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今天，美国保守的基督徒好像前所未有的感到文化漂泊和道德隔离的处境。虽然每一代都需要当心夸大自己所面对的挑战，但很多道德观点的确已经在很短时间内发生了显著变化。而这也对基督徒如何理解自己在社会中的地位与责任提出了难题。

本文并不是来分析近期的文化转变，而是从更广的视角来思考基督徒应当如何诠释他们在世界中的身份。圣经明确指出，今天许多美国基督徒所感到的不安和漂泊感其实是正常的、意料之中的。这既使人清醒也鼓舞人心，因为圣经预备我们如何面对这些情况，为我们在不断变化的社会中如何忠心的生活提供了思考方式和引导。

客旅和寄居者

圣经是如何描述基督徒在社会中的位置的呢？首先，《彼得前书》2章11节提出两个重要的概念：“亲爱的弟兄啊，你们是客旅，是寄居的。我劝你们要禁戒肉体的私欲，这私欲是与灵魂争战的。” 彼得的用词值得特别注意，因为整个《彼得前书》2章所处理的正是与美国基督徒所关心的社会道德风气变化相关的事：教会的本质、不信者的敌视、权力结构的合法性以及为义遭受的痛苦。在这种环境下，彼得教导基督徒要把自己看作为客旅和寄居者。这两个概念引出丰富的旧约背景。

亲爱的弟兄啊，你们是客旅，是寄居的。我劝你们要禁戒肉体的私欲，这私欲是与灵魂争战的。

《彼得前书》2:11

客旅（sojourner）是在一个地方有临时住处但没有永久的家的人。在旧约中，亚伯拉罕和他的家人是客旅的典范（创12:10; 15:13; 20:1; 21:34; 23:4）。上帝与亚伯拉罕建立恩典之约，把他一家人分别为圣（创15,17），但上帝没有命令亚伯拉罕与在这世上有公共事务关系的异教邻舍分开。虽然亚伯拉罕放弃偶像并且凭着信心紧紧依靠真神，但是他仍然积极参与到他所逗留的城市的文化生活中。他加入军事行动（与所多玛和蛾摩拉联合！）（创14），参与由基拉尔耳王亚比米勒发起的合法活动（创20），与亚比米勒建立条约（创21:22-34），并从事房产交易（创23）。亚伯拉罕在这些地区没有永久的家，但却参与他们的事务中。

寄居者（Exile，或译作流亡者）是在这些重要方面的类似概念。寄居者是从家乡被放逐并且被迫住在外国的人。在旧约中，被带到巴比伦作俘虏的犹大人就是寄居者的例子，而且彼得也将他的读者引导到这些人的经历中。耶利米向一些早期寄居者写了封信，提供了有关如何在巴比伦生活的指示。先知鼓励他们在被掳中继续寻求正常的生活：盖造房屋、栽种田园、娶妻并且生儿女（耶29:5-6）。他还劝勉他们：“我所使你们被掳到的那城，你们要为那城求平安，为那城祷告耶和华，因为那城得平安，你们也随着得平安。”（29:7）值得注意的是，耶利米劝他们要帮助那座毁灭耶路撒冷的自高自大的异教城市得平安福祉。现在他们自己的命运连接于他们所在城市的政治和经济命运。但同时，他们也要记得，巴比伦仅仅是寄居的地方，不是新的家乡，因为耶利米曾发预言，神将在70年后结束他们寄居的日子并且将他们带回耶路撒冷（29:10-14）。像客旅亚伯拉罕一样，寄居者在他们居住的城市中是公共事务的积极参与者，并不信奉他们异教邻舍的宗教或者误把该城市当作他们永久的家。但以理和他的三个朋友示范了这种生活（但1-6）。

我所使你们被掳到的那城，你们要为那城求平安，为那城祷告耶和华，因为那城得平安，你们也随着得平安。

《耶利米书》29:7

实践含义

了解了这些旧约背景，那么彼得称呼新约的基督徒们是“客旅和寄居的”，他是要传达什么思想呢？显然，我们的处境并不绝对等同于旧约中的客旅和寄居者。相比于旧约圣徒，生活在基督十架和复活之后的我们更丰富的享受圣灵所赐的救赎恩典。教会拥有亚伯拉罕一家和以色列寄居者们所未曾有过的特权，那就是上帝呼召教会做宣教的团体，主动邀请非信徒加入我们。

除了这些和其他差别以外，彼得指出，我们与他们非常相似。也许，在最基本的层面上，作为客旅和寄居者的基督徒应当将他们的社会视为临时的居住地而非永久的家。信徒有家乡，但它不是这个世界上的地址街名和门牌号。我们的国籍是在天上（腓3:20），并且我们正寻求那将来的城（来11:14, 16）。约翰·加尔文曾发问，“如果天堂是我们的国，地上不是寄居之地是什么？”（《要义》, 3.9.4）但彼得的话还意味着基督徒应当成为他们寄居群体中的积极参与者，促使他们的平安，而不误把他们当作“有根基的城”（来11:10）。

在本文剩余部分中，我将提出四点思考，来说明在今天这个时代，客旅和寄居者的身份对我们基督徒来说，应该是一种鼓舞。

第一，我们应该对上帝在我们寄居社群中的护理掌管有极大的信心。如果不是因为上帝在大洪水之后与挪亚建立普遍恩典之约（创8:21-9:17），我们的群体根本就不会存在。在这个约中，神强调了他要存留全人类（9:9, 12），连同全部的活物（9:10, 12, 15–17），并且应许只要“地还存留的时候”（8:22）就会保守他们。神的普遍恩典保守使得人类社会得到基本的维护。他祝福人类繁衍（9:1, 7），提供食物（9:3-4），并且交付人寻求公义（9:5-6）。因为这个挪亚之约，基督徒客旅可将他们所在的属地社会视为合法的，是上帝设立的，但同时又是临时的、非永久的。基拉尔、巴比伦、罗马和美国都已经存在于挪亚的彩虹之下，用作上帝的护理的目的，同时“像水桶的一滴”并且“如天平上的微尘”（赛40:15）。上帝监管列国的兴起和衰落（赛40:22-24）。

第二，客旅和寄居者的身份提醒我们，历史环境会随着时间和地点的变化而剧烈变化，因此也为我们自己的处境提供了适当的视角。在亚伯拉罕客旅生涯中，他不得不与所多玛王和基拉尔王这两个非常不同的城市的统治者打交道。前者如此邪恶以至于神使其作为最终审判的典型（创19:1-29, 参路17:28-30），而创世记20章却把后者描写为惊人的礼仪与正义之邦。今天，虽然没有属地家乡，上帝却呼召基督徒们生活在各种不同的地方和环境中。美国基督徒已经享受非同寻常的特权和机遇，但圣经从未保证他们无期限的持续。即使这些持续，我们应当成为非常感恩的人，特别是当我们考虑到那些现在面对着叙利亚或北朝鲜的弟兄姐妹们。保守的基督徒如此经常地对美国发牢骚和抱怨，却不因着拥有如此多祝福而感恩（历史中许多基督徒都没有享受这些祝福），这是多么羞愧啊。

第三，客旅和寄居者的身份提醒我们在教会团体和公民团体之间的重要差别。在哥林多前书5章中，保罗劝勉教会劝惩不悔改的淫乱的人，但然后立刻将教会关系从公民关系中区分：“我先前写信给你们说：不可与淫乱的人相交。此话不是指这世上一概行淫乱的，或贪婪的、勒索的，或拜偶像的，若是这样，你们除非离开世界方可。但如今我写信给你们说：若有称为弟兄是行淫乱的、或贪婪的、或拜偶像的、或辱骂的、或醉酒的、或勒索的，这样的人不可与他相交，就是与他吃饭都不可。”（5:9-11）。教会必须在其寄居城市的文化道德变化中间保持其道德纪律——如彼得所说，我们作为“客旅和寄居的”必须“禁戒肉体的私欲”（彼前2:11）——但基督徒不因此避开与陷入这些罪中的非基督徒邻舍在公共事务上的交往。

最后，客旅和寄居者的身份应当鼓舞我们更加追求卓越并且努力祝福我们的邻舍，尽管我们能做的有限。耶利米也劝以色列寄居者从事各种工作并且寻求巴比伦的平安，同时提醒他们，巴比伦将仍然是巴比伦，但在70年后，他们将会离开巴比伦前往耶路撒冷。同样，上帝呼召新约的基督徒努力工作（帖前4:11-12; 帖后3:6-12）——为了基督的缘故（西3:23），为了上帝的荣耀（林前10:31），为了我们邻舍的好处（加6:10），甚至为了享受我们自己的劳动作为奖赏（传5:18-19）。但上帝并未应许我们将如何或以多大程度从我们的工作中看到果效。无论外表上是鼓舞人心的还是令人沮丧的，以及无论我们周围的社会道德风气是逐渐改善的还是逐渐变坏的，我们作为有信心的寄居者继续劳动，相信全智全知的上帝将按着他所看为适合的方式，兴旺我们手里的工作。

https://www.reformedbeginner.net/christians-place-in-society/

The Christian’s Place in Society

Resident Faculty, David M. VanDrunen | June 22, 2015

Conservative American Christians seem to feel culturally adrift and morally isolated today in ways they have never before experienced. While each generation needs to be careful about exaggerating the magnitude of its own challenges, certain moral sentiments have shifted markedly in a short period of time, in ways that raise difficult questions for Christians seeking to understand their place in civil society and their responsibilities within it.

This article does not analyze these recent cultural shifts, but reflects more broadly on how Christians should understand their identity in the world. Scripture indicates that the discomfort and homelessness that many American Christians now feel is in fact the ordinary and expected state of affairs. This is sobering, but it is heartening to know that Scripture prepares us for these circumstances, providing theological perspective and guidance for faithful life in our changing societies.

Sojourners and Exiles

How does Scripture describe Christians’ place in society? First Peter 2:11 presents two important concepts: “Beloved, I urge you assojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.” Peter’s terminology is worthy of special attention since 1 Peter 2 as a whole addresses matters pertinent to American Christians’ concern about society’s changing moral ethos: the nature of the church, opposition from unbelievers, the legitimacy of authority structures, and suffering for righteousness’ sake. In this context, Peter instructs Christians to think of themselves as sojourners and exiles. Both concepts draw upon a rich Old Testament background.

A sojourner is one who has temporary residence in a place, but no permanent home. In the Old Testament, Abraham and his family were the paradigmatic sojourners (Gen. 12:10; 15:13; 20:1; 21:34; 23:4). God set apart Abraham’s house by establishing the covenant of grace with him (Gen. 15; 17), but he did not command separation from his pagan neighbors in the common affairs of this world. Even while giving up idols and clinging by faith to the true God, Abraham remained an active participant in the broader cultural life of the cities in which he wandered. He joined a military campaign (allied with Sodom and Gomorrah!) (Gen. 14), participated in legal proceedings initiated by Abimelech, king of Gerar (Gen. 20), entered into a civil covenant with Abimelech (Gen. 21:22–34), and engaged in a real estate transaction (Gen. 23). Abraham had no permanent home in these regions, yet was involved in their affairs.

Exile is a similar concept in important respects. Exiles are people banished from their homeland and compelled to live in foreign places. In the Old Testament, the people of Judah taken into Babylonian captivity were the paradigmatic exiles, and Peter directs his readers to their experience as well. Jeremiah wrote a letter to some of the early exiles, providing perspective and instruction about how to live in Babylon. The prophet encouraged them to continue pursuing the ordinary things of life in exile: building houses, planting gardens, getting married, and having children (Jer. 29:5–6). He also exhorted them to “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (29:7). This is remarkable: Jeremiah urged them to promote the welfare of the arrogant pagan city that was destroying Jerusalem. Now their own fortunes were tied to the political and economic fortunes of their host city. But at the same time they needed to remember that Babylon was only a place of exile, not a new homeland, for Jeremiah proceeded to prophesy that God would end their exile and bring them back to Jerusalem after seventy years (29:10–14). Like Abraham the sojourner, the exiles were to be active participants in the affairs of their city of residence without embracing the religion of their pagan neighbors or mistaking this city for their permanent home. Daniel and his three friends exemplified this sort of life (Dan. 1–6).

Practical Implications

Given this Old Testament background, what does Peter communicate by calling New Testament Christians “sojourners and exiles”? Obviously our situation is not absolutely identical to that of the sojourners and exiles of old. We who live on this side of Christ’s cross and resurrection enjoy the Spirit’s redemptive blessings in much greater measure than did the Old Testament saints. One privilege the church has that Abraham’s household and the Israelite exiles lacked is God’s call to be a missionary community by actively inviting unbelievers to join us.

Despite these and other differences, Peter indicates that our similarities are profound. Perhaps at the most basic level, Christians, as sojourners and exiles, should view their societies as places of temporary residence, not as permanent homes. Believers have a homeland, but it has no earthly address. Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), and we are looking for a city that is to come (Heb. 13:14). As with Abraham, our “homeland” is “a better country, that is, a heavenly one” (Heb. 11:14, 16). John Calvin asked, “If heaven is our country, what can earth be but a place of exile?” (Institutes, 3.9.4). Yet Peter’s terminology also suggests that Christians should be active participants in their communities of exile, promoting their welfare without mistaking them for “the city that has foundations” (Heb. 11:10).

In the rest of this article, I offer four reflections upon our Christian identity as sojourners and exiles that ought to be encouraging in our own time.

First, we may have great confidence in God’s providential government of our exilic societies. Our communities would not exist at all were it not for the covenant of common grace that God established with Noah after the great flood (Gen. 8:21–9:17). In this covenant, God addressed all human beings (9:9, 12)—along with all living creatures (9:10, 12, 15–17), the earth (8:21; 9:13), and the cosmic order (8:22)—and promised to preserve them for as long as “the earth remains” (8:22). God’s common grace preservation entails the basic maintenance of human society. He blesses human procreation (9:1, 7), provides food (9:3–4), and commissions the pursuit of justice (9:5–6). Thanks to this covenant, Christian sojourners may view their earthly societies as legitimate and God-ordained, while at the same time temporary, rather than permanent. Gerar, Babylon, Rome, and the United States have all existed under Noah’s rainbow, serving God’s providential purposes while being “like a drop from a bucket” and “as the dust on the scales” (Isa. 40:15). God superintends the rise and fall of nations (Isa. 40:22–24).

Second, our identity as sojourners and exiles reminds us that historical circumstances change drastically from time to time and place to place, and thus provides a proper perspective on our own situation. In his sojourns, Abraham had to deal with both the king of Sodom and the king of Gerar, rulers of two very different cities. The former was so wicked that God made it a type of the final judgment (Gen. 19:1–29; cf. Luke 17:28–30), while Genesis 20 presents the latter as a place of surprising propriety and justice. Today God calls Christians, having no earthly homeland, to live in a variety of places and circumstances. American Christians have long enjoyed extraordinary privileges and opportunities, but Scripture never guarantees their indefinite continuance. While they continue, we should be very thankful people, especially when we consider what our fellow believers now face in Syria or North Korea, for example. How shameful it is that conservative Christians so often gripe and complain about the state of America, rather than express gratitude for having so many temporal blessings that most Christians throughout history have lacked.

Third, our identity as sojourners and exiles reminds us of important differences between our ecclesiastical and civil associations. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul exhorts the church to discipline an unrepentant sexually immoral person, but then immediately distinguishes ecclesiastical from civil relationships: “I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler” (5:9–11). The church must maintain its merciful discipline in the midst of cultural moral change in its cities of exile—as Peter said, “as sojourners and exiles” we must “abstain from the passions of the flesh” (1 Peter 2:11)—but Christians are not therefore to shun association in civil affairs with their non-Christian neighbors who fall into such sins.

Finally, our identity as sojourners and exiles encourages us to pursue excellence in our vocations and strive to bless our neighbors, albeit with modest expectations. Jeremiah urged the Israelite exiles to take up a variety of occupations and to seek the welfare of Babylon, while simultaneously reminding them that Babylon would remain Babylon, and that in seventy years they would leave Babylon for Jerusalem. In similar fashion, God calls New Testament Christians to work hard (1 Thess. 4:11–12; 2 Thess. 3:6–12) and to work well—for Christ’s sake (Col. 3:23), God’s glory (1 Cor. 10:31), and our neighbors’ good (Gal. 6:10), even enjoying our labor as its own reward (Eccl. 5:18–19). But God does not promise how or in what measure we will see fruit from our work. Whether the outward signs are encouraging or discouraging, and whether our ambient social ethos is improving or worsening, we labor on as faithful exiles, confident that the all-wise God will prosper the work of our hands as he sees fit.

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