices; see, e.g., Oliver, *Torah Praxis after 70 CE*; Strelan, *Luke the Priest*. Nonetheless, the manifest sensitivity of Luke to Old Testament texts and contemporary Jewish halakha is quite compatible with the more widely held view that Luke was a Gentile who had spent decades in Jewish religious circles, as a Christian and perhaps previously as a God-fearer, such that I remain more convinced by the arguments mounted by, e.g., Keener, *Acts*, 403–16; Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 54–60; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 49–51; Bock, *Luke*, 4–7. For a further account of the authorship and audience of Acts reflected here, see Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, 77–9.

63 Stenschke, "Migration and Mission," 136.

64 Ibid., 140; see also Buchholz, "Theological Meaning of Migration," 106–8.

the temple precincts, he "claims a number of identities. Paul is Jewish/Judean. He is a citizen of Tarsus. He is a Roman."[65] He is a man of both the Greek and the Hebrew tongues and strove to be "all things to all people" (1 Cor 9:22). As Eric Barreto insightfully observes, "Hybridity is a valuable strategy for positing and constructing complex, overlapping, and flexible ethnic identities [...] Luke–Acts crafts a hybrid theological and ethnic space in which difference is treasured as a gift from God, not an obstacle to be overcome."[66]

The Christian migrant thus does well to *embrace* hybridity – not only in the sense of conceding the inexorability of hybridization but indeed also proactively forming her own hybrid identity. Hybridity does not betray one's culture. It enriches one's identity so that one can connect more deeply with previously foreign sisters and brothers, and so that one can bless one's new environs with the gifts of one's birth culture, thus loving one's neighbor as oneself. It is not an easy process; it entails change, and some loss, too. But the gains can far outstrip the losses, if the migrant chooses to preserve who she has been and take part in becoming who God would have her be.

Likewise, non-migrants need to recognize their own hybridity – and then choose to hybridize further, even if their cultural space does not require it. White Americans, for example, often ignore their families' own histories of migration, just as the Jerusalem Jews who stoned Stephen had forgotten that their father was a wandering Aramean (Deut 10:9). But WASP identity (for example) is not an immutable inheritance from time immemorial; it possesses no essential ontology, nor does it bear a divine missiological *imprimatur*. It is a cultural product of historical and migratory forces, with strengths and weaknesses, and so it too can benefit from further hybridization with the virtues of other cultures. Migrants are not a threat to our way of life; they are a divine invitation to enrich our way of life, lest we be people uncircumcised in heart and ears, resisting the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51).[67]

3.2 Migrant integration and the book of Acts

These reflections on twenty-first century migration in light of Acts can be further enhanced by social-scientific insights about immigrant acculturation. Cross-cultural psychologist John W. Berry helpfully maps out four different profiles of immigrant acculturation, distributed along the two axes of (A) *contact* with the dominant culture and (B) *maintenance* of one's previous culture.[68]

	Low cultural maintenance	High cultural maintenance
High contact	Assimilation	Integration
Low contact	Separation/segregation	Marginalization

Immigrants who participate minimally in the dominant culture and invest little in maintaining their previous culture (often because of prejudice) exhibit an acculturation profile characterized as "marginalization," as in the residential schools into which the Canadians forced First Nations children in order "to kill the Indian in the child."[69] Migrants who actively maintain their previous culture, while still having low contact with the dominant society, are characterized in terms of "separation/segregation," as one often sees in refugee camps. Non-participation in the dominant society, whether in terms of separation or marginalization, is widely recognized to be deeply destructive; it often hinders economic advancement and psychological progress, and ultimately is not compatible with the unity in Christ God desires for the Church (cf. John 17:11).

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65 Barreto, "Crafting Colonial Identities," 118; see further Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations*, 164–80.
66 Barreto, "Crafting Colonial Identities," 108.
67 Cf. Orlando Álvarez, *Latin@ Identity in Pneumatological Perspective*, 147–9.
68 Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," 10, cf. 270–2. For a discussion of the different assimilation patterns of Latin migrants to the US, and implications for ecclesial ministry, see Fox et al., "Further Examining Berry's Model," 270–2.
69 Hanson, "The Residential School System."

The acculturation profiles of peoples with high levels of participation in the dominant culture are labeled "assimilation" and "integration." "Assimilation" entails high contact with the dominant culture *without* maintaining one's previous culture.[70] Assimilation is defined as "a multidimensional process of boundary reduction and brokering which blurs or dissolves an ethnic distinction and the social and cultural differences and identities associated with it."[71] In other words, two previously different groups come to be indistinguishable.[72] When a nation has an assimilationist tendency, the incorporation of immigrants comes largely at the expense of the alterity of the immigrant. This is why Zygmunt Bauman characterized assimilation as "annihilating the strangers by *devouring* them and then metabolically transforming them into a tissue indistinguishable from one's own."[73]

An assimilationist policy has historically been quite common – and continues to have strong nativist adherents even in notionally multiculturalist societies like the United States[74] – because unassimilated refugees and immigrants blur nationalist boundaries, the deeply held distinction between "us" and "them," and threaten to expose the "false universalism" and ideological hegemony enjoyed by the religiously and ethnically dominant groups in a given context.[75] Because of this, the dominant group often tries to assimilate the immigrant, to "impos[e] homogeneity, the smoothing of ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic distinctives for the sake of unity."[76] Naturally, many first-generation migrants fear the loss of their identity as they and their children are assimilated to the dominant culture.[77]

Berry's fourth acculturation profile is "integration," which describes immigrants who participate robustly in the dominant society while preserving their previous cultural identity.[78] Current evidence indicates that, "Even in societies that tend towards assimilation policies [...] immigrants and ethnocultural group members generally prefer integration, and when they do [integrate], they tend to make more positive adaptations."[79] When the dominant group is amenable to cultural diversity, integration is possible – but it depends on "mutual accommodation" between the dominant and non-dominant groups.

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70 For an overview of the history of theories around the assimilation of immigrants, see Rumbaut, "Assimilation of Immigrants;" Gans, "Towards a Reconciliation," 875–92; Alba and Nee, "Rethinking Assimilation Theory," 827–41; Brown and Bean, "Assimilation Models, Old and New;" LeMay, "Assessing Assimilation," 163–76.

71 Rumbaut, "Assimilation of Immigrants," 81; see similarly Yinger, "Assimilation and Dissimilation," 249–50; Alba and Nee, "Rethinking Assimilation Theory," 863.

72 Assimilation is not linear and does not occur in the same way for all groups, although trends and tendencies can certainly be identified in different historical and ethnic contexts. For a nuanced and multidimensional account, see Alba and Nee, "Rethinking Assimilation Theory," 832–3.

73 Bauman, *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*, 19.

74 On the potential perils of a multiculturalist posture toward immigrants, see Hoon, "Assimilation, Multiculturalism, Hybridity," 154–9.

75 Hoon, "Assimilation, Multiculturalism, Hybridity," 153; so also Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 7–8.

76 Barreto, "Crafting Colonial Identities," 116–7.

77 By contrast, of course, many second- and third-generation migrants want to and effectively do assimilate. But assimilation is not a straight-line process (Gans, "Towards a Reconciliation," 883–8), and even if a second generation does assimilate, a third or fourth generation may want to dissimilate as well (Yinger, "Assimilation and Dissimilation," 249–64; cf. Gans, "Towards a Reconciliation," 881–3).

78 Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," 9–11.

79 Ibid., 27; cf. Fox et al., "Further Examining Berry's Model," 272, 81. Liisa Malkki's comparative ethnographic study of Burundian Hutu refugees in a camp and in a town revealed that the camp refugees, who had a segregationist experience which they understood in terms of purity and exile, continued their own process of identity development, but in non-hybrid ways, and ultimately experienced economic stagnation and psychological struggle. By contrast, the town refugees developed multiple and complex identities and tended to experience strong levels of acculturation and economic advancement, while diminishing their nationalist self-identification. See summary in Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 2–4. For the town refugees, Malkki observed, "The very ability to 'lose' one's identity and to move *through* categories was for many a form of social freedom and even security. [...] Creolization and cosmopolitanism tended to be celebrated, and categorical loyalties to be regarded with caution, sometimes disdain." Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 16; see further 156–70. Malkki construes the town refugees' self-identification in terms of invisibility and multiplicity, but the language of hybridity may be even more apt.

> This strategy requires non-dominant groups to adopt the basic values of the larger society, while [...] at the same time the dominant group must [...] be prepared to adapt national institutions (e.g. education, health, labour) to better meet the needs of all groups now living together in the plural society.[80]

While Berry does not use hybridization terminology in discussing integration, one can appreciate how identity hybridity fosters robust integration, hedging against the sort of assimilationist pressures that result in more acute identity crises for migrants.

Read through Berry's grid, the Stephen account provides examples of some of the perils and benefits of different acculturation profiles. In relation to low-contact profiles (marginalization and separation), when Stephen comments that the Israelites "in their hearts turned back to Egypt" (Acts 7:39), he describes the ever-so-common resistance of the immigrant to their new context, owing to the real difficulties and privations that migration entails. The temptation to turn back to your homeland, if only in your heart, is completely understandable. But it can ultimately mean that you spend longer in the desert, in exile, and that you fail to see that on the other side of the loss of Egypt there is promise, even if life will be different.

The Stephen account also illustrates, albeit somewhat indirectly, the perils of a nativist jingoism among peoples who fail to recognize their own migrant identity.[81] Stephen's attempt to pry the Jerusalem leaders' identity apart from the Holy Land, to remind the inhabitants of the city that they are a migrant people, was such a threat to their nationalist sense of self that they accused him of blasphemy against God (6:11); with this language, Luke indicts them for an idolatrous fusion of the Promised Land and the temple with God *in se*. As a result, the people of Jerusalem stained their ground with blood yet again, ultimately losing the land to which they were so attached.[82]

Perhaps under the influence of similar prejudices, Jewish Christians in Jerusalem initially neglected the migrant widows in their daily distribution. Nonetheless, they listened when the immigrants raised their complaints and made institutional changes to facilitate the Hellenists' integration into the community (Acts 6:1–6). The dominant group accommodated the non-dominant group, adapting their institutions to meet the needs of the migrants (see the comments of Berry above on mutual integration), with the result that "the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem" (Acts 6:7) – doubtless among the Hellenists in particular.[83] Not coincidentally, the Hellenists went on to be key agents of the expansion of the Gospel among the Gentiles, precisely because they were not fully assimilated to Judaean culture – precisely because they were hybrids.[84] It is fortunate that the Jerusalem community was able to integrate them effectively, through caring accommodation for their widows.

This does not mean that the migrant should not also change to adapt to their new community. Successful, healthy integration of migrant communities – especially in the first generation – is marked by hybridity. The immigrant has to make some adaptations, some concessions, and indeed find some things to love and embrace from the dominant culture. I know that this is no small undertaking, both from personal experience and from the testimonies of Colombians who are victims of the armed conflict in our country. When

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80 Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," 11. He admits, "There are obvious costs to both sides: to the dominant society in changing school curricula and health services; to the acculturating group in shedding some aspects of their culture that are valued but not adaptative. However, the costs of *not* adopting integrationist policies are likely to be even greater;" Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," 28–9.

81 This is not assimilationism *per se* but reveals the essentialist myth and ultimately the sin that underlies assimilationism: that the dominant society is right and properly immutable, such that it is the immigrant, and only the immigrant, that should change.

82 Naturally, one struggles to identify a people group that has not returned to violence in support of their security or identity; Luke, nonetheless, argues that the people of God have a pattern of killing the messengers of God (Luke 11:47–51; 13:33–4; 20:9–18; Acts 7:52; cf. Luke 6:22).

83 Jorge Pantelis remarks on the necessity and challenge of dominant groups making concessions to the non-dominant: "Es siempre posible en una congregación local dada lograr cierto grado de integración entre representantes de diversas etnias, para lo que habrá que hace arreglos culturales y lingüísticos al estilo de los judeo-cristianos y gentil-cristianos. El desafío aquí es siempre mayor para los de la etnia dominante, sin cuya sensibilidad hacia los otros étnicamente diferentes no es posible de lograr ninguna integración congregacional;" Pantelis, "Etnias e iglesias," 117.

84 Similarly, however much Paul may have claimed to have "become all things to all people" (1 Cor 9:22), he remained hybrid: his Judaism and messianism were his distinctive message for Gentile audiences, the truth that enriched them immeasurably.

rural Colombians are driven from the *campo* to the city, they often struggle with the notion of acculturation, especially because they lack the category of integration and feel a pressure toward assimilation. Many resent urban labor practices and the expectations of formal employment; they mourn the loss of the campesino life. I work with a group of Nasa indigenous believers who were displaced from their reservation, and they have mixed feelings about acquisition of Spanish and adaptation to "white" Colombian culture, especially since their native language and traditions are already endangered species. Many fear that their children will assimilate, losing their tongue and their knowledge of the land.

But the Nasa believers I have seen flourish most (emotionally, spiritually, and economically) are those who find a way to integrate and hybridize: who teach their kids Spanish and Nasayube (their native language), who translate the Bible into Nasayube and worship in both tongues; who apply their agricultural skills and virtues to new industries, engaging with markets beyond their local communities. Indeed, the Nasa migrants who are the greatest assets to their people are the ones who are most hybrid: the people who are fully bilingual, who actively study their own roots as well as the dominant culture, who engage with both their tribal leaders and with Colombian politicians. They are the future of their people. They are not simply what they were before, but are becoming something more. As they hybridize and as they integrate, they are becoming *nga tangata awarua*, people of two rivers, for the benefit of two nations.

4 Conclusion: What is the place of my rest?

This article examined the Stephen narrative of Acts 6–7, identifying how tensions with and between migrants and about migration drive the narrative and the construction of Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin. Stephen's discourse, designed to justify his criticism of his Jewish contemporaries and his prediction of the forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem, turns on a variety of theological arguments pertinent to the theme of migration. In particular, the following theological convictions are integral to Stephen's argument:

(1) to be a member of the people of God is to be a migrant;

(2) any ground can be holy ground; and

(3) passion for one's homeland can, potentially, become spiritually dangerous, if it prevents us from hearing God's call to an unknown place or to unknown persons.

This exegetical study of Acts 6–7 was buttressed with an exploration of social-scientific insights about identity hybridity and migrant integration. When read in the light of these two concepts, Acts 6–7 reflects the benefits of identity hybridity and migrant integration, for both migrants themselves and the mission of the Christian community, and highlights the moral and theological deficiency of Stephen's opponents.

Stephen the migrant rebuked the people of Jerusalem for forgetting their migrant identity – for clinging so fiercely to their place and their customs and their way of worship that they literally killed their own God. Stephen reminded them that God is not a god of only one place, but the God of all places. The Lord once said, almost scoffing: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, or what is the place of my rest?" (Isa 61:2 as cited in Acts 7:49–50). The human migrant might speak those words differently, plaintively, as if inquiring of God whether their new country can be home: "What kind of house will *you* build for me, or what is the place of *my* rest?" In one sense, Christianity knows that the answer is that "here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come" (Heb 13:14). On the other hand, we know that God can make any ground holy for us. So, we accept that where we were is part of who we are, and that where we are is part of who we will be. Conversely, if ours is the dominant culture in a given location, we nonetheless recognize that we are all pilgrim people, and so we make accommodations for our migrant siblings to foster their integration. Ultimately, since none of us have a lasting city here, we are all just "strangers welcoming strangers."[85]

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85 Pohl, "Biblical Issues in Mission and Migration," 5, cf. 9.

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