

Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue

CHURCH IN AN AGE OF GLOBAL MIGRATION

A Moving Body

Edited by
Susanna Snyder,
Joshua Ralston, and
Agnes M. Brazal



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GLOBAL MIGRATION

**PATHWAYS FOR ECUMENICAL AND
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

Series Editors: Mark Chapman and Gerard Mannion

Building on the important work of the Ecclesiological Investigations International Research Network to promote ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue, the Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue series publishes scholarship on ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and encounters in relation to the past, present, and future. It gathers together a richly diverse array of voices in monographs and edited collections that speak to the challenges, aspirations, and elements of ecumenical and interreligious work. Through its publications, the series allows for the exploration of new ways, means, and methods of advancing the wider ecumenical cause with renewed energy for the twenty-first century.

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Church in an Age of Global Migration: A Moving Body
Edited by Susanna Snyder, Joshua Ralston, and Agnes M.
Brazal

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INTRODUCTION

MOVING BODY

Susanna Snyder

Are the churches willing to hear the voice of the Spirit that speaks through the too often broken voices and experiences of immigrants? Are ecclesiologists ready and willing to do that? Are we ready for the transformation that these stories can trigger in our ecclesiologies? Or are we afraid to be transformed by them?¹

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. (Eph. 2:19–20)

In Nogales, Arizona, on the corrugated iron and barbed wire fence that announces the border between Mexico and the United States, an array of artwork arrests the attention of passersby. From crosses pinned in an ad hoc fashion to the fence—some marked starkly with the names of those who have died trying to cross the border—to colorful murals depicting the brutality of the border patrol and spiky metal sculptures portraying the dashed hopes of would-be immigrants to the United States, the fence is covered with symbols of hope and despair. Many of these symbols are Christian. This collage of visual images offers viewers shocking and poignant windows into the experience of those who have sought to migrate to the United States.

This book similarly seeks to construct a collage. As editors, we wish to piece together a collage of ecclesial practices, understandings, and realities that have emerged and are continuing to emerge in the face of global migration. Weaving together theoretical and practical perspectives on what it means to be church, we do not produce an overarching narrative or theory of a “moving church”—impossible even if it was desirable given the rapidly shifting migration context—but rather allow each context to speak for itself. We hope to offer, as Duncan Forrester put it, fragments that may be illuminating as opposed to comprehensive analyses or neat conceptualizations.² Each contributor offers an answer to the question, How are churches changing—in terms of theology, identity, and practice—in the face of global migration? Together, we rearticulate the challenge posed at the outset of this introduction by Gioacchino Campese: Are churches ready and willing to be transformed by those among us on the move? If Christian communities are to make for an authentic and inclusive Body of Christ in the twenty-first century, this challenge needs to be heard and responded to by ecclesialogists, pastors, lay workers, and church members alike wherever migration is transforming church—in sending, receiving, and transit countries.

MIGRATION IN POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

With more than 232 million migrants existing across the globe today, it is not surprising that ours has been called an “age of migration.”³ There is no universal agreement on the definition of a migrant, but international migrants are usually categorized into various types for the purposes of national immigration regimes. While a plethora of visa categories exists in most nation-states, broadly speaking, economic migrants are understood to be those moving primarily in search of work or financial prospects, while refugees are legally defined as those who have fled their homelands due to “a well-founded fear of persecution.” Students, tourists, people trafficked for sex or labor, and those traveling to reunite with family members are all migrants. Some people move with the prior authorization of the country in which they seek to live, while others have little choice (due to refusal or lack of visa, or a hasty or forced departure) but to do so without the required paperwork. In addition to the many children, women, and men who cross nation-state borders, others experience uprootedness within their own countries of origin as internal migrants or internally displaced persons.⁴ Roger Haight has stressed the importance of understanding the church in relation to “the world in which it participates”

as the world is the “single main force of changes and development of the church.”⁵ If ecclesiology is going to be responsive—both to the world outside church walls and to the multiple worlds coexisting within the lives of church members—it needs to engage with this developing migratory context in depth and with nuance.

People who cross borders, particularly refugees and unauthorized immigrants, frequently find themselves falling into gaps between national and international concern. As those who embody what Giorgio Agamben calls “bare life”—a liminal status in ancient societies between what was understood to be natural or animal life (*zōē*) and full humanity linked with political participation or citizenship (*bíos*)—they find themselves inhabiting identities excluded within nation-state structures. They break “the identity between the human and the citizen and that between nativity and nationality” and are thus regarded with suspicion.⁶ In effect, they are included only through being excluded and often find “no place to lay their heads” (Luke 9:53). Many have experienced violence or poverty in their countries of origin or en route and then manage hostility, racism, politico-legal exclusion, exploitation, and other social and economic struggles on arrival in a new place. What is more, as Manuel Vásquez points out, “mobility and connectivity have been accompanied by an exacerbation of socioeconomic inequalities” between countries.⁷ Underprivileged migrants are numerous and diverse. In June 2014, there were nearly three million Syrian refugees of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), most seeking survival in Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon, as well as 6.5 million internally displaced within Syria. At the time of writing in September 2015, hundreds of thousands more are fleeing this region and making dangerous journeys to and across the European Union.⁸ In 2011, approximately 11.5 million migrants (mostly Mexican and Central American) lived in the United States without authorization; and in 2013, approximately 10.5 million Filipino/as lived and worked abroad—some with visas and some without.⁹

This volume is committed to the perspectives of underprivileged migrants—those treated as “bare life.” While not heavily theory laden, postcolonial realities and critiques form an implicit backdrop to the collection. Postcolonialism seeks to unmask former and continuing structures and practices of imperialism, or as Kwok Pui Lan puts it, it represents “a desire, a determination, and a process of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome.” Postcolonialism deconstructs dominant Western knowledges and investigates the ways in which “colonial systems of knowledge cast their impact, long after

the colonizers have gone.”¹⁰ *Church in an Age of Global Migration* is committed to the voices of people directly affected by imperialistic and domineering systems of border control and migration management and simultaneously seeks to unveil how ecclesiologies have prioritized the needs and perspectives of those at the “core” (i.e., West) over those considered “peripheral.” In other words, we believe that it is crucial that migrants themselves talk about the changes they are bringing to churches in their local contexts and that Christians from countries usually excluded from power and privilege have a space to assert their ecclesiologies. As postcolonial scholars have sought to make those in the Global North aware, the Global South has been for too long on the receiving end of ecclesiologies imposed upon them.¹¹ Those writing from their own migrant or diasporic identities have been marginalized as “undocumented scholars,” to coin a phrase of Carmen Nanko-Fernández.¹² While most contributors to this volume live with privilege—not least as scholars or pastors—many of us have personal experience of migration and come from or live in countries that have been underrepresented in academic theological discussion of migration to date: we name Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ghana, India, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Palestine, Philippines, Romania, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States among our countries of origin, nationality, and migration.

CONTEMPORARY ECCLESIOLOGICAL RESPONSES

Contemporary ecclesiological responses to migration have tended to have an ethical focus—in terms of both the work churches are doing on the ground and academic theological reflections. Religious organizations, particularly churches, have been at the forefront of moral and practical responses to migration and especially underprivileged migrants, notably refugees, people seeking asylum, trafficking survivors, and those alternately documented.¹³ On the US-Mexico border, Humane Borders, the Kino Initiative, and No More Deaths are among the groups providing life-saving material support as well as advocating for justice. In the Philippines, the Apostleship of the Sea—through its chaplaincies and Stella Maris Centres—provides pastoral care, welfare/legal services, counseling, predeparture orientation, information and value formation, temporary lodging, entertainment, and friendship to seafarers and their families. It also engages in advocacy work for the protection of seafarers. In war-torn contexts within Africa and Asia, faith-based nonprofit organizations such as Episcopal Relief and Development, World Vision, Jesuit Refugee Service, and

Islamic Relief have offered humanitarian support to those at risk of displacement. Studies, written by scholars inhabiting different disciplines, regions, and religious perspectives, abound on the good works being undertaken.¹⁴

On a very different front, ecclesialogists in the Global North have been putting considerable energy into thinking about how to be and do church in a changing age characterized by secularization, disillusionment with churches, multicultural and multifaith realities, and leisure interests competing for attention on Sunday mornings. Fresh Expressions and Emerging Church are examples of new movements grappling with ways to increase numbers, especially among Protestant denominations.¹⁵ As Cheryl Peterson articulates, “Survival is on the mind of most mainline congregations and denominations.”¹⁶ In *Who Is the Church?*, she points out that pastors are desperately seeking strategies to turn around membership decline through making church more attractive, doing church differently in “more authentic and relational ways,” and trying to rediscover the purpose of the church. The church in North America, she believes, is facing an “identity crisis.”¹⁷ Meanwhile, there has also been considerable discussion within the Global South context where churches are growing and Christianity is flourishing. As Andrew Walls has pointed out, it is clear that the center of gravity of Christianity has shifted inexorably southward.¹⁸

An area in which there has been little reflection, however, is the place where ecclesial identities and futures and migration intersect—or, in other words, the ways in which migration is changing the church. Ecclesiological reflections that go beyond the moral duty of the church on migration have been noticeably absent. Gioacchino Campese, in one of the few essays written on the subject to date, put it this way: mainstream ecclesiology “has been rather deaf and mute about the human mobility that characterizes our age . . . basically silent.”¹⁹ He suggests that the church has been too inward looking and has failed often to engage the “real world.” It has been too nationalistic, Eurocentric, or “Western-centric.”²⁰ Why is this? At one level, there is a tendency on the part of many pastors and theologians in the Global North to think of the church as responding to migrants—as if migrants were outside it and recipients of Christian welfare—rather than migrants being part of the church or Christian “we.” Many theological reflections on migration have explored the migrant as the “other” or “stranger.” The term “migrant churches,” used to describe churches primarily composed of recent first- or second-generation migrants or one ethnic/national origin group, similarly implies that such churches are different from the norm, norm

implying white, Eurocentric, and what have been traditionally designated as “historic” or “mainstream” denominations. However, as Nanko-Fernández, a US Latina Catholic theologian, rightly points out, “We are not your diversity! We are the Church!” Noting that 39 percent of US Catholics are Hispanic but yet only 13 percent of those ordained for diocesan priesthood are, she describes Latinos as the “marginalized many.”²¹ She urges a challenging of the norms around who has the power to decide what church is, who is in and out, and who has the option to offer hospitality or formulate responses to migration.²²

At another level, while sociologists and ethnographers of religion have produced numerous fascinating studies detailing shifts in religious landscape brought about by migration—away from a monochrome Christendom toward multireligious transnational diversity—mainstream historic denominations have done little to explore what these shifts mean for their future, identity, and practices.²³ Some have explored the need to engage in interfaith community and dialogue, but the predominant trend has been to worry more about younger Anglo generations that are not going to church. Yet as Moses Biney points out in this volume, the failure of Global North churches to address migration in ways other than the ethical is radically affecting their growth, direction, and shape. Inhospitability and exclusion experienced by migrants are leading to the development of an entirely new ecclesial landscape across the world, with new churches emerging often segregated around ethnic, national, and racial lines (see also Chetti, this volume). By the end of 2007, Geneva alone boasted more than 90 worshipping communities of foreign origin and 2,350,000 Christians mostly from India, the Philippines, North America, and Europe.²⁴ Indeed, churches have been slow to learn the lessons of segregation in the United States following forced slave migration and the Jim Crow laws and of the exclusion faced by black people in the United Kingdom when they arrived from the Caribbean in the 1950s and 1960s. The majority of excluded migrants had no choice but to form new churches where they would be welcome and could express their own faith and spirituality. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke for many countries in the Global North when he pointed out that 11 a.m. on Sunday morning was the most racially segregated hour in the week.

In an effort to redress these lacunae, this volume intentionally focuses on ecclesiological reformulations in the light of migration. We offer explorations of the church as it is affected by the world—a world deeply impacted by the movement of peoples—and less on

what Peterson describes as “those already gathered.”²⁵ The editors and authors wish to invite readers to enter the uncomfortable territory of considering what such changes might look like.

BUILDING UPON AN EMERGING ECUMENICAL RESPONSE

Until recently, there had been little ecumenical reflection on migration, aside from a statement on uprooted people produced by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1995, titled *A Moment to Choose: Risking to Be with Uprooted People*.²⁶ In spring 2012, a panel was held at the Where We Dwell in Common: Ecclesiological Investigations Conference in Assisi on migration and ecclesiology, and this is where this book began to take life. All three coeditors, coming from different national contexts and denominational backgrounds, were present at the conference and all explored in papers what migration might mean for the church today.²⁷ Concurrently, during 2011 and 2012, the WCC organized international gatherings of church representatives to discuss an ecumenical response to migration in Beirut, Lebanon; Geneva, Switzerland; and Manila, the Philippines. Two of the contributors to this volume—Susanna Snyder and Daniel Chetti—were present at the gathering in Geneva, and the gatherings resulted in the document “Migration and Inclusive Communities—the ‘Other’ Is My Neighbour: Developing an Ecumenical Response to Migration.”²⁸ While focusing on the theme of the “other” and the “stranger” in the Bible, this document does go some way to articulating two important points. First, it argues that migration is a “mark of the church” in that all Christians are understood to be aliens and strangers in this world or migrants in diaspora on their way to a heavenly home (e.g., Heb. 13:14).²⁹ Second, it includes a section explicitly articulating the “ecclesiological implications” of migration. It names that migration “leads to increasing cultural, theological and linguistic pluralism with Christian practice” and “profoundly impacts both the nature and the mission of the church.” Migration, the authors argue, calls us to rediscover conceptions of the church as a pilgrim community (called to transgress boundaries), a kingdom community (called to challenge injustice), and an inclusive community (called to be neighbors to the “other”).³⁰ They conclude, “Migrant newcomers can play a significant role to challenge a mono-cultural denomination long established in a particular nation-state to interact with and sometimes adopt different ways of being church, expressing faith, worshipping, praying and

relating to one another . . . migrant newcomers create capacity for new and shared expressions of their Christian faith.”³¹

Church in an Age of Global Migration seeks to build on this emerging ecumenical response, adding in-depth and specific accounts to put flesh on the bones of some of the insights and conversations generated by the WCC gatherings and Ecclesiastical Investigations conference. We believe that migration presents an opportunity for churches of all denominations and backgrounds to grow together, particularly as some of the old denominational divides based on nation-state borders (e.g., Anglicanism has its origins in England) are inherently troubled.³² Indeed, while migrants expose longstanding social, ethnic, and economic rifts and lacunae within church communities, they simultaneously open up fresh possibilities for the church to embody its catholic identity. The catholicity of the church—its wholeness or universal abundance—can only be known, as Roger Haight has pointed out, through engaging with a diversity of perspectives, be those of differing Christian traditions or migrants and nonmigrants.³³ Peterson puts it this way: the church is oriented toward “the other,” and *koinonia*, or communion, should expand “geographically, numerically, and ethnically.”³⁴ She states, “To be catholic means consciously to point beyond one’s own particular ecclesial community to the global church as a fuller expression of the Spirit’s work in creating and shaping a people.”³⁵

Contributors to the volume come from a wide range of denominations—Anglican, Baptist, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, and Catholic—and even more diverse traditions within and beyond these. Conversation between the chapters thus weaves an embryonic ecumenical dialogue. We encourage you to make links and construct this dialogue in the spaces between the chapters for yourselves and to add your own insights and experience. In addition, Jennifer Drago, James Walters, Deogratias Rwezaura, and Alana Harris discuss intentionally ecumenical—and in three cases, interfaith—models of ministry responding to migrants. Despite our authorial diversity, however, we recognize that many denominations, expressions of church, and voices are missing: much more conversation is needed and on many more topics.

THE CHURCH AS A MOVING BODY

Together, the contributors suggest in this volume that the church is inherently “mobile” or “shifting”: the Body of Christ is not a static institution but rather a moving body—alive and changing, vulnerable

and strong, always dying and growing. Contemporary migration offers Christian communities an opportunity to rediscover this truth and to be enriched by the insights that migration and the migrants among us can bring. Each author explores this fluidity or mobility in some way and the need for flexibility or reimagination in conceptualizations and practices of church.

Such an understanding of the church is not, however, new. Rather, it has been too easily forgotten as we seek to shore up our institutions and buildings as a fearful response to change. Ecclesialogists emphasizing the importance of mission have argued that movement is part of ecclesial essence. Haight writes, for example, “This dynamic, historical way of understanding the church ‘turns inside out’ all ideas of a static church that is established once for all. God takes the initiative; logically and chronologically, the mission is prior to the church.”³⁶ Pete Ward introduced the notion of the “liquid church,” and Stephen Pickard fleshes out a “traveling Church.”³⁷ Peterson has pointed out the need to move beyond simply thinking about church as an assembly, Body of Christ, or volunteer membership group to focus on its missionary essence and the movement—the reaching out, stretching, journeying—that this implies. Ecclesiology, she believes, has been too focused on “those already gathered” and argues that we should start with “*ad extra* movement of God in the *missio Dei*.”³⁸ Healy similarly emphasizes the importance of attending to a “pilgrim church” that is “*in via*”—an imperfect church “prone to error and sin as it struggles, confusedly, on its way”—rather than on an abstract or eschatological church triumphant.³⁹

Starting from a different place of concern—that of the overbearing power of contemporary nation-states (a concern shared by those who experience or witness the effects of state-enforced national borders on migrants)—political theologian William Cavanaugh has articulated that the church needs to contest the nation-state. The church, he believes, needs to break the hold the state has on public and Christian imaginaries and “constitute itself as alternative social space” where “alternative economies and authorities flourish.”⁴⁰ Specifically addressing the question of church in an age of “new mobility,” Cavanaugh similarly proposes rediscovering our Christian identity as pilgrims.⁴¹ In contrast to the migrant and tourist today, the pilgrim represents for him “a model of mobility that is not dependent on an imperial gaze.”⁴² Whereas the tourist gazes on from above, moving to the periphery of his world, the pilgrim moves toward the center. His assertions about the pilgrim nature of the church are worth quoting at length:

To embrace the identity of pilgrim now is first of all to embrace a certain kind of mobility in the context of globalization. The church has been unmoored and should joyfully take leave of the settledness of Constantinian social arrangements that gave it privilege and power . . . Our status as pilgrims makes clear that our primary identity is not what is defined for us by national borders. The pilgrim seeks to transgress all artificial borders that impede the quest for communion with God and with other people . . . We are first members of the body of Christ, a body that crosses and transgresses national borders. We are Christians first, members of an international, not merely national, body. Our pilgrim status makes the church a liminal body in any bordered nation-state.⁴³

Others have explored the intrinsically fluid nature of Christian identity.⁴⁴ I, along with scholars reflecting on migration including Jean-Pierre Ruiz, Luis Rivera-Pagán, and Daniel Carroll, have pointed out that the Christian biblical tradition is full of stories of wandering “strangers” from Adam and Abraham and Sarah through to Jesus, who was both itinerant and the ultimate divine stranger.⁴⁵ The early Christians understood themselves to be strangers in this world, migrating toward their heavenly home. The first letter of Peter, probably written between 73 and 92 CE, is addressed to “aliens” and “exiles” in the diaspora of Asia Minor (1:1; 2:11). As John Elliott notes, one of the Greek words used is *parepidemos*, meaning transient visitors, pilgrims, or sojourners. The other is *paroikos*, meaning foreign or “other,” and refers to a “displaced and dislocated person, the curious or suspicious-looking alien or stranger.” These “strangers in a strange land” are simultaneously “at home with” God.⁴⁶ Christian discipleship was, in addition, originally termed “the Way” (*hodos*; e.g., Acts 9:2; 19:23), and life in the early church involved people moving from city to city in order to spread the Gospel. Richard Giles writes explicitly of the Anglican tradition, “We believe travel in itself to be a godly thing . . . We are people on the move, emerging from a safe position to take hold of life with quiet, unassuming confidence.”⁴⁷

Place is also important, however: the goal of movement has always been to reach a home, and we need to be careful not to overvalorize or romanticize migration. Not only is much migration grueling and far from a chosen journey of discovery, but many people face significant barriers to movement today. Stories of Syrian refugees facing police brutality and being stopped from leaving Hungary by train as they sought to reach to Austria and Germany and of migrants camping in what was described as a “jungle” at Calais in France as they desperately sought to cross the heavily-defended border of the Channel crossing

to the United Kingdom in the summer of 2015 are illustrative.⁴⁸ As Vázquez points out, ours is a “gated globe, regulated by panoptical regimes of mobility and characterized by selective osmosis.”⁴⁹ There is a danger in too quickly appropriating migratory metaphors for the church. Reflecting on the well-known notion of “resident aliens” expounded by Stanley Hauerwas, David Johns warns, “It perpetuates the social status of alien and alienation [by making] aliens those are ‘at home’” and rendering “*extraterritorial* those who are trying to find a place to be . . . Such a vision of church actually perpetuates the injustice of alienation; it legitimizes documenting authorities’ practice of declaring illegitimate those *on the move*.”⁵⁰

What is more, church also always has a relationship with local context: it is shaped by institutions, particular people, and the socio-economic-politico-cultural dynamics of a place. Vázquez points to the fine line that we therefore need to tread: “How then do we study religion in motion without uncritically celebrating mobility or falling back on the old static, essentialist, and functionalist models of society and culture?”⁵¹

Nevertheless, migration does still challenge Christians to rediscover an understanding of church as moving and dynamic. Orlando Espín, reflecting on ecclesiology and migration, explicitly states, “Being ‘immigrant’ toward the Reign of God, is a necessary, indispensable, non-negotiable and foundational reality of the Church of Christ,” and argues that churches “must be formed by the realities of immigration—and not because of political correctness or momentary inconvenience, but—because this is the very essence of Christianity.”⁵² He sees immigration as “the contemporary definition of ‘pilgrim Church’” and “the indispensable ‘sacrament’ of the Church’s catholicity today.”⁵³ Reflecting on the process of doing theology, Nancy Bedford notes that traditional understandings of the *locus theologicus* as Bible, oral tradition, Magisterium, reason, philosophy, and history have been added to by liberation theologians. They suggested that the poor in Latin America were the real *locus theologicus*. She argues, however, that the metaphor of *locus* or place for doing theology is fundamentally limited because of “its *static character*.” Bedford suggests adopting the notion of a “*via theologica* as a possible variation on the *locus theologicus*,” recognizing that for migrants, “the *locus* for speaking of God is structurally, by definition, a *way*,” and advocates “learning to speak of God from more than one place.”⁵⁴

In a similar way—and in an effort to hold together both movement and emplacedness—I have suggested that the notion of a *via ecclesiae*, or a way of gatherings of those called out, may be more helpful in an

age of migration than that of *locus ecclesiae*. *Ekklēsia*—the Greek word used to describe Christian gatherings in the New Testament and usually mistranslated into English as “church”—comes from *ek* (out) and *caleo* (to call) and thus literally means “gathering of the called-out ones.” In the Greco-Roman world, an *ekklēsia* was a political assembly of citizens who met to speak freely and make decisions concerning various aspects of life in Greek city-states.⁵⁵ *Ekklēsia* thus implies *movement*—a calling out and coming—to the *place* of the assembly. The phrase *via ecclesiae* (genitive singular) seeks to take this one step further. It suggests a repeated movement of the people of God as they are called out, assemble for a while, and then move on as they are called to step out once more. Living church as *via ecclesiae* today means being open to being drawn out of some entrenched habits or practices by those among us with experience of migration and reassembling to grow and make decisions together as the Body of Christ. This involves repeatedly crossing and inhabiting boundaries between immigrant and nonimmigrant, tradition and change, local and global, poor and rich, denomination and faith, unity and polycentricity, and the mundane and transcendent.⁵⁶

THIS VOLUME

Church in an Age of Global Migration offers examples of visions and practices of such a *via ecclesiae*. Mannion points out that ecclesiology involves both “*envisaging* and *envisioning*” the church, and this volume will be both realistic and utopian.⁵⁷ Some authors offer critical perspectives on church as it currently is, while others present a hopeful or “prophetic imagination” about what church could be at its best. In addition, we offer explorations of both ecclesial mission and nature.⁵⁸ We consider what takes place within congregations—“the people of God called *out* of the world”—as well as what the church does when “*sent into* the world.”⁵⁹ All the contributors discuss ways in which church is embodied on the ground, offering ecclesiological reflection “from below” rather than “from above.” We focus on the concrete and particular and attend to context, believing that such an ecclesiological approach is likely to offer better images, models, and practices of church in the face of contemporary societal challenges than abstract theologizing.⁶⁰ Mary McClintock Fulkerson has stressed the need to engage theology in an embodied way, given that “culturally marked bodies” and “bodily wisdom,” or “*corporeal knowledge*,” are crucial to the formulation of the Body of Christ.⁶¹ She calls for people to “recognize the primacy of the situation” for theological

reflection.⁶² Nanko-Fernández similarly talks about “unwrapping the daily” or privileging “lo cotidiano,” and Nicholas Healy writes, “The church’s response to its ever-shifting contexts should not first-and-foremost be to formulate theoretical constructions, be they doctrinal or moral systems, but should be to reconstruct its concrete identity so as to embody its witness in truthful discipleship.”⁶³ We therefore avoid constructing what Healy terms “blueprint ecclesiologies”—abstract models of what a perfect church should look like—and instead seek to be “practical and prophetic.” We hope to help “the concrete church perform its main tasks ever more adequately.”⁶⁴

Contributors include academics, practitioners, pastors, and scholar-activists inhabiting a wide variety of denominations and national backgrounds. We aim to demonstrate the profound ways in which migration is transforming the church by presenting a collage through which themes emerge and future directions for ecclesiological enquiry and practice can be glimpsed. Our focus on what migration means for the church is not intended to be self-serving in that “we” voyeuristically draw on migrants for our own growth or enrichment—even if that is a byproduct: first and foremost, we stand in solidarity with those among us who experience oppression because of their migration status.⁶⁵

Five aspects of a transdenominational ecclesiology articulated by Haight—nature and purpose of the church, institutional and organizational form of the church, membership, activities, and relation between church and world—are addressed in *Church in an Age of Global Migration*.⁶⁶ Explorations of the relationship between the migratory world and the church and its membership undergird the volume, recurring as constantly developing and overlapping themes. How does the church respond to the realities of migration? Who is “in” and who is “out,” and who gets to decide what church is and how it should be practiced? The other aspects, albeit also interwoven, are addressed as distinct themes in three parts. In Part I, “Denominational Visions of Migrant Ecclesiology,” the ways in which different church bodies with their own particularities and theologies are reimagining their identity in the light of contemporary migration are envisioned. These chapters grapple deeply with the nature and purpose of the church. Gioacchino Campese, writing from a Roman Catholic perspective, examines the important place of migrants in the new ecclesial practice and vision of Pope Francis. Joshua Ralston rereads John Calvin as a migrant theologian to present a Protestant theology of catholicity that challenges the inherited nationalism that undergirds much Reformed ecclesiology and mission. Maria Hämmerli’s chapter

considers how Orthodox migrants from the historical heartland of Eastern Christianity have reconfigured their previous bishop-centric ecclesologies to adjust to the new realities of cultural marginalization and plurality. Néstor Medina offers a Pentecostal reflection on migration that draws connections between the movement of people and the movement of the Spirit.

Part II, “Reimagining Traditional Ecclesial Tasks,” brings together chapters that explore the ways in which migration is encouraging churches to rethink and practice anew traditional core tasks. It focuses on church activities, which Haight notes take both pastoral and missionary forms.⁶⁷ Through analysis of the US-Mexico border and the Kino Border Initiative, Kristin Heyer suggests that a new ecclesial *moralité* or ethical praxis is required. James Walters, an Anglican chaplain at the London School of Economics, reveals that migration has fundamentally shifted the practice of *university chaplaincy*: in the United Kingdom, it is no longer assumed that Church of England priests attend to Church of England students, providing sacraments and sermons. HyeRan Kim-Cragg and Stephen Burns and Cláudio Carvahlaes offer chapters revealing that *liturgy* is transformed by migration—or should be—and that, in fact, migration calls the church in its liturgical life back to its true identity. Patricia Santos focuses on *pastoral care*—arguing that circular migration of women in India calls for a revised understanding and practice of pastoral support, and Alana Harris describes how *congregational life* in East London churches has radically changed: she offers an ethnographic glimpse into how members are nurtured and offered spiritual sustenance today in a migratory world and reveals that many of those coming to the church are Hindu. In the final chapter in this part, Michael Campos discerns the ways in which queer, migrant Filipinos draw from iconic religious practices to stabilize an elusive home.

In Part III, “New Ecclesial Structures,” authors describe and analyze new forms of church that have emerged in response to mobility in the world today. This section grapples with institutional structures and organizational modes, starting with two chapters focusing on the Middle East. Agnes Brazal and Randy Odchigue explore how cyberchurches can help respond to the spiritual/religious needs of Filipin@ migrants, and Daniel Chetti, a Baptist minister and seminary professor, narrates the emergence of new churches in the Lebanon for migrant domestic workers. Jennifer Drago then narrates the story of Jubilee Partners, an intentional nondenominational community in Comer, Georgia, revealing how an entirely new form of church came into being with specific intention of serving and being among

refugees. Deogratias Rwezaura explores the humanitarian work of the Jesuit Refugee Service in East Africa, discussing the effects of focusing on interreligious, ecumenical, and ethical dialogue. Can we talk of the humanitarian church? Finally, Moses Biney explores the theological and cultural dynamics behind why Ghanaian Presbyterian churches do or do not affiliate with American Presbyterian denominations. Each chapter explores a new embodied form of church that has emerged in the face of migration.

Together, the chapters call for an open, welcoming ecclesiology—or better, ecclesiologies in the multiple. They call for visions and practices of church that are turned inside out to make space for difference and to offer power to the least privileged.

NOTES

1. Gioacchino Campese, “‘But I See That Somebody Is Missing’: Ecclesiology and Exclusions in the Context of Immigration,” in *Ecclesiology and Exclusion: Boundaries of Being and Belonging in Postmodern Times*, ed. Dennis M. Doyle, Timothy J. Furry, and Pascal D. Bazzell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012), 71–91, 81.
2. Duncan B. Forrester, *Theological Fragments: Essays in Unsystematic Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2005).
3. See <http://esa.un.org/unmigration/wallchart2013.htm>; Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *Age of Migration*, 4th ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
4. In reality, there is a continuum of choice and force—or “push” and “pull” factor—in all forms of migration. For a discussion of different categories and this spectrum, see Susanna Snyder, *Asylum-Seeking, Migration and Church* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2012).
5. Roger Haight, *Christian Community, Volume 3: Ecclesial Existence* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008), 233, 235. Nicholas M. Healy suggests ecclesiologies need to “respond to the ecclesiological context for which and within which they are made” (*Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 49).
6. Giorgio Agamben in Patricia Owens, “Beyond ‘Bare Life’: Refugees and the ‘Right’ to Have Rights,” in *Refugees in International Relations*, ed. A. Betts and G. Loescher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 133–50, 137. See also Luke Bretherton, “The Duty of Care to Refugees, Christian Cosmopolitanism, and the Hallowing of Bare Life,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19, no. 1 (2006): 39–61.
7. Manuel Vásquez, *More than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 294.

8. UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>, accessed June 10, 2014; <http://syrianrefugees.eu>, accessed September 7, 2015.
9. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states#9>; <http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/news-and-views/press-briefing-notes/pbn-2013/pbn-listing/philippines-report-tracks-rise-o.html>.
10. Kwok Pui Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (London: SCM, 2005), 2–3.
11. See, for example, Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, “Musings Toward a Postcolonial Feminist Intercultural Ecclesiology for the United Church of Canada in the 21st Century” (paper given at the United Church of Canada’s Beyond Survival to God’s Mission consultation, Mississauga, Ontario, February 2009), http://www.united-church.ca/files/renewal/congregational/living_musings.pdf, accessed June 15, 2014.
12. Carmen Nanko-Fernández, “Alternately Documented Theologies: Mapping Border, Exile and Diaspora,” in *Religion and Politics in America’s Borderlands*, ed. Sarah Azaransky (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 33–55, 33.
13. See Nanko-Fernández, “Alternately Documented Theologies,” on the use of the term “alternately documented.”
14. Examples include Ananda Rose, *Showdown in the Sonoran Desert: Religion, Law and the Immigration Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Fabio Baggio and Agnes M. Brazal, *Faith on the Move: Toward a Theology of Migration in Asia* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008); Orobator E. Agbonkhanmeghe, *From Crisis to Kairos: The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV/AIDS, Refugees, and Poverty* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005); Kristin Heyer, *Kinship across Borders: A Christian Ethic of Immigration* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012); Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campese, eds., *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2008); Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *God’s Heart Has No Borders: How Religious Activists Are Working for Immigrant Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); and Snyder, *Asylum-Seeking*.
15. See, for example, Gerardo Marti and Gladys Ganiel, *The Deconstructed Church: Understanding Emerging Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Phyllis Tickle, *Emergence Christianity: What It Is, Where It Is Going, and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012).
16. Cheryl M. Peterson, *Who Is the Church? An Ecclesiology for the 21st Century* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 1.
17. *Ibid.*, 2–4. See Gerard Mannion, “Postmodern Ecclesiologies,” in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, ed. Gerard Mannion and

- Lewis S. Mudge (New York: Routledge, 2008), 127–52, on the preoccupations and responses of the church in the West today.
18. Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 8. On Christianity in the Global South, see also Elijah J. F. Kim, *The Rise of the Global South: The Decline of Western Christendom and the Rise of Majority World Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012).
 19. Campese, “But I See That Somebody Is Missing,” 79.
 20. Ibid., 80. Notable exceptions include Orobator, *From Crisis to Kairos*; Carmen Nanko-Fernández, *Theologizing en EspanGLISH: Context, Community, and Ministry* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010); Orlando Espín, “Immigration and Some of Its Implications for Christian Identity and Doctrine,” in *Religion and Politics*, ed. Azaransky, 19–31; David L. Johns, “Being an Otherwise-Documented Church: An Ecclesiology for All Us Immigrants,” in *Ecclesiology and Exclusion*, ed. Doyle, Furry, and Bazzell, 93–103; and Agnes Brazal and Emmanuel S. de Guzman, *Intercultural Church: Bridge of Solidarity in the Migration Context* (Borderless, 2014).
 21. Nanko-Fernández, *Theologizing en EspanGLISH*, 1, 3–4.
 22. Ibid., 119.
 23. Examples include Peggy Levitt, *God Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape* (New York: New Press, 2009); Olivia Sheringham, *Transnational Religious Spaces: Faith and the Brazilian Migration Experience* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Afe Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora: New Currents and Emerging Trends in World Christianity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); and Diana Eck, *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002).
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 25. Peterson, *Who Is the Church?*, 53.
 26. World Council of Churches, *A Moment to Choose: Risking to Be with Uprooted People* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1995), <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/uprooted/moment1.html>, accessed June 15, 2014.
 27. See Agnes M. Brazal and Emmanuel S. de Guzman, “Seeing beyond the Religious and Social Divide: Intercultural Church in the Migrant Context,” in *Where we Dwell in Common: The Quest for Dialogue in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Gerard Mannion (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
 28. Lorke and Werner, “Migration and Inclusive Communities.”
 29. Ibid., 274.

30. Ibid., 276–77.
31. Ibid., 277.
32. See Orobator, *From Crisis to Kairos*, 172.
33. Haight, *Christian Community*, 93.
34. Peterson, *Who Is the Church?*, 111.
35. Ibid., 134. For a classic discussion of catholicity, see Avery Dulles, SJ, *The Catholicity of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).
36. Haight, *Christian Communities*, 106.
37. Pete Ward, *Liquid Church* (London: Paternoster, 2002); Stephen Pickard, *Seeking the Church: An Introduction to Ecclesiology* (London: SCM, 2012), 233.
38. Peterson, *Who Is the Church?*, 53, 99.
39. Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life*, 37. Paul Lakeland also suggests the church as “pilgrim” in *The Church: Living Communion* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 149–54.
40. William Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 42.
41. Ibid., 69.
42. Ibid., 79.
43. Ibid., 82, 86. See also Esther D. Reed, “Refugee Rights and State Sovereignty: Theological Perspectives on the Ethics of Territorial Borders,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 30, no. 2 (2010): 59–78, and Bretherton, “Duty of Care to Refugees,” on the need to contest nation-state borders. For a critique of Cavanaugh, see Joshua Ralston, “Toward a Political Theology of Refugee Resettlement,” *Theological Studies* 73 (2012): 363–90.
44. The following material was originally published in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglican Studies*, edited by Mark D. Chapman, Sathianathan Clarke, and Martyn Percy, and has been reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press. See <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/academic/series/religion/ohrt/9780199218561.do>.
45. See Jean-Pierre Ruiz, *Readings from the Edges: The Bible and People on the Move* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011); Daniel Carroll R., *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008); Snyder, *Asylum-Seeking*.
46. John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*. new ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 23–25.
47. Richard Giles, *Always Open: Being an Anglican Today* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 2004), 26–27.
48. See for example, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/09/03/europe/europe-migrant-crisis> and <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/aug/20/british-police-deploy-calais-migrant-smuggling-gangs-theresa-may>, accessed September 7, 2015.
49. Vásquez, *More than Belief*, 297.

50. Johns, "Being an Otherwise-Documented Church," 98.
51. Vásquez, *More than Belief*, 294.
52. Orlando Espín, "Immigration and Some of Its Implications for Christian Identity and Doctrine," in *Religion and Politics*, ed. Azaransky, 19–31, 22.
53. *Ibid.*, 29.
54. Nancy Bedford, "To Speak of God from More than One Place: Theological Reflections from the Experience of Migration," in *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation*, ed. Ivan Petrella (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005), 95–118, 103–4, 113.
55. Paul Trebilco, "Why Did the Early Christians Call Themselves κκλησα?," *New Testament Studies* 57 (2011), 440–60, 445.
56. Stephan Bevans, "Mission among Migrants, Mission of Migrants: Mission of the Church," in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*, ed. Daniel Groody and Gioacchino Campese (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2008), 89–106, 93.
57. See Gerard Mannion, "What Is Comparative Ecclesiology and Why Is It Important? Roger Haight's Pioneering Methodological Insights," in *Comparative Ecclesiology*, ed. Gerard Mannion (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 13; Haight, *Christian Community*, 40.
58. Haight, *Christian Community*, 98.
59. Peterson, *Who Is the Church?*, 99.
60. See Mannion, "What Is Comparative Ecclesiology?," 18, 21; Peterson, *Who Is the Church?*, 5.
61. Mary McClintock-Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 43, 251.
62. *Ibid.*, 235.
63. Nanko-Fernández, *Theologizing*, 25; Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life*, 21–22.
64. Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life*, 36, 46, 50.
65. As Nanko-Fernández has aptly warned, "To impose spiritual interpretations on *las vidas cotidianas* of those who constitute our communities of accountability is exploitative, manipulative, and to a degree voyeuristic. To romanticize migration and canonize those among us who migrate is to dehumanize and disregard the particularity of each life." See Nanko-Fernández, *Theologizing*, 117.
66. Haight, *Christian Community*, 25–26.
67. *Ibid.*, 197.

PART I



DENOMINATIONAL VISIONS OF
MIGRANT ECCLESIOLOGY

CHAPTER 1



“YOU ARE CLOSE TO THE CHURCH’S HEART”

POPE FRANCIS AND MIGRANTS

Gioacchino Campese, CS

April 19, 2015, will be remembered as the day on which a boat carrying an estimated 800 to 1,000 migrants sank in the Mediterranean Sea. Only 28 of those aboard are believed to have survived.¹ While particularly awful due to the scale of the tragedy, there have been many similar incidents. On October 3, 2013, a boat filled beyond capacity with more than 500 children, women, and men traveling from Libya to Italy caught fire and capsized just off the coast of Lampedusa, Sicily. Despite the efforts of the coast guard and some fishermen from Lampedusa, 368 people—mostly Eritrean who had paid \$1,600 each for passage—drowned. These represent just two examples of the many shipwrecks in which migrants have died during their journey toward the European continent, particularly during the last 15 years. On July 8, 2013, for his first trip outside of Rome, Pope Francis decided to visit this seemingly insignificant island on the border between Europe and Africa. He explained the reason behind this decision in his homily: the news of migrants dying at sea in their journey to Europe was “like a painful thorn in my heart. So I felt that I had to come here today, to pray and to offer a sign of my closeness, but also to challenge our consciences lest this tragedy be repeated.”²

This chapter will show how Francis is contributing to an understanding and practice of a church that is willing to listen and be transformed by the lives of the most vulnerable migrants and refugees. It will be divided into three main parts: the first will describe the context and significance of the historical trip to Lampedusa, the second will highlight aspects of Francis's ongoing ministry among migrants, and the third section will emphasize the ecclesiological and missiological implications of Francis's attention and concern toward migrants.

A TURNING POINT: THE TRIP TO LAMPEDUSA

Since the very beginning of his papacy, Francis has demonstrated a new way of understanding and conducting his ministry as a bishop of Rome. One of the most impressive features has been the simplicity with which Francis relates to people and the spontaneous ease with which he is able to communicate with them. One of his favorite preaching refrains is that the pastor, the evangelizer, has to be so close to the sheep as to take on their smell.³ For those who have known him as bishop of Buenos Aires—when he was Jorge Bergoglio—his choice of Lampedusa for his first trip outside Rome was unsurprising. He was well recognized as a pastor who would take special care of the most vulnerable people, the poor, and the marginalized in the peripheries of the territory assigned to him. The many journalists and writers who have researched Bergoglio's life have emphasized his work among the poor in the *villas miserias*, or “misery settlements”—the slums of Buenos Aires. It is not by chance that most of the inhabitants of these slums are migrants, both internal migrants and immigrants often coming from Peru, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil.⁴ While on one hand, then, the trip to Lampedusa represents the natural continuation of Francis's ministry at the peripheries and with the poor, on the other hand, it represents a paradigmatic moment signaling to the world his vision of church mission. In addition, it is the first of a series of actions and statements by Francis on the issue of migration.

To better appreciate this event, something must be said about the location. Lampedusa is a tiny Italian island located between Sicily and Tunisia, located in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. It is only 25 square kilometers and boasts few more than 6,000 inhabitants among it and its smaller sister island of Linosa. For at least 15 years now, this island, previously known for some of the most beautiful beaches in the Mediterranean, has become the main landing point for thousands of boat people—migrants leaving Africa and the Middle East in order

to find a better future in Europe. In order to control the flow of migrants and prevent their entry into the Italian mainland, Lampedusa has become an important base for the Italian coast guard and now includes an immigrant center guarded by the police and military. Lampedusa is also one of the strategic locations of the activity of Frontex, the European Union agency established in 2004 to manage the European borders.⁵ As the US-Mexican experience reveals, the management of borders and attempts to stop the flows of undocumented migrants are never as straightforward as politicians, and other pundits like to present them to the public. Not acknowledged in political rhetoric is the reality that thousands of people die crossing borders. The European agencies that guard the borders, under the aegis of Frontex, have been running operations to rescue thousands of people crossing the Mediterranean in the run-down boats provided by profiteering human traffickers. Despite these efforts, people continue to die in their journey toward European borders. The blog *Fortress Europe*, run by Italian journalist Gabriele Del Grande, provides a constantly updated death toll: since 1988, it has surpassed 21,000 people.⁶ A migration policy based primarily on border control is and will always be a human and moral failure.⁷ Lampedusa has thus become for Italy, and indeed for Europe, a symbol of the complexity and the drama of migration. A few years ago, German theologian Michael Nausner, reflecting on the theological meaning of the European borders, quoted Swedish writer Henning Mankell’s argument that Lampedusa is the symbolic center of Europe because it is precisely in what happens on and around this island that the future of Europe will be decided. In other words, it is in the attitudes and strategies implemented in and around Lampedusa that we show what kind of Europe we want to be.⁸

Pope Francis understands the strategic importance of frontiers and margins for Christian mission, and he consequently realizes the significance of making the presence of the church real at one of the most prominent geographical and political borders of the world. The text of his homily from his visit to Lampedusa reveals the multiple intentions behind his visit. It gave him the opportunity to be close—once again his idea of being intimate with the people, of taking on the “smell of the sheep”—to greet and offer his solidarity to the migrants arriving in this island; to thank the inhabitants of Lampedusa for the support they have given to the migrants; to celebrate what he called a “penitential liturgy” in order to mourn and ask forgiveness for the deaths of so many migrants; and to denounce the “globalization of indifference,” the inability to cry for these migrants. In fact, Francis bemoans that despite the call of the Christian faith for believers to be

in solidarity with the vulnerable, and for us to be “neighbors” to our migrant sisters and brothers, we have become used to the suffering of others to the point of thinking, “It doesn’t affect me; it doesn’t concern me; it’s none of my business!”

The heartfelt and powerful message offered by Francis during his visit to Lampedusa put the issue of migration at the center of public debate, but in a much different light than the predominant discourse of the immigrant “invasion” with its racist and violent overtones. Rather, he reframed the debate to be about the humanity of the migrants, the capacity to feel compassion for them, and the responsibility that the faith community as well as leaders and the broader civic community have toward these people on the move.

FRANCIS’S ONGOING MINISTRY WITH MIGRANTS: MORE SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS

After Lampedusa, Francis has met and talked with migrants and refugees on numerous occasions. A second important moment of Francis’s ministry with migrants was his visit to Rome’s Astalli Center for asylum seekers and refugees run by the Jesuits.⁹ Francis went to meet asylum seekers and migrants and to hear their stories and show them with his presence that the church cares for them. In his speech there, Francis emphasized that people who have fled their countries not only are bearers of sad and violent stories but also, more important, possess a wealth of human and religious gifts that should be celebrated. The pope also offered a word of thanks to those who work with migrants, establishing meaningful human relationships with them and thereby affirming their full humanity. As such, he was pointing out that accompanying asylum seekers and refugees entails going beyond charitable service to support people in their effort to fully integrate into their new society. Finally, he urged that the whole church and not just a few “specialists” must be involved in the ministry of welcoming the poor and working for social justice. This should be a norm for all parishes and part of the formation of all future ministers. He issued a prophetic call to members of religious orders with property: “The Lord calls us to live with greater courage and generosity hospitality in communities, in houses and in empty convents. Dear men and women religious, your empty convents are not useful to the church if they are turned into hotels and earn money. The empty convents do not belong to you, they are for the flesh of Christ which is what refugees are.”¹⁰

A third important moment of Francis’s ministry with migrants was his first annual message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees on January 19, 2014. In it, he discussed the role of the church as a faith community that accompanies migrants and refugees on their journey, works to understand the causes of migration, and also “works to overcome its negative effects, and to maximize its positive influence on the communities of origin, transit and destination.” He spoke also of the prejudices and fear that are part of our discourse on and approach to migration and the great responsibility that the mass media have in relation to this. Moreover, he insisted on considering migrants not just as a problem for society: “We ourselves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees do not only represent a problem to be solved, but are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved.”¹¹ During the traditional prayer of the Angelus on that day, he addressed migrants themselves, saying, “Dear friends, you are close to the church’s heart, because the church is a people on a journey towards the Kingdom of God which Jesus Christ has brought into our midst. Do not lose hope in a better world. My hope is that you might live in peace in the countries that welcome you, while preserving the values of the cultures of your homeland.”¹² This statement is important for two reasons: (1) it upholds the cultures of migrants that are often downplayed, if not despised, by the populations that receive them; (2) it puts migrants and refugees right at the heart of the church, as protagonists of the Christian faith community.

An ongoing aspect of Francis’s ministry with migrants and refugees is the frequency with which he meets them and speaks about them in his homilies and speeches. When he goes to visit parishes in Rome, he always asks for a time to encounter those immigrants and refugees who are part of that community. During a visit to Assisi, he explicitly asked to have lunch with the poor and the immigrants in the soup kitchen run by the local church: here, he was welcomed by a seven-year-old child from Morocco. He often asks people to pray for migrants and refugees. This request should be interpreted as a spiritual event that simultaneously has profound political meaning in a society in which the wells of the political and popular discourse about migration have been poisoned by exploitation, prejudice, irrational fear of the stranger, intolerance, and racism. In this context, Francis’s invitation to prayer inspires positive attitudes of understanding, solidarity, friendship, and care for migrants.

ECCLESIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Although Francis is not a systematic theologian and has not composed a formal ecclesiological statement, through his writings—especially the *Evangelii gaudium*—and his various homilies, speeches, and ministries, he has made his vision of the church clear. This vision reveals his attentive and creative reception of one of the most significant ecclesiological affirmations of the Second Vatican Council, which appears in the second paragraph of *Ad gentes*: “The pilgrim church is missionary by her very nature.”¹³ In the following section, I will reflect on some of the ecclesiological implications of his vision of the church, particularly as this is refracted through Francis’s attention to and concern for migrants.

First, Francis places the mission of God at the forefront of his understanding of the church. God has entrusted the church with the mission of spreading the Gospel to the whole world, a task that should be fulfilled with a joy that characterizes disciples of Jesus Christ. The church is essentially a “community of missionary disciples” and an “evangelizing community.”¹⁴ It is not just a part of the church that participates in the mission, but by “virtue of their baptism, all the members of the people of God have become missionary disciples. All the baptized, whatever their position in the church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization.”¹⁵ This also means that migrants and refugees, regardless of their social and legal status, are active members of the Christian community as missionary disciples.¹⁶

Second, migrants have a central metaphorical relevance in Francis’s vision of the church. The church is not just a missionary community but also a “people of God who walks,” “the people of God on a journey,” “a people of pilgrims and evangelizers,” and “the pilgrim people of God.”¹⁷ Francis regularly depicts the nature of the church with these vivid and dynamic images. According to Richard Gaillardetz, the “pilgrim people of God” is in fact the root metaphor of Francis’s theology of the church.¹⁸ He draws an important distinction between being a pilgrim people and being a wandering people. Francis argues that Christian believers are pilgrims not wanderers, because while a wandering people go astray, a pilgrim people has a clear goal, which is the promised land in Old Testament language and the Reign of God in New Testament language.

Moreover, the church is a pilgrim people because it does not walk alone but is rather always accompanied by God on its journey in this world.¹⁹ Indeed, Francis regularly emphasizes the responsibility of

the church to mimic divine accompaniment by journeying alongside migrants. To accompany is a favorite verb in Francis’s ecclesiological and missiological vocabulary, and as Deogratias Rwezaura’s chapter in this volume makes clear, accompaniment is a key feature of the Jesuit Refugee Service. It is unsurprising, then, that the first Jesuit Pope would highlight the importance of accompaniment in his ecclesiology and missiology. As he argued in his speech at the Astalli Center in September 2013, a missionary and pilgrim church is a church that becomes a companion of humanity on the journey of life, “standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be.”²⁰ To do this, the church must necessarily take to the streets and become a neighbor to humanity just as the Samaritan does in the well-known parable (Luke 10:25–37): “Here I repeat for the entire church what I have often said to the priests and laity of Buenos Aires: I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.”²¹ Migrants and refugees are “close to the church’s heart” because they are the living symbol of a pilgrim church. A church on the move is a community of pilgrim evangelizers since any person—regardless of their legal status—who belongs to the people of God is a missionary who has the responsibility of communicating the joy of the Good News of Jesus Christ to the whole world. Moreover, to accompany migrants and refugees gives the church the opportunity to go out to the streets and “get dirty” with the messiness of a pilgrim humanity.

Another aspect of Francis’s ecclesiology is his compelling call for a church that is poor and for the poor—and migrants make up many of those deemed poor today. His choice of the name Francis signifies his commitment to this kind of church—a church that adopts a simple lifestyle so that it can credibly stand at the side of the people who are excluded. Speaking about the “option for the poor”—a liberationist theological commitment that characterized his ministry as bishop of Buenos Aires—Francis has underlined crucial facets of what this means in practice. It is a theological option grounded in God’s preference for those who are marginalized and vulnerable, and it demands that the church becomes a friend of the poor, listening to them and speaking out to advance their cause. More important, it is the discovery of the poor as active members of the church and its evangelizers: “They [the poor] have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*,²² but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves to be evangelized by them. The new

evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the church pilgrim's way."²³

The pope makes a key connection between the pilgrim quality of the church and the central role of the poor in it: the church is a community that exists to evangelize but at the same time needs to be evangelized by those who are at the geographical and existential margins of society. Migrants become, then, crucial for ecclesial integrity and growth.

In his ecclesiological vision, Francis also centralizes frontiers and peripheries. This is, for him, primarily a hermeneutical issue rather than an ethical one. Reality—that is, the real daily lives of flesh and blood people—has to be interpreted and is better understood not from the center but from the peripheries, which become the frontiers of Christian practice and reflection.²⁴ The fact that migrants and refugees are mostly found in these geographical and existential borders is extremely significant and helps deepen our understanding of the trip to Lampedusa. Perhaps Francis's most significant reason for visiting was unspoken: the pope wanted to listen to the voices of those seeking asylum because he needed to experience and read reality from the very border of the European continent, a border that represents the living symbol of the hope and despair of millions of people on the move.

CONCLUSION: EMBODYING ECCLESIAL VISION

Perhaps more convincing and persuasive than any of his statements encouraging migrants to be placed at the heart of ecclesial life—pastorally, liturgically, ethically, and organizationally—is the way in which Francis himself is inhabiting and exemplifying his own ecclesiological priorities and hopes. Francis is becoming, knowingly or unknowingly, a famous and trustworthy embodiment of the dramatic “global southern” shift that has been taking place within Christianity in the last forty years.²⁵ This shift is inherently theological, missiological, and ecclesiological, not only demographic. In many ways, the pope's identity and actions illumine the insights of scholars such as Walbert Dillmann, John Mbiti, Lamin Sanneh, and Andrew Walls about the transformation of Christianity into a multicentric and non-Western religion. For instance, Mbiti claimed in 1974 that “the centers of the church's universality are no longer in Geneva, Rome, Athens, Paris, London, New York, but Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, Addis Abeba, and Manila.”²⁶ Almost forty years after the forecast of this African theologian, the bishop of Buenos Aires became leader of the

Catholic Church. What makes this even more intriguing is that the experience of immigration is woven into the DNA of Pope Francis’s family. Migration is a fundamental part of his own history as a human being and as a Christian believer, and this is a history that he has always cherished and honored, especially in the memories of his parents and paternal grandparents who came from Piemonte—a region in Northern Italy—and whose dialect he learned when he was a child. These roots have had a fundamental influence on his human, cultural, and spiritual formation.

Pope Francis represents for most Catholics, and indeed many Christians, the hope for an evangelical and structural conversion of the church based on mercy, tenderness, care for each other—especially the poor—and care for the whole of creation. He is showing to the whole world that the Gospel of Jesus and the Christian faith are still relevant and that an evangelical lifestyle is worth living and dying for. Echoing Walls’s thought-provoking interpretation of the history of Christian mission, Jorge Mario Bergoglio’s election as Pope Francis makes him one of the most representative witnesses of the “reverse mission” that accompanies the “great reverse migration” characterizing our times since the second half of the twentieth century. What is most interesting is that Francis is simultaneously the descendant of the people who were the protagonists of the “great European migration” that started in the sixteenth century and continued until the first half of the twentieth century.²⁷ With this background, it is no surprise that this pope has made care for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers one of the cornerstones of his ministry and that they have a privileged place in his vision of the church and its mission. Undoubtedly, they have found in Francis a new and great ally in their struggle toward full recognition of their human rights, citizenship, and participation within society and within the Christian community. Faggioli believes that being a son of immigrants is a “sign of the times” in a world characterized by human mobility. This makes him able to understand immigrant Catholicism such as that practiced by Latina/os in the United States, and this in turn has made him popular with migrants.²⁸

As a church leader, he has shown great understanding and insight into migrants’ experiences; their suffering and hope; the stigma of rejection; the joy of being welcomed; the difficulties and obstacles that characterize their journey; and the wealth of human, cultural, and spiritual gifts that they bring to the table of society and church. This occurs not just because he is a Christian or because he is the pope. It is primarily because he is also Jorge Mario Bergoglio, son of Mario Bergoglio, an Italian immigrant, and Regina Maria Sivori, an Argentinian

of Italian descent. He knows what it means to be an immigrant: he knows the heart of the immigrants because he remembers that he is one of them (Exod. 23:9). And he never fails to remind all Christians that we are migrants too because we too are walking in faith toward a promised land: “We are all immigrants, we are all on a journey. And this word that we are all immigrants is not written in a book, it is written in our flesh, in our journey of life, which assures us that in Jesus we are all children of God, beloved children, wanted children, saved children. Let us consider this: we are all immigrants on the journey of life, none of us has a fixed abode in this land, we all must go.”²⁹ We are all pilgrims because we belong to the very diverse but one people of God on a journey that will find its final fulfillment in God’s Reign.

NOTES

1. See Jim Yardley and Dan Bilefsky, “Captain of Migrant Boat Hit Rescue Ship, Prosecutors Say,” *New York Times*, April 21, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/22/world/europe/italy-libya-migrant-boat-capsize.html>. All websites quoted in this chapter have been accessed on April 21, 2015.
2. The text of the homily is available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130708_omelia-lampedusa_en.html.
3. *Evangelii gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”), a programmatic text issued on November 24, 2013, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html. Henceforth, EG. The number indicates the paragraph of the document we are quoting or referring to.
4. See Paul Valley, *Pope Francis. Untying the Knots* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 97. Valley tellingly titles this chapter of his book (pp. 95–125) “The Bishop of the Slums.”
5. See <http://frontex.europa.eu>.
6. See <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.it/>. The latest update of this website is dated October 4, 2014. According to reliable sources, 1,200 migrants have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea just during the week from April 12 to 19, 2015. See <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/04/20/world/europe/surge-in-refugees-crossing-the-mediterranean-sea-maps.html>.
7. For a theological reading of the situation at the US-Mexico border, see Gioacchino Campese, “¿Cuántos más? The Crucified Peoples at the U.S.-Mexico Border,” in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*, ed. Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino

- Campese (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 271–98.
8. Michael Nausner, “Alla Luce di Lampedusa. Una Riflessione Teologica sulle Frontiere Europee,” *Protestantesimo* 66 (2011): 341–56.
 9. Centro Astalli is the headquarters of the Italian branch of the Jesuit Refugee Service founded by this Roman Catholic order in 1980.
 10. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130910_centro-astalli_en.html.
 11. Pope Francis, “Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2014),” http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20130805_world-migrants-day_en.html.
 12. Pope Francis, “Angelus,” January 19, 2014, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/angelus/2014/documents/papa-francesco_angelus_20140119_en.html.
 13. See the text of this document in http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html.
 14. EG 24.
 15. EG 120.
 16. The idea of the church as a community of missionary disciples comes from the document of Aparecida issued by the CELAM (*Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano*) in 2007. The then bishop Jorge Bergoglio was the chairman of the committee that drafted this document. The English translation of the original Spanish version of this document can be found at <http://www.celam.org/aparecida/Ingles.pdf>.
 17. EG 111.
 18. See Richard R. Gaillardetz, “The ‘Francis Moment’: A New Kairos for Catholic Ecclesiology,” *CTSA Proceedings* 69 (2014): 63–80. Among the other elements of Francis’s ecclesiology, Gaillardetz lists the centrifugal and listening qualities of the church.
 19. See Pope Francis, “Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord,” Midnight Mass Homily, December 24, 2014, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20131224_omelia-natale_en.html. On the church as a people of God that is both missionary and disciple, see Pope Francis, “General Audience,” January 15, 2014, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140115_udienza-generale_en.html.
 20. EG 24. The English version of *Evangelii gaudium* does not translate literally the Spanish verb *acompañar*, which is one of the main ideas of paragraph 24 of this document.
 21. EG 49.

22. In EG 119, Francis briefly explains what the *sensus fidei* is: “As part of his mysterious love for humanity, God furnished the totality of the faithful with an instinct of faith—*sensus fidei*—which helps them to discern what is truly of God. The presence of the Spirit gives Christians a certain connaturality with divine realities, and a wisdom which enables them to grasp those realities intuitively, even when they lack the wherewithal to give them precise expression.”
23. EG 198.
24. The theme of frontiers and peripheries comes up in the two interviews that Jesuit Antonio Spadaro, director of Italian journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*, had with Pope Francis. The text of the first interview that happened at the end of summer 2013 is available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130921_intervista-spadaro.html; the text of the second interview, which took place at the beginning of 2014, is available at http://www.laciviltacattolica.it/articoli_download/extra/Wake_up_the_world.pdf.
25. See, for instance, Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).
26. This sentence is quoted in Kwame Bediako, “The Emergence of World Christianity and the Remaking of Theology,” in *Understanding World Christianity: The Vision and Work of Andrew F. Walls*, ed. William R. Burrows, Mark R. Gornik, and Janice A. McLean (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 243. See also Walbert Buhlmann, *The Coming of the Third Church: An Analysis of the Present and Future of the Church* (Slough, England: St. Pauls Publications, 1976); Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).
27. For this reading of the history of Christian mission, see Andrew F. Walls, “Afterword: Christian Mission in a Five-Hundred-Year Context,” in *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*, ed. Andrew F. Walls and Cathy Ross (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 193–204.
28. Massimo Faggioli, *Papa Francesco e la Chiesa-Mondo* (Roma: Armando Editore, 2014), 23, 25.
29. See Pope Francis, “Meeting with the People and Various Social Categories of the Scampia Neighborhood,” March 21, 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/march/documents/papa-francesco_20150321_napoli-pompei-popolazione-scampia.html.

CHAPTER 2



“GATHERED FROM ALL NATIONS”

CATHOLICITY, MIGRATION, AND
REFORMED ECCLESIOLOGY

Joshua Ralston

He left the city, like hundreds of others, quietly and quickly. Protests and placards had led to riots and arrests. Rumors of torture for those responsible swirled throughout the capital; soon there would be executions. It was no longer safe to live in his country of birth. In the eyes of the authorities, his beliefs meant that he was a traitor. A friend reports that during his flight, he was plundered by a servant and was forced to complete his journey without transport or finance. Even when he was safely beyond the border, he was still without a home. For seven years, he would wander from city to city—settling down for a period, only to leave again when his welcome wore thin or a new opportunity arose. Finally, he would settle in a city that bordered his homeland. In the decade after he arrived, the city quickly became a haven for countless other refugees—initially from his native country but soon joined by others from throughout the continent who began to stream to this city of sanctuary. Records show that “more than five thousand heads of household inscribed their names in this register, and several thousand more went unrecorded. These immigrants remained a distinctive and influential segment of the urban population.”²¹ The locals, though, soon began to grumble about the city being overrun by foreigners, and new arrivals reported being “treated with contempt and suspicion by those among whom they tried to settle.”²² And while our subject

*gained authority in the city, he never felt completely at home—waiting nearly twenty years to accept citizenship. A commentator writes, “He was always somewhat a sojourner in a foreign land. In this sense he was but one of the many refugees living there with their eyes on their homeland.”*²⁸

This story, or one like it, could be repeated by each of the nearly 15 million people currently classified by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees as stateless. Under the 1951 Geneva Convention, a refugee is legally defined as a person who, due to a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”⁴ Often decades or even entire lifetimes are spent in this liminal space of citizenlessness in a world where human rights are still chiefly protected by nation-states. As Giorgio Agamben describes it, the political limbo of statelessness consigns refugees to “bare life” outside the law.⁵ The refugee camp physically embodies this legal reality.

And yet, I have gotten ahead of myself, for the initial story was not one from Syria or Burma and the city was not Amman or Bangkok. The man was John Calvin and the city was Geneva.

By drawing a connection between Calvin and forced migrants in the twenty-first century, I am not only making a rhetorical point. I intend to draw attention to an aspect of history that is often overlooked in Reformed thought and ecclesiology—the connection between the formation of distinctly Reformed modalities of church during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the social experience of migration.⁶ As one historian writes, “With the notable exceptions of Scotland, the Netherlands, and Geneva itself, the Calvinist movement was, in contrast to state-sponsored Lutheranism, the Reformation of a persecuted minority.”⁷ In fact, Philip Marfleet has argued that the first community to be explicitly described in and through the modern legal category of refugee was the French Reformed Huguenots. The Huguenots “represent the classic refugee” and bear “all the defining characteristics of the forced migrant of the modern era.”⁸ The Huguenots were politically persecuted for their beliefs and/or identity and thus forced to flee, placing a moral and political demand on neighboring states to accept them. Certainly, the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was crafted by Western states as a partial response to their own failure to protect Jewish refugees during the 1930s and 1940s. In addition, the requirement of *nonrefoulement*

can be traced to both medieval canon law’s institutionalization of the Hebrew Bible’s command to protect exiles and the seventeenth-century Dutch theopolitical legal theorist Hugo Grotius’s argument that “a fixed abode ought not to be refused to strangers, who being expelled from their own country, seek a retreat elsewhere.”⁹ Contemporary legal definitions of refugees and the moral obligations of states to them have not only Jewish and Christian roots but also a particular Reformed lineage. Moreover, social historians have recently argued that John Calvin’s own ecclesiology was shaped fundamentally by his own migration experience. Philip Benedict posits, “Calvin’s sojourn in Strasbourg was instrumental in shaping his thinking about ecclesiology.”¹⁰ The realities of migration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, then, had a profound impact on both the practical and the theological shape of Reformed ecclesiology.

REFORMED ECCLESIOLOGY AND THE NATION-STATE

Given this surprising convergence between the life of Calvin, the reputation of Geneva in the sixteenth century as an enclave for exiles, and the increasing number of migrants in the twenty-first century, one might expect the Reformed tradition to have a particularly strong ecclesial and missional interest in migrants generally and refugees more specifically. Yet it must be acknowledged that contemporary Reformed engagement with the 15 million refugees, 25 million internally displaced people, and countless other asylum seekers and so-called economic migrants has been marginal to the ecclesiology and missiology of contemporary North American Reformed communities.¹¹

This is not to say that engagement has not occurred. The Presbyterian Church of Canada has a thirty-year-old mission dedicated to refugee resources, asylum seekers, and resettlement. National branches of the Reformed traditions such as the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (USA), or PC(USA), have assisted ecumenical resettlement programs, and local churches in cities like Minneapolis, Atlanta, and Toronto have committed to sponsoring refugee families upon their arrival. Many local Presbyterian congregations in Arizona, California, Texas, and New Mexico have worked tirelessly to support undocumented migrants, with some such as Tucson’s Southside Presbyterian Church even offering sanctuary to those threatened by deportation.

Beyond these acts of social justice and mission, North American Reformed traditions have increasingly become aware of the

importance of intercultural ministry and creating a welcoming space for migrants and migrant-led churches. The 1996 General Assembly of the PC(USA) adopted the “Racial Ethnic Immigrant Evangelism Church Growth Strategy” that proposed a multipronged and multicultural approach to church development that aimed to better reflect the church’s call to be agents of cross-cultural reconciliation.¹² These actions have included creating presbyteries for communities with a shared cultural or linguistic heritage such as the Atlantic-Korean American Presbytery or the Hanmi Presbytery. The PC(USA) has also invested in both national and regional offices committed to supporting and growing new immigrant congregations. “While the Presbyterian Church (USA) continues to be largely European American, the newest growth in the church is among immigrants and in some cases racial ethnic congregations.”¹³

While these acts are to be applauded and their work extended, most Reformed churches still remain rooted in older missionary models and have yet to embrace what the sociologist Stephen Warner described as the “de-Europeanization of American Christianity.”¹⁴ There have been numerous white papers and church conferences that attempt to overturn the tendency of congregations to exist in cultural enclaves, but more often than not—as Moses Biney’s chapter in this volume makes clear—Reformed churches are marked by a high level of ethnic and racial division. While this is true of most church communities, magisterial Protestants such as the Reformed and Lutheran traditions have been particularly influenced by the ways that the development of their church polities and the emergence of the modern nation-state were intertwined. As the Scottish theologian David Fergusson has noted, “The rise of nation states and the emergence of churches organized within their territorial bounds created the conditions under which a church could be a marker of national identity in modern times.”¹⁵ Put differently, migration demands both ethical and ecclesial transformations within the Reformed traditions.

Without a transnational episcopacy or a hierarchy of teaching offices, the Reformed tradition by and large opted, for understandable and practical reasons, to draw organizational and denominational boundaries in and through the emerging nation-states. An obvious sign of this reality is the fact that Reformed denominations are circumscribed by national borders—the Presbyterian Church (USA), Presbyterian Church of Canada, or the Church of Scotland. This model was largely exported through the missionary movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such that the Presbyterian churches and denominations that emerged in Latin America, the Middle East,

East Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa are also primarily understood in and through the nation-state. Moreover, during the various waves of migration from Europe to North America in the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, Reformed communities traveled with their existing ethnic divisions. Thus PC(USA) traces its roots to Scottish and English traditions, while the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) emerged from the Dutch Reformed traditions.¹⁶

These practical ecclesiological decisions to express church unity beyond the local congregation by borrowing the borders of the nation have had profound theological and ecclesial consequences. North American Reformed ecclesiology remains deeply shaped by these latent assumptions of nationalism and xenophobia, both of which serve to marginalize migrants from local congregations and denominational structures. This is reflected both in the diversity statistics, which indicate that Canadian and US Reformed churches remain primarily white and upper or middle class, and more profoundly in the hidden ways that cultural assumptions frame worship, polity, and ecclesial organization.¹⁷ The PC(USA), for instance, has created certain levels of congregational membership through terms like “ethnic-racial minority” or “immigrant congregations” that exist below full church membership. While the intention of these categories is to encourage and foster the phased development of new migrant congregations, the functional outworking is a tiered hierarchy of what counts as an ideal church. In fact, many of these immigrant churches remain at lower formal levels such as new worshipping communities and never become full members of their presbyteries or formerly identified as churches because they fail to meet the financial or educational standard demanded by the presbytery. This is problematic on various grounds, including Calvin’s own—who famously defined the marks of the church simply by preaching and sacraments and not by financial possibilities or presbytery involvement.

Moreover, the ethical actions of Reformed churches around migration are also informed by much older debates regarding the church, politics, and race in America. North American Presbyterian ecclesiology remains influenced by controversies that erupted over the church’s role in the political turmoil that surrounded the US Civil War. During this period, many theologians and church leaders leveraged theologies of the two kingdoms to advance a concept of the “spirituality of the church.” According to proponents of this view such as Robert Lewis Dabney and later Gresham Machen, since the church is spiritual and not of this world, it is called to refrain from

overt political engagement. The church and the state exist in two different spheres, and the church compromises its identity and mission by focusing on moral crusades or social transformation. These debates continued to influence American Presbyterianism, particularly during the modernist-fundamentalist controversies of the early twentieth century and the debates over race and Jim Crow in the 1960s. While there is some wisdom in this tradition, more often than not, these theological claims functioned as a justification for evading the complicated and messy reality of being the church in the world. The church's claim to be spiritual served as a means to ignore the ways that political power, economic injustice, and racism infest and shape the church. Rather than the church being free from the constraints of the political culture of the day, the church often mirrors the racial, ethnic, gender, and class divides of the culture. As Willie Jennings has argued in his award-winning book, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*, appeals to unity in Christ are not necessarily antiracist or antixenophobic. "What looks like a radical antiracist, antiethnocentric vision of Christian faith is in fact profoundly imperialist."¹⁸ One can see the lingering power of these divisions in contemporary church debates about catholicity and immigration reform. For instance, many churches will often name a spiritual unity across national boundaries but then claim that such a citizenship is otherworldly and thus irrelevant for political ethics. Extending the claims of the Belhar Confession, it can be argued that confessing the unity and catholicity of the church while failing to struggle to enact and symbolize this in and through concrete local congregational action is heretical. The church confesses a catholic identity that exceeds the visible church, and yet without concrete polity practices that enact this confession, the Reformed traditions often mimicked the broader culture and nation.

Let me suggest that the encounter with the great diversity within the world through increased globalization and migration, especially within the United States since the Immigration Act of 1965, presses predominately white and European Reformed ecclesiology to divest itself of both its own privilege and its tendency to overspiritualize the church's unity and catholicity. It demands that the church recover an ecclesiology and missiology that can better traverse national boundaries and reform its practice, polity, and theology so that diversity and hospitality become concretely expressed in local communities. Calvin's ecclesiology, especially when read alongside recent social historical studies concerning the impact of migration on Reformed theology and ecclesiology, offers one such promising theological direction for thinking about a church that is both global and local.

READING CALVIN'S ECCLESIOLOGY IN LIGHT OF SOCIAL HISTORY

The last decades have seen a shift in Reformation studies away from a theologically oriented prism and toward an emphasis on social history. One of the major breakthroughs in this approach has been a contextualization of Calvin's theology, not simply in the intellectual traditions of the period, but also in the tumultuous social and political world of sixteenth-century Europe. The recent biographies of Calvin by William Bouwsma, Bernard Cottret, and Bruce Gordon all draw attention to Calvin's experience of exile and the fundamental ways migration shaped his life, thought, and ministry. Bouwsma argues, "It seems likely that Calvin's own experience of exile contributed to his understanding of the Gospel as a haven for the disposed, a refuge for those quite literally alienated."¹⁹ Through the work of historians such as Robert Kingdon, Jeannine Olson, and William Bouwsma, Geneva emerges as a safe haven for refugees from as far away as Scotland, Hungary, Italy, the Low Countries, and Poland. Geneva "was in the true sense a city of refuge, to which flowed the unsatisfied, the insatiable, the lovers of Jesus Christ, desirous of building an ideal Christian society."²⁰ In the midst of such mass migration, Calvin and his allies were forging new ecclesial-political models out of the old wineskins of medieval and Catholic practice while also negotiating the collision between foreigners and local Genevans.

At the forefront of the movement to reinterpret Calvin's theology in light of his exile was the late Heiko Oberman. He claimed that Calvin's enduring legacy can be largely traced not only to the genius of the *Institutes of Christian Religion* or his scriptural exegesis but also to the practical import of his pastoral and ecclesial model, a model particularly well suited to the period after 1550, what he calls the reformation of the refugees. This period was marked by persecution, exile, and a lack of state support for those sympathetic to the reformation. According to Oberman, Calvin was the chief architect of the exegesis, theology, and ecclesiology that allowed for these diasporic and Reformed communities to emerge and eventually flourish throughout Europe. It is this that sets him apart from other reformed figures such as Zwingli, Bucer, and Bullinger and explains his reputation as the quintessential Reformed theologian.

A primary way that Calvin shaped a diasporic catholicity was by interpreting Scripture with attention to themes of exile. Take, for instance, his introduction to Oliveit's New Testament, where Calvin writes that God "accompanied the Children of Israel night and day on

their flight, present among them as a fugitive himself.”²¹ This exegesis was instrumental in Calvin’s theology of providence, in which identity is found in God and earthly exile is interpreted within a broader spiritual journey. Oberman claims that “the doctrine of election, far from being speculation about billions of earthlings, is addressed to the children of God and refers them to their place in the Catholic Church of all ages.”²² Finally, as a second-generation reformer, Calvin emphasized how theological reformation included concrete ecclesial reform. It is not enough to simply correct the church’s teaching on justification or sacramental theology; the church must also practically and continually reform itself by the power of the Spirit in light of Scripture and new social contexts.

In his book *Christ’s Church Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism*, Philip Benedict extends Oberman’s insights further into the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. He contends that the refugee churches were “all important cradles of Reformed further expansion” since they “offered a model derived from the Bible of how to form independent churches in the absence of governmental support.”²³ This quick survey of recent historical studies highlights that the Reformed tradition began as a church both of and in service to those exiled from their physical homes and that Calvin’s theology was fundamental in creating a view of the church that allowed Reformed communities to flourish in diverse settings.

TOWARD A SOCIOETHICAL REFORMED CATHOLICITY

With these historical studies in mind, we now turn to Calvin’s account of the church as simultaneously catholic and dispersed. What resources may be found in these historical studies for rereading Calvin’s own theology in order to reform contemporary Reformed ecclesiology in ways that attend to both migration and ecumenism? How might Calvin’s theology of the church’s unity and catholicity be reframed to address the persistent challenges of migration, nationalism, and the “spirituality of the church”?

At the outset, it must be stated that Calvin’s ecclesiology is best understood not as Reformed or Presbyterian but as catholic. This is most evident in Calvin’s rebuttal to the Roman Catholic Cardinal Jacopo Sadoletto. Sadoletto has accused Geneva of abandoning the faith and compromising the church’s unity and catholicity. He argues, “The Catholic Church is that which in all parts, as well as at the present time in every region of the world, united and consenting in Christ,

has been always and everywhere directed by the one Spirit of Christ; in which Church no dissention can exist.”²⁴ Writing from Strasbourg (after he had been temporarily exiled from Geneva), Calvin does not dispute these starting points but defends the Reformation movement precisely on the terms set by Sadoletto—it is the Reforming movement that is authentically catholic and faithful to the apostles. And yet, catholicity for Calvin is grounded in Christ and Spirit, not in visible allegiance to Rome. The church is “bound together by the one doctrine and one Spirit of Christ” as it “cultivates and observes unity of faith and brotherly concord.”²⁵ On the theological level, catholicity is found in Christ through the Spirit. On the anthropological level, catholicity is marked by doctrinal faithfulness, unity in faith, and the active cultivation of unity and accord. The ground for ecclesial unity and catholicity is Christ and Spirit, not visible allegiance to Rome or apostolic succession. The church is one because Christ is one, holy because God is holy, catholic because the Spirit creates faith across the globe, and apostolic because its Word is consistent with the apostles’ Word. The church is defined by its relationship to God, not primarily through sociological analysis or historical genealogy. To be the one church is to be united in faith to Christ and Spirit.

Alongside Calvin’s account of catholicity is an equal insistence that the church is dispersed, scattered, and persecuted. As Oberman writes, “Calvin discovered the ecumenical church at his conversion, the Catholic Church of all places and all times. But in Strasbourg he discovered a new mark of the church, the authentic church of Christ, like the people of the Jews, is persecuted and dispersed.”²⁶ The Christian community is united, even when it is spread throughout the world. The lack of land does not signify a lack of communal identity, since Israel and Church are defined theologically in God, not first and foremost through sociology, polity, or culture. In the *Institutes of Christian Religion*, he writes, “The church universal is a multitude gathered from all nations; it is divided and dispersed in separate places, but agrees on the one truth of divine doctrine, and is bound by the bond of the same religion. Under it are thus included individual churches, disposed in towns and villages according to human need, so that each rightly has the name and authority of the church.”²⁷

Obviously, Calvin’s emphasis on the church as catholic and dispersed is not an innovation. Ecclesiology has long noted both the church’s pilgrim identity and its universal reach. However, reading Calvin’s ecclesiology of diasporic catholicity alongside recent historical studies opens up new vistas for interpretation of Calvin and his relevance for a Reformed ecclesiology in the age of global migration.

First, a brief caveat—Calvin’s ecclesiology is no cure all. Claims for hospitality to the exile and the indelible image of God in others did not press Calvin to extend welcome to those persecuted but unsympathetic to his vision. The trial and execution of Servetus is case in point (and one that actually caused some protests among French refugees in Geneva who saw his execution as an act of hypocrisy). A straightforward reclamation of Calvin’s theology and ecclesiology alone is insufficient to address the theological and missiological demands of our pluralist and global world, especially given the number of Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu refugees and migrants. Still, I am suggesting that his theology, especially his move to locate both the church and the neighbor in God possesses possibilities for addressing two perennial problems in Reformed ecclesiology: the issue of national borders and the moral challenge of spatial distance. While Calvin’s theological account could be and has been employed to justify an apolitical spirituality of the migrant church, reading his ecclesiology alongside social history presses against such a rendering.

First, if unity is secured not through the bishop but through God, then the church, like the Spirit in whom it dwells, lives eccentrically beyond local and national borders. Or, as Calvin writes, “We ought to embrace the whole human race without exception in a single feeling of love; here there is no distinction between barbarian and Greek, worthy and unworthy, friend and enemy, since all should be contemplated in God, not in themselves.”²⁸ Furthermore, in Christ the church embraces the world, especially those embraced by Jesus’s concrete mission and life—persons marginalized from society and without citizenship. The primary focus of the church’s engagement in mission with refugees and migrants should be not through the lens of state or legal definitions but through recognizing them as embodying what Gustavo Gutiérrez terms the nonpersons—those functionally relegated out of existence by society. The question facing refugee ministry today mirrors Gutiérrez’s question about “how to tell the nonperson, the nonhuman, that God is love, and that this love makes us all brothers and sisters.”²⁹

Finally, by grounding identity and catholicity in God, Calvin attempts to overcome the moral challenge of spatial distance. The church is drawn together in God, even if it remains physically apart. A chief reason that engagement with migrants, be it political or ecclesial, is often haphazard is because it is bound by the limits of empathy created by spatial distance and social invisibility. Matthew Gibney argues that “to explain our intermittent engagement with refugees we need to consider the relationship between ethics and distance.”³⁰ Ethicists

have long recognized distance as a hindrance to moral engagement. David Hume famously noted, a broken mirror at home causes more worry than houses burning down abroad. If this is true politically, it is also true ecclesially. Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator laments, "Apart from occasional appearances on news flashes in the international mass media, refugees easily become a distant problem for the church, something for other local churches to deal with."³¹ However, if identity and catholicity are found in Christ through the Spirit, then the usual problem of spatial distance and love should become theologically reframed. St. John of Chrysostom eloquently states, "He who lives in Rome may look on the Indians as his own members."³² Human beings now live in God through Christ and thus even the most spatially remote are made neighbors. "Now, since Christ has shown in the parable of the Samaritan that the term 'neighbor' includes even the most remote person, we are not expected to limit the percept of love to those in close relationships."³³ For Calvin, in Christ, "the bonds of the spirit extended beyond the boundaries of the native soil."³⁴

However, as I have argued, Reformed ecclesiology developed with a one-sided focus on locality that led to the construction of national or ethnic church borders. The church confessed to be catholic, but the practices that united local and dispersed congregations in the sixteenth century were lost under the weight of dogmatic disagreement. This development spiritualizes Calvin's vision of the church as catholic, allowing the church to fall victim to and also contribute to cultural forces of xenophobia and ethnic marginalization. Under this ecclesiological model, migrants are primarily treated not as fellow members of the Body of Christ but as strangers to be either assimilated or excluded. Recovering and reframing Calvin's vision of catholicity is a vital step toward developing practical and theological resources for expanding the ecclesiological identity and missional imagination of the Reformed tradition.

The call for the church is to allow for this theological gift and eschatological direction to become enacted, even always only imperfectly, in our public and liturgical life. The danger, especially for those in the magisterial Protestant traditions, is that our theological catholicity will remain spiritualized, such that we claim with Barth that "Christians will always be Christians first, and only then, members of a specific culture or state or class," but our politics, worship, and lives fail to reflect who we claim we are in Christ.³⁵ The realities of migration, however, press the church to live in such a way that its theological claims regarding unity and catholicity are expressed in and through its local practice. It is one thing to embrace the whole human race or

the global church theoretically or even theologically; it is another to consider the intersections with power, citizenship, and culture when migration makes these differences concretely and locally present.

For Reformed ecclesiology, the local congregation is the “primary form of the body of Christ in the world.”³⁶ Migration has fundamentally altered the nature of the local community. No longer is the local defined exclusively by similarities in culture or education; it has become the site of radical plurality and global diversity. These transformations have significant impacts on the church since it is now embodying what has always been true of the catholic church: that it is “made up of historically, culturally, and socially non-simultaneous groups.”³⁷ If the Reformed, following the *World Alliance of Reformed Churches*, want to continue to maintain that catholicity begins with the local gathered congregation, not by allegiance to the pope or a bishop, then it must take more seriously the socioethical task of signifying catholicity and unity in the local congregation and national denominations.³⁸ Migration demands that local congregations, presbyteries, and denominations find ways to connect our theological confession of catholicity with our lived practice.

Following the important Reformed dictate to be reformed and ever reforming according to the Word of God, let me conclude by suggesting two significant events within the Pauline epistles that could aid the Reformed tradition, and the broader ecumenical church, in the struggle to symbolize the church’s unity and catholicity in an age of global migration. Neither of these depends on (or denies) transnational episcopacies or teaching offices; thus they are amenable to the Reformed heritage and also open to adoption across denominational lines. The first is to reclaim the socioethical importance of Paul’s argument regarding unity, social standing, and communion or the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 11. Far from being a demand to personally examine one’s own motives, Paul’s injunction is a radical call for the church to traverse existing social structures by mirroring the radical unity of Christ. Far from offering a vision of the “spirituality of the church,” Paul’s sacramental ethics are a call for the Christian community to live across and against the constructed borders of society. The second New Testament example from which we might creatively develop a symbolic account of the unity and catholicity of church is seen in Paul’s collection for the church in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:10; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8:1–9:15; Rom. 15:14–32). There Paul requests that theological unity and catholicity become expressed in and through financial sharing. In these two events, Paul and the early Christian community struggle to find ways to enact and symbolize their unity

and catholicity, both locally and across the “globe.” Paul does not opt for symbolic acts grounded in his own authority or in theological confession alone but also in concrete socioethical exchange that symbolize and make concrete the reconciling truth of the Gospel.

Read in these ways, the church’s claim to be one catholic community takes on a radical political edge. Dietrich Bonhoeffer highlights this when he writes,

To allow other baptized Christians to participate in worship but to refuse to have community with them in everyday life, and to abuse them and treat them with contempt, is to become guilty against the body of Christ itself. To acknowledge that other baptized Christians have received the gifts of salvation, and then to deny them the provisions necessary for this earthly life, or to leave them knowingly in affliction and distress, is to make a mockery of the gift of salvation and to behave like a liar. When the Holy Spirit has spoken, but we still continue to listen to the voice of our race, our nature, or our sympathies and antipathies, we are profaning the sacrament. Baptism into the body of Christ changes not only a person’s personal status with regard to salvation, but also their relationships throughout all of life.³⁹

Extending Bonhoeffer’s reading, the church’s catholicity and unity is oriented, not toward the institutional church, but toward the world. The church’s weekly confession of being one holy catholic church demands the rearrangement and reframing of the existing patterns of the nation. To confess the catholicity of the church demands acts of solidarity across borders that reimagine and resist the categories of citizen and migrant. The church’s mission, then, aims to witness to the One that beckons all nations to worship. Furthermore, as Bonhoeffer notes, the catholic unity that is given and received in worship must be extended outward into human practice beyond the church walls. To truly live as catholic people entails cultivating a life of discipleship that manifests our eccentric identity received in Word and Sacrament. To claim baptismal and catholic unity but then to ignore the racial, gender, and national divisions that exist in the world is to ignore the Spirit and deny Christ. Catholicity and unity are gifts that are grounded in Christ and given through the Spirit for the sake of mission and public practice. They are fundamentally not the church’s possessions but God’s gifts.

Ministry with migrants and refugees in North America, then, should extend itself beyond political debates regarding immigration or acts of resettlement and begin to cultivate long-term commitments to acts of

friendship, mutual learning, shared worship, and genuine exchange. The dominant models of either service to migrants or accommodation to immigrant churches must be shifted toward socioethical and doxological practices of radical solidarity. Such creative acts of diasporic catholicity draw from the deep wells of Scripture, tradition, and the lived example of radical alternative communities. For instance, the church in North America could take a cue from organizations discussed in this book like Jubilee Partners and the Jesuit Refugee Service and develop models of accompaniment and hospitality that enfleashes the church's catholicity in local communities. In so doing, the Reformed churches of the West must address the economic and social barriers toward church leadership that inhibit full participation by refugees and immigrants. This would allow these churches to begin to not only give gifts of hospitality to refugees and migrants but also receive the numerous gifts of the spirit of God that new arrivals have to offer the church in North America. In so doing, the church might more faithfully witness to the One, who, in Karl Barth's wonderful phrase, journeyed to the far-off country for our sake. The church will then begin to more fully embody its theological identity as a catholic people and lean more fully into our eschatological destiny as those who will become what we are already are in Christ: one people gathered from all nations.

NOTES

1. Philip Benedict, *Christ's Church Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 99.
2. Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 199.
3. J. E. Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare: Deacons and the Bourse Française* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989), 11.
4. *1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, Article I.a., <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html>.
5. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 134.
6. This chapter builds on and constructively expands on the insights and arguments of Robert R. Vosloo's "The Displaced Calvin: 'Refugee Reality' as a Lens to Re-examine Calvin's Life, Theology and Legacy," *Religion and Theology* 16 (2009): 35–52.
7. Michael Wilson Bruening, *Calvinism's First Battleground: Conflict and Reform in the Pays de Vaud, 1528–1559* (New York: Springer, 2005), 167.

8. Philip Marfleet, *Refugees in a Global Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 102–5.
9. Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace*, trans. Francis W. Keley (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962 [1625]), Book II.2.16.
10. Philip Benedict, *Christ’s Church Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 84.
11. While I will make reference to other Reformed denominations, my primary engagement in this chapter will be with the Presbyterian Church (USA).
12. See https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/immigrant/pdf/growth-strategy.pdf.
13. <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/cross-cultural-ministries/about-us>.
14. R. Stephen Weber, *A Church of Our Own: Disestablishment and Diversity in American Religion* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), chap. 15.
15. David Fergusson, *Church, State and Civil Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 140.
16. There is a long and vibrant tradition of African American Presbyterianism. For more, see Gayraud S. Wilmore, “Identity and Integration: Black Presbyterians and Their Allies in the Twentieth Century,” in *The Presbyterian Predicament: Six Perspectives*, ed. Milton J. Colalter, John M. Mulder, and Louis B Weeks (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 109–33.
17. As Corey Widmer’s forthcoming dissertation notes, “The PC(USA) is currently 90.2% white in its membership. This statistic reflects that 9.8% of membership is non-white, but the percentage of multiethnic congregations is of course much smaller. Even among the membership, most gains in the racial ethnic share among PC(USA) members have resulted from declines in total white percentage, not increases in the racial ethnic one. The 1999–2008 shift from 6.4 to 8.6 percent racial ethnic membership happened partly because of a net gain of 15,000 racial ethnic members, but mostly because of a net loss of 233,000 white members.” <http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/research/pdfs/gofigureaug10.pdf>.
18. Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 145.
19. William Bouswma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 17.
20. Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 109.
21. Heiko Oberman, *The Two Reformations: The Journey from the Last Days to the New World*, ed. Donald Weinstein (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 144.

22. Heiko Oberman, *John Calvin and the Reformation of the Refugees* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2009), 162.
23. Benedict, *Christ's Church Purely Reformed*, 120.
24. R. Stephen Warner, "The De-Europeanization of American Christianity," in *A Nation of Religions: Pluralism in the American Public Square*, ed. Stephen Prothero (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 233–55.
25. John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoletto, *A Reformation Debate*, ed. John C. Olin (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1966), 62.
26. Oberman, *The Two Reformations*, 148.
27. John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill and trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960), IV.1.9.
28. Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, II.8.55.
29. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 193.
30. Matthew J. Gibney, "Caring at a Distance: (Im)partiality, Moral Motivation and the Ethics of Representation—Asylum and the Principle of Proximity," *Ethics, Place & Environment: A Journal of Philosophy & Geography* 3 (2000): 313–17.
31. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *From Crisis to Kairos: The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV/AIDS, Refugees, and Poverty* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications of Africa, 2005).
32. John of Chrysostom, *Homily 65, I*, in *Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1844–1855), LIX 361–62.
33. Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, II.8.55.
34. Calvin and Sadoletto, *A Reformation Debate*, 64.
35. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV.1, trans. Thomas T. Torrance (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1956), 703.
36. Fergusson, *Church, State, and Civil Society*, 149.
37. Karl Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come* (New York: Seabury, 1974), 35.
38. See Dirkie J. Smit, *Essays on Being Reformed: Collected Essays 3* (Stellenbosch, South Africa: SUN MeDia, 2009), 390.
39. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer Works vol. 4 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 234–35.

CHAPTER 3



ORTHODOX CHURCH(ES) STEPPING OUT OF THE ORTHODOX HEARTLAND

SOLVING ECCLESIOLOGICAL RIDDLES IN A MIGRATION CONTEXT¹

Maria Hämmerli

INTRODUCTION

One of the key conditions for religious groups to obtain legal recognition by the state in the Swiss Canton of Vaud is the capacity to provide a unique representative in its dealings with the political authorities of the canton. Nobody expected that this apparently trivial and mundane task, especially for small population samples at the regional level, would turn out to become the stumbling block for Orthodox communities at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Though numerically a tiny minority, the Orthodox in the Canton of Vaud are ethnically very diverse: Serbs, Russians, Romanians, Greeks, and a few local converts populate the “Orthodox landscape” in the region, which is organized correspondingly in ethnic parishes placed under the jurisdiction of national churches back home. Five different bishops (belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate) are in charge of these parishes, and only two of them have residence in Switzerland. Some of the bishops did not give their blessing for their parishes to form a politically involved secular structure, which would mean that, in some particular matters,

the respective parishes would follow instructions from an authority other than ecclesiastical. Also, designating a unique representative of Orthodox churches on such a small territory would imply the creation of a suprajurisdictional structure, with its own legal statutes, administrative bodies, and agenda. Since there was not unanimous agreement of all bishops, none of the parishes set forth any further legal action, giving up the idea of obtaining political recognition. While in the eyes of other Christian denominations in the canton, this was yet another example of the impossibility of Orthodox churches to work together in a migration context because of the multiple jurisdiction system; for Orthodox Christians themselves, it was a way to preserve conciliarity and fraternal relations while remaining ethnically centered and ecclesiastically tied to the mother churches back home.

Orthodox churches are not usually associated with global movement and transnational circulation. Despite some occasional missionary activity by the Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska, Japan, and China, these churches have been historically confined to their traditional territories in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Only recently have they started spreading around the world, and this is because their members have been driven away from their home countries by dramatic events (e.g., during communism in Eastern Europe) or economic hardships in the postcommunist period. This new episode in their history—expansion of their canonical territories beyond the Orthodox heartland—has raised new questions and challenged their ecclesiology.

Historically confined to the Orthodox heartland, Orthodoxy has developed an organic bond with the local cultures and with ethnic/national identity. Through migration, religion becomes disconnected from a social, political, and cultural environment that supports religious identity for individuals as well as religious institutions' organizational structure and way of functioning. Eastern European expatriates in the West become minorities and have to go through the painful transition from being a national church that is socially, politically, and culturally embedded in everyday life to inhabiting a legal framework favoring separation of church and state, which confines them to regular public law associations. Migration and settlement in non-Orthodox contexts requires Orthodox churches and their members to undergo a process of identity reconstruction, whereby they adjust to and integrate into societies that have not been shaped by Orthodox values while simultaneously preserving their theological and ecclesiological heritage.

This chapter analyzes the implications of migration for Orthodox ecclesiology at two levels: the macro level of the Orthodox Church as an institution and in terms of inter-Orthodox relations and small-scale ecclesiological “events” that occur at the level of individual parishes. When relocating into non-Orthodox settings, Orthodox Churches are faced with a need to rediscuss issues of jurisdiction, primacy, and conciliarity. Also, they must reorient a theological focus that understands Church unity to derive from the bishop exercising jurisdiction on a particular territory to a Eucharistically centered ecclesiology. Finally, I argue that migration prompts a redefinition and reconfiguration of clergy-laity relations—something that varies according to the sociological reality of each parish. However, first, I will introduce some notions of Orthodox ecclesiology and provide a brief account of Orthodox migrations and their settlement in Western Europe.

THE BASICS OF ORTHODOX ECCLESIOLOGY

At the core of Orthodox ecclesiology lies the belief that each local community of Christians gathered around a bishop—who has jurisdiction over a definite territory and celebrates the Eucharist—represents the local realization of the universal church (what is called the *local church*). John Zizioulas argues that Eastern Christianity does not hold an antagonistic relationship between the local church (which has preeminence in Protestantism) and the universal church (stressed by the Catholic Church) but rather combines the two categories, which coexist and operate simultaneously: the local church epitomizes the universal, and the universal is manifested locally.² Notwithstanding the physical and numerical size of each local church, they are all *equal* by virtue of the fact that each of them fully embodies the universal church.

Though remaining self-governing, equal entities, the various local churches preserve *unity* among themselves, not by virtue of a superstructure or by way of a centralized coordination of their activity. Orthodox theologians argue that the principle of unity emanates from the fact that local churches are held together by the Orthodox faith—namely, in sacramental unity (the Eucharist and the other sacraments), in liturgical unity (they have basically the same liturgical texts and liturgical celebration patterns but in different languages), and in canonical unity (they refer to the first seven Ecumenical Councils and other local councils).³ Their unity is also expressed in their mutual recognition and respect of territorial jurisdiction.

All local churches being equal, their primates are also equal among themselves. Official titles such as patriarch, metropolitan, or archbishop are not ranks of a linear hierarchy but reflect a certain “ranking of honor”⁴ in the sense that a patriarch may have a supervisory role over the synod of all the bishops of his country or that a metropolitan of a city may have some degree of precedence among the bishops of his province. Yet they are all *basically* bishops and “equal in apostolic status.”⁵ There is thus no pontifical authority in the Orthodox Church, which recognizes only Jesus Christ as its real head.

A *primacy of honor* is granted to the ecumenical patriarch (of Constantinople) on the account of the history of Constantinople as the capital of the ancient Byzantine Empire. Besides, it is a primacy among equals: he is called *primus inter pares*. Within the church polity, decisions are made by way of dialogue and agreement among bishops, who are expected to be in permanent dialogue and synergy with the laity. This system of governance is called *synodality* or *conciliarity*. Moreover, authority is not the prerogative uniquely of bishops but is much more diffuse and shared by “Christ’s inspired people in their various offices and duties (bishops, priests, deacons, ascetics, married couples, prophets, martyrs among them).”⁶ This polycentric pattern of authority is considered both an asset (because it allows for flexibility in church life management) and a shortcoming (because it makes it difficult to understand who concretely leads the church and who speaks for it).

The jurisdictional organization of the Orthodox Church,⁷ as we know it today, results from the application of the principle of the local churches gathered around their bishops in a specific territory. The spread of Christianity and the numerical growth of the church members led to a more complex diversification of church structure into metropolitan and patriarchal levels. The metropolitan was a bishop of a big city (metropolis); the title of “patriarch” was first applied to the original three major sees of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch and shortly after extended to include Constantinople and Jerusalem. This fellowship, known as “the pentarchy,” changed its configuration because of two historic events: The first was the advent of Islam in the seventh century in Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem and in the fifteenth century in Constantinople, which led to the loss of many territories and populations. In these countries, Orthodox (and Christians more generally, including the so-called Oriental Orthodox) are still today a minority and their numbers keep shrinking under the pressure of religious or political persecution. The second was the schism with Rome in the eleventh century, which brought about a long-lasting separation

of Christianity into “Western” and “Eastern.” Besides these ancient patriarchates, other more “modern” locally established churches are part of the *Orthodox* Commonwealth—the Romanian (BOR⁸), Serbian (SOC), Russian (ROC), Bulgarian (BOC), and Greek (GOC). These were actually part of or historically connected to the Byzantine Empire and the Patriarchate of Constantinople but emerged into separate autocephalous churches (i.e., self-governing) when the Byzantine Empire began to disintegrate under Ottoman pressure (the Orthodox Church in Russia, recognized as autocephalous in 1589) or after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire itself and the formation of new nation-states in the Balkans in the course of the nineteenth century (in the case of Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece). The nationalist movement sealed in the Balkans a century-old synthesis of religion and ethnicity, resulting in ethnicity and nationality being absorbed into Orthodox ecclesiology. Though the principle of territoriality (one territory, one bishop, one Eucharist) was preserved, the criterion of ethnicity and nationality emerged as important elements in the organization of the church. Many of the local churches became in time de facto national churches, operating within the geopolitical boundaries of sovereign national states. This fact is very important for understanding the behavior of Orthodox Churches in a migration context, which I will discuss in the next section.

ORTHODOX MIGRATIONS TO WESTERN EUROPE⁹

For centuries, Orthodox Churches have been confined to their historical territories, focusing their energy on survival strategies and the perpetuation of religious and ethnic identity of their members. This is mostly due to the fact that these churches lived and operated under political regimes that closely watched and restricted their activity or openly persecuted them: the four-century Ottoman dominion in the Balkans, the two-century abolition of the institution of the patriarchate in Russia (since Peter the Great to 1917), and the several decades of communist regime in Russia and Eastern Europe. The Orthodox scattered worldwide relatively recently—starting with the twentieth century—as a result of a political exodus caused by the Bolshevik takeover in Russia (1917), the Greek-Turkish conflict in 1921, the advent of communism in the Balkans (in the aftermath of World War II), and the labor migration from Greece and Yugoslavia during the economic reconstruction of Western Europe. Orthodox migrations diversified and intensified after the fall of communism in the 1990s, following the war in the former Yugoslavia at the end of the 1990s, the European

integration of Romania and Bulgaria in the early twenty-first century, and the economic crisis in Greece in 2009.

Outside the Orthodox heartland, Orthodox churches continue to be organized along ethnic lines and continue ecclesiastical dependence on the mother churches back home. This means that Romanian Orthodox migrants established their own parishes, with Romanian-speaking priests and bishops belonging to the BOR—it is the same for Serbs, Russians, Bulgarians, and so on. Besides creating the ecclesiastical paradox of having two or more bishops for the same territory (e.g., in Paris, there are seven Orthodox bishops, each holding jurisdiction over his own ethnic flock), this strong connection between ethnicity/nationality and Orthodoxy makes it difficult to draw a clear-cut picture of the Orthodox communities in the West. The tendency “to consider that the cumulative number of Greeks, Romanians, Russians and Serbs coincides with the number of Orthodox people in a given country, while this is only a pool from which one can identify potential Orthodox,” prevents researchers from describing the demography of Orthodox churches.¹⁰

The Orthodox presence in the West is often designated as “Orthodox diaspora,” but this term is not appropriate sociologically speaking because these expatriate communities do not gather around the religious reference but remain instead ethnic immigrant groups. From a theological point of view, *diaspora* involves the idea of a periphery—that is, the Orthodox communities established in Western Europe in relation to a center, the mother churches, back home. This is a view that contradicts the decentralized Orthodox ecclesiology, which, as was said before, is based on the principle of equality among local churches.¹¹ These difficulties of defining an Orthodox identity outside the Orthodox heartland stem from the fact that migration implies deterritorialization from a social, cultural, and political context, which backs religious identity and settlement in culturally and religiously alien contexts. In the following section, I will discuss the resulting consequences of this situation for Orthodox ecclesiology.

ECCLESIOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN MIGRATION

In analyzing the ecclesiological challenges raised by migration, I will distinguish between the institutional level (e.g., inter-Orthodox relations, theological redefinitions of primacy, and conciliarity) and the intermediate level of parish organization in specific local contexts in Western Europe (e.g., legal status and relation with the host state and

society, internal parish organization involving the redefinition of the clergy role).

One of the first ecclesiological riddles that migration caused Orthodox churches was the question of jurisdiction over the populations who left the Orthodox heartland and settled in non-Orthodox countries. The common way to proceed in the case of population movement is that people attend already existing parishes and pay allegiance to the bishop who has jurisdiction over that territory, becoming part of his Eucharistic assembly. The Western part of Europe was traditionally under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome. However, since the bishop of Rome (pope) is no longer in communion with the Orthodox Church, his authority over the respective territory is not recognized as canonical. This created a jurisdictional void in Western Europe and other parts of the world that were not traditionally Orthodox.

Unexpected migration waves, especially after the Bolshevik coup in Russia in 1917 and after 1990, forced local national churches to answer to the pastoral needs of their expatriate flock by creating parishes and dioceses on territories that were not canonically theirs, each of them ordaining its own bishops. The result is that there are parallel ethnically diverse Orthodox hierarchies on the same territory in Western Europe, a situation that the whole Orthodox world deplors as contrary to its ecclesiology. Here are a few problematic points the Orthodox strive to solve:

First, Orthodox Churches infringed the principle of territoriality which lies at the core of their ecclesiology: national autocephalous churches extended their jurisdiction beyond their canonically established territorial limits, causing an overlapping of ecclesial authority on the same geographical area. External observers interpret this as an obstacle to inter-Orthodox relations and to the unity of the Orthodox Church. Despite bishops recognizing each other's episcopate, the Orthodox Church is declined in the plural (*Orthodox Churches*), resembling a federation of national churches. Co-territoriality, "the co-existence of several local Churches at the same geographical location, on the same ecclesial territory" is historically linked to *confessionalism*, which emerged as a consequence of ecclesiastical rupture in the West (the church separation after the Reformation). In the Orthodox case, we see manifestations of ecclesiological problems in the fact that different jurisdictions are exercised on the same territory (what Papatomas calls "multi-jurisdictional co-territoriality").¹²

As a measure to lessen the negative consequences of this situation for the unity of the Orthodox Church, the Orthodox bishops'

conferences proposed a temporary solution: the creation in each country of Episcopal Assemblies, bringing together all canonically recognized bishops and chaired by “the first among the prelates of the Church of Constantinople.” Yet these assemblies do not hold true ecclesiastical authority because the member bishops continue to be subject to their mother churches.

Many Orthodox hierarchs relativize the current state of affairs by invoking the unity in faith and sacraments. There is a shift in recent Orthodox theology (e.g., in the works of Serghie Bulgakov, Nikolaj Afanassieff, Alexander Schmemmann, and John Meyendorff) from an ecclesiology centered on the bishop (e.g., Ignatius of Antioch’s “Where the bishop is, there the Church is”) to an emphasis on the Eucharist (e.g., Afanassieff’s “Where the Eucharist is, there is the Church”). This implies that the main factor of the unity of the church is the Eucharist—which is the origin of the church—determining ecclesiastical structure and order. Eucharistic ecclesiology provides a corrective to overlapping jurisdictional authority of bishops in order to reassert conciliarity (synodality). Yet the Eucharist and all sacraments are territorially embedded, and they remain connected to the principle of territoriality to the extent that they are tied to episcopacy.

Second, by extending their jurisdiction beyond their canonically established geographical limits, each national church made her own geography and her own partition of Western Europe: churches often refer to their diocese/archdiocese/metropolitanate in “West and Central Europe,” or “West and South Europe,” or “North and Central Europe,” with different countries cut out. This is due, on the one hand, to the fact that the criterion of creating parishes was ethnic, each national church following her flock, according to its demographic distribution. On the other hand, this is due to the fact that the canons do not explicitly address how churches may expand into new territory, or at least the local and autocephalous churches cannot agree on their interpretation. The fourth Pan-Orthodox preconiliar conference in 2009 tried to reach a decision about territorial cuts in 11 “regions”: North America and Central America; South America; Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania; Great Britain and Ireland; France; Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg; Austria; Italy and Malta; Switzerland and Lichtenstein; Germany; Scandinavian countries (except Finland); and Spain and Portugal.

In the third place, by extending their ecclesiastical authority beyond their geographically determined territories, Orthodox churches started exercising jurisdiction on people of a specific ethnic identity, indicating a shift from an objective criterion (the canonical territorial boundaries)

to ethnicity, which is a changeable and subjective variable. The importance attached to ethnicity or national identity was often qualified as “ethnophyletism” and has been repeatedly denounced by the church starting in 1872 (Council of Constantinople). By keeping a strong umbilical cord with their mother churches, the Orthodox established in the West often were influenced by the political developments in their respective countries of origin. Let me quote here the implications of the advent of communism in Eastern Europe: during the two world wars, the expatriate Russians did not agree on the attitude to take on the political situation in the homeland, with the church being subdued, persecuted, and controlled by the new political regime. The Russian diaspora was split into three major ecclesiastical units: (1) those who remained faithful to the Moscow patriarchate, refusing to associate the church with a temporary hostile political situation; (2) those who separated from Moscow patriarchate, creating the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) as a temporary measure to avoid interference from the Bolsheviks; (3) those who decided to ask for ecclesiastical shelter in the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, giving rise to what became the Exarchate of Orthodox Parishes of Russian Tradition in Western Europe.

Fourth, migration and settlement in non-Orthodox places brought onto the Orthodox agenda issues of primacy: declaring the jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome as noncanonical created an ecclesiastical void on his territory. The question of primacy over the traditionally non-Orthodox territories became a source of conflict polarized by two positions: on the one hand, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople claims jurisdiction over all the territories in the world that are not already part of the canonically delimited territories of another local church; it substantiates this claim with the provision of the canon 28 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, which grants the Patriarch of Constantinople a primacy of honor after the bishop of Rome and over “barbarian” dioceses (the interpretation of “barbarian” being highly contested). On the other hand, the national autocephalous churches—but mostly the Moscow Patriarchate—contest this right of world jurisdiction, evoking the danger of generating a primacy of authority, similar to that of the pope of Rome, and asking for a reading of the canons adapted to the present demographic reality of the church.

Recently, the Ecumenical Patriarchate published on its website¹³ a paper that challenged primacy as a mere honorific designation by redefining the patriarch of Constantinople as *primus sine paribus* (first without equals). Russian theologians qualified this position as

deviant because it would tend to introduce a centralized pattern of authority, which is contrary to the principle of conciliarity.¹⁴ These theological disagreements hide a tacit competition between the sees of Constantinople and Moscow in gaining recognition as representatives of the Orthodox world: the former on account of its history, the latter by virtue of its size and contribution to the Orthodox theological heritage.¹⁵ This long-established rivalry dates back to the fifteenth century, when Russia aspired to become the “Third Rome” and a defender of Christendom in a time when Constantinople (the “Second Rome”) was under siege and ended up under a four-century-long Ottoman domination.

Migration challenges Orthodox ecclesiology not only at the macro level but also at a smaller scale, in parish organization and the relations between clergy and laity. In a migration context, Orthodox churches are a religious minority, with no (or at best little) contact with the political sphere of the receiving country and no collective support. Most often they are registered as public law organizations, similar to leisure or sports organizations. This legal status implies they need to function democratically, with elections and equal voices for all members. In some parishes this empowers lay people and belittles the authority of priests. It comes as no surprise then that Afanassieff’s writings on the ministry of laity and the equal priesthood of laymen and clergy (a theological innovation¹⁶ developed in a migration context) have been met with such a success in Orthodox parishes in the West. In a 1958 paper Afanassieff spoke of lay believers as embodying royal priesthood, a form of service within the church that possesses priestly dignity. He described clergy as not ontologically but only functionally different from lay people. The priesthood of clergy is only a special form of service, which does not (or should not) supersede the royal priesthood of the “people of God.” In his perspective, there should not be any separation between laity and clergy because this partition automatically introduces a hierarchical relationship between the two parts of the church, inducing a passive and submissive attitude in lay people.¹⁷ One of the Orthodox dioceses that applied this new approach was the Russian diocese of Sourouzh in Great Britain under Metropolitan Anthony, who used to speak of “a hierarchy of service and not of dominion.”¹⁸

The nature of the laity-clergy relation can also change because of a practical aspect: in a minority context, priests do not possess collective, massive, social recognition of their ministry and authority. If they do exert authority, that happens in the restricted circle of the parish. And even at that level, their influence is being undermined by the fact

that they are employees of their parish and relate to their flock on a contractual basis. Under the influence of the secularization process in the West, many parishes introduced a way of management that separates this-worldly administrative and financial matters, entrusted to lay leaders, from the otherworldly liturgical and pastoral care, which is the expertise of the priests. Though in their discourse and teachings, priests preach the need to reconnect the material and the spiritual world, in reality their working conditions increasingly resemble civil jobs in which the material, practical, “worldly” aspects are separated from the “spiritual” sphere. Berit Thorbjørnsrud’s research findings illustrate the changing lay-clergy relations through case studies of Orthodox priests in Norway caught in painful and long-lasting conflicts with their parish board members, which were not solved by ecclesiastical authority but required intervention from the civil local authorities.¹⁹

CONCLUSION

This chapter has tried to illustrate some of the ecclesiological riddles Orthodox churches are called to solve in a migration context: at the macro level, they are searching for a canonical solution that would allow them to exercise power of jurisdiction over new territories so as to maintain unity and conciliarity and not transgress the main norm of church organization, which is territoriality. Meanwhile, the field reality points to ecclesiastical incoherence and cacophony (for instance, the jurisdiction overlap) and to the emergence of ethnicity/nationality as a significant criterion of church organization. Besides, the emergence of a new “territory” also raised the question of who is more legitimate to claim jurisdiction over it, and this opened the way for competition among national churches.

There are some theological developments that, though remaining in the frame of tradition and within acceptable Orthodox theological positions, reflect the adaptation to a new social reality: first, there is a shift of emphasis from the bishop as the key figure embodying church unity to the sacrament (or *mystery*, to use Orthodox terminology) of the Eucharist as that which confers unity of faith among all Orthodox worldwide; second, Orthodox theologians reevaluate the traditional relations between clergy and laity in light of the decline of religious leaders’ authority in the West and certainly also under the influence of democratic ideals of social equality. “Hierarchy of service and not of dominion” and the “lay activism” movement are examples of such theological innovations.

NOTES

1. Some of the arguments developed in this chapter have been discussed previously in Maria Hämmerli, “Orthodox *Diaspora?* A Sociological and Theological Problematisation of a Stock Phrase,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 10, no. 2 (2010): 97–115.
2. Jean Zizioulas, *L’Eucharistie, l’Evêque et l’Eglise* (Paris: Desclée Brouwer, 1994).
3. Sergei Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1988); K. Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1993).
4. The idea of precedence and rank of honor is suggested in the *diptychs*, a term that describes the order in which Orthodox Churches commemorate each other at their patriarchal liturgies and that reflects their history, the mutual recognition of this history and relations among the local churches; see J. McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).
5. *Ibid.*, 28.
6. *Ibid.*, 29.
7. Though the plurality of the local churches is expressed grammatically by the customary plural “Orthodox Churches,” according to some theologians (e.g., Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 1988), this could convey a misleading description of the organization of Eastern Christianity, as it might give the wrong impression that there would be different types of Orthodoxy, similar to a denominational model, in which the *Russian* Orthodox Church would differ from the *Greek* Orthodox Church or from the *Romanian* Orthodox Church. Gregorios Papathomas argues that, in order to avoid this ambiguity, one should refer to the Orthodox Church *in Russia*, the Orthodox Church *in Greece*, and so on. See Gregorios Papathomas, “La Relation d’opposition entre ‘Eglise locale établie’ et ‘Diaspora Ecclésiale,’” *Contacts* 210 (2005): 96–132. The latter designations would be more appropriate, as they would convey two fundamental Orthodox ecclesiological assumptions: first, that it is the territorial principle that is the norm of organization and not nationality (Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 1993), and second, that there is unity (the Church is *one*) in plurality (the *One Church* has various geographical manifestations).
8. BOR stands for Biserica ortodoxă română. I opted for the acronym based on the Romanian designation in order to avoid using ROC, which also stands for the Russian Orthodox Church.
9. This section is based on material I used for the introduction to *Orthodox Identities in Western Europe: Migration, Settlement and Innovation* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2014).
10. Hämmerli and Mayer, “Introduction,” 3.

11. For a complete argumentation about the inaccuracy of the term “diaspora” for the Orthodox presence in the West, see Hämmerli, “Orthodox *Diaspora*?”
12. Papatomas, “La Relation d’opposition entre ‘Eglise localement établie’ et ‘Diaspora Ecclésiale,’”
13. Elpidophoros Lambriniadis, Metropolitan of Bursa, “First Without Equals,” <http://www.patriarchate.org/documents/first-without-equals-elpidophoros-lambriniadis>, accessed March 2014.
14. “Presentation by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk Chairman of the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate Chairman of the Synodal Biblical-Theological Commission Rector of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate Institute,” <https://mospat.ru/en/2014/03/25/news100001/>, accessed April 2014.
15. The ROC is the single largest Orthodox Church in the world, with an estimate of 101,450,000 members. The most important Orthodox theologians of the twentieth century are Russian émigrés in France and the United States (A. Schmemmann, J. Meyendorff, G. Florovsky, V. Lossky, N. Afanasiev, S. Bulgakov, etc.).
16. Though based on early Church experience and tradition (or rather the claim to offer a more “authentic” reinterpretation of tradition), this theological development can be called an innovation. Innovation in the Orthodox Church is introduced never as such but rather as a return to a more accurate interpretation of tradition. For an analysis of this phenomenon, see Trine Willert and Lina Molokotos-Liederman, eds., *Innovation in the Orthodox Christian Tradition?* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), and Maria Hämmerli and Jean-François Mayer, eds., *Orthodox Identities in Western Europe: Migration, Settlement and Innovation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).
17. Nikolaj Afanassieff, “The Ministry of the Laity in the Church,” *Ecumenical Review* 10, no. 3 (1958): 255–63.
18. G. Crow, *This Holy Man: Impressions of Metropolitan Anthony* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2005).
19. Berit Thorbjørnsrud, “Orthodox Priests in Norway: Serving or Ruling?,” in *Orthodox Identities*, ed. Maria Hämmerli and Jean-Francois Mayer, 191–210.

CHAPTER 4



BEING CHURCH AS LATINA/O PENTECOSTALS

Néstor Medina

Twenty-five years ago, I left Guatemala with my younger brother and my good friend. We left with the hopes of making it to the United States. Within a week we had crossed Mexico and successfully avoided the Mexican police. My uncle gave us a rough map outlining the direction of our journey. Several times we ran out of money and asked people to give us some change to get there—al norte. We found wonderful people who helped us and gave us money, food, and shelter along the way. When we arrived at the US-Mexico border, we found some coyotes who offered to take us across the Río Grande. To my surprise, none among them knew how to swim. I knew that my brother's best friend had drowned in the same river a year before.

It was January 6, 1988, and it was zero degrees outside. At least it felt that way. The current was strong, and we had to put our clothes in plastic bags and swim across holding the bags with our mouths. I was the first one to cross. I was also the only one who knew how to swim. I got to the other side and indicated to my brother and my friend to start crossing. They were put together inside an inner tube so that they could float on while the coyote sat on another inner tube and held them with her feet. The river was about twenty meters wide at the time. It carried tree branches. Halfway in, my brother started screaming; he felt he was slipping out of the inner tube. I had to jump back into the river and pull them out on the US side

of the river. As we were leaving, another woman screamed because her girlfriend was drowning. So without hesitation, I jumped back in and was able to pull her out of the water. We were pretty shaken up, but there was no time to rest. We knew La Migra was nearby.

INTRODUCTION

My story of migration did not begin or end with this crossing of the Rio Grande, but the memory of that experience continues to shape my life and the way I think about borders, the journey of migration, and migrants' lives and spiritual journeys. It shapes the way I think about church. I carry the pain, suffering, and human cost of migration and cannot think about my own life in Canada without thinking about those that stayed behind. The idea of living in the "Promised Land" after a dramatic exodus or migration does not communicate the experiences of "undocumented" migrants in the United States. From a Latina/o perspective, the notion of the "Promised Land" ought to be rejected: first, because the Spanish conquistadors and the English settlers used the same imagery to justify the decimation of the indigenous population and imperial project in the Americas, and, second, because as soon as immigrants arrive, they quickly realize that the United States is far from a land full of milk and honey. In this chapter, I propose that multiple interrelated aspects of the migration experience conspire to shape and reshape the way many Latin American and Latina/o Pentecostal migrants come to understand their faith in God, what it means to be a community of believers, and what it means to be and do church.¹

As people migrate, they export their sacred traditions across borders.² For those Pentecostals who have undergone or are familiar with the experience of migration and are part of the Latina/o communities, there is little doubt that, from beginning to end, the journey becomes an essential prism for understanding divine activity in their lives and their role as church in this world. Out of this realization, a new kind of church is emerging, one that refuses to understand itself as an abstract idea and focuses instead on a concrete reality invested in the well-being of others. In this chapter, I theologically reconceptualize church as a sacred space of cultural and human affirmation and as a space for the reorientation of inherited androcentric ecclesial structures. I do this through connecting the theme of migration in the Bible with the long-standing experience of migration among Latinas/os. I argue that for these migrants, the very migratory journey is in itself pneumatological: migrants daringly conceive human agency and

being/doing church as taking place within the confines of the activity of the spirit. My goal is to signal the emergence of a Pentecostal theological understanding of church that accompanies migrants as a result of their faith in God and concrete expression of the activity of the Spirit.

There are three parts to this chapter. First, I briefly explore the present context of Latinas/os in the United States. Second, I outline the ways in which the experience of migration leads to the development of new interpretive frames when it comes to approaching the biblical text. Third, I explore how the experience of migration contributes to a theological reconfiguration of what it means to be and do church.

LATINAS/OS AND MIGRATION: THE CONTEXT

Migration is certainly not a new discussion topic for Latina/os in the United States. While Latinas/os are perceived generally to be either recent migrants or the children of migrants, many Mexican Americans trace back their ancestry to Mexico and today's southwest United States prior to the US-Mexican War at the end of the first half of the nineteenth century. Similarly, the "migration" of Puerto Ricans into the continental United States is connected to the implementation of the Jones Act in 1919. In both of these cases, US expansionism directly resulted in the presence of these migrants in the United States today. Cuban migration to the United States has largely been a consequence of the ways in which the United States undermined and opposed the communist Cuban Revolution of 1959.³ The circumstances surrounding the presence of these three groups in the United States—those representing the majority of the Latina/o population—are worlds apart from those that forced masses of Latin Americans, especially Central Americans, to make their way into the United States during the early 1980s and 1990s.⁴ In addition, today, countless men and women cut across the Sonoran Desert, swim across the Río Grande, or find other creative means to cross the border between Mexico and the United States to enter into the United States without "proper" documentation.

People migrate because their birth countries have failed them. It has become impossible for them to earn enough of a living to feed their families. The proliferation of gang violence, the lack of safety, and corruption at every level of government portend even worse economic hardships in the near future.⁵ In many ways, the present increase in undocumented immigrants must be interpreted as a form of protest against local governments who do not provide for their

citizens and ensure their safety.⁶ Regardless of how complicated and confusing arguments against undocumented immigrants may be (protection against terrorism, loss of jobs for the white Anglo and African American populations, and the erosion of US culture), the fact remains that thousands of people risk their lives daily attempting to cross the border into the United States. A large percentage of these people are of Latin American descent.⁷

Immigration is about human beings refusing to die prematurely as well as the hopelessness that forces people to leave and part ways with the world they know. In leaving their country of birth, immigrants risk it all.⁸ They leave their communities, homes, families, and lives behind, with no assurance of return. This is where the theological meets the social, economic, and political: migration is a struggle for life by those who would die prematurely. The costs involved in the journey of migration are not only physical but also emotional and psychological: many immigrants are mugged and raped and some others are dismembered and even die.⁹ Nevertheless, in my experience and in my many years interacting with immigrants, I have come to realize that as people embark on their migratory journey, negative experiences are only one side of the story. What we do not often hear is that migrants also encounter love, compassion, and hope. The impetus behind such a physically and emotionally taxing undertaking is the faint hope that if they cross the border, their families will actually survive. The goals of these immigrants are very modest. They do not aspire to have high-paying jobs and become rich. Rather, they hope to find a job so that they can send money home for their children to go to school and for their families to build a house and escape poverty. This explains why remittances for nations like El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico are the single most important source of foreign revenue¹⁰ and constitute, in some countries, a quarter of the national gross domestic product (GDP).¹¹

It should come as no surprise that questions of migration among Latinas/os stir mixed emotions of being unwelcome in this country. Although most Latinas/os were born in the United States and many others who were born outside the United States are now US citizens, Latinas/os are often depicted by the media as *perennial immigrants*, and many live with the social stigma of being *ilegales*. Attitudes of exclusion in governmental rhetoric have certainly been exacerbated by 9/11. However, both before and since then, migration issues have served as triggers justifying the exclusion of Latinas/os in the public arena. Once inside the country, many migrants face enormous pressures and experience life in the United States as a form

of imprisonment. Songs—Ricardo Arjona’s *El Mojado* and Los Tigres del Norte’s *Tres Veces Mojado*—remind us of the numerous perils faced by undocumented people and their persistence as they migrate to the United States.¹² Wet from their tears and sweat—or the waters of the Río Grande—they cross the border and live as fugitives in their new country. For some, returning to see their families is a lost hope. The US border becomes the bars of a *Jaula de oro* (golden cage), as the Tigres del Norte would call it, signaling the multiple changes people undergo over time, which later close the possibilities of returning to their birth country.

Finally, it is important to recognize that those who cross the border bring with them their religious affiliations. These eventually contribute to the development of crucial religious transnational relations and what have come to be called “religious remittances.”¹³ Many Latina/o migrants are Catholic by background, with the result that Catholic parishes and organizations in the United States and Mexico have sought ways to ameliorate their condition—and much has been written about their activity.¹⁴ Pentecostalism, by contrast, is often overlooked in conversations around migration. However, the Latina/o Pentecostal presence can be traced as far back as the 1906 revivals in Azusa Street, Los Angeles, and other places.¹⁵ Discussions of Latina/o Pentecostalism tend to refer broadly and simultaneously to nonmigrant Latinas/os who are of Pentecostal background originally, migrants who arrive to the United States already as Pentecostals, migrants who convert to Pentecostalism soon after their arrival, and migrants who convert to Catholicism both in their migratory journey and once they enter the country.¹⁶ Shifts in religious affiliation among Latinas/os in the United States have grabbed the attention of the nation, as evidenced in the cover article “The Latino Reformation” and Elizabeth Días’s article “The Rise of the Evangélicos” in the same issue of *Time* on April 15, 2013.¹⁷ Along that line, and although it tends to lump together erroneously Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Charismatics,¹⁸ one of the interesting aspects of the 2011 Pew Research Hispanic Center is that a good number of the constituency of Evangélicos are undocumented migrants.¹⁹ According to Gastón Espinosa, the influx of Latin American Pentecostal migrants is contributing to the numerical growth of Latina/o Pentecostal communities.²⁰

This complex web of interrelated issues influences the way in which Latinas/os come to view the Christian faith, interpret their experience with God, and understand what it means to be church. As I have shown, the composition of the Latina/o population in the United States is enormously diverse in terms of ethnic composition, religious

affiliation, and citizenship status. Because of the constant flow of new arrivals, many Latina/o churches are shaped by the reality of migration and often define themselves in light of the experience of migration. This is particularly true of Evangelicals/Pentecostals. In what follows, I focus on the ways in which migration shapes and continues to shape these Latina/o Evangelical/Pentecostal communities.

RETRIEVAL OF THE BIBLE—OR HERMENEUTICAL RECONFIGURATION— AS AN ASPECT OF BEING CHURCH

For Latina/o Pentecostals, the Bible provides the theological framing for doing and being church. There is a dynamic interrelation between their social context and the biblical text. Identifying the motif of migration in the Bible marks a hermeneutical reconfiguration whereby Latina/o Pentecostals come to find themselves represented in the biblical narrative and can thus conceive of themselves as agents in the development of the divine-human saga. In this complex yet fine tension between their lives and the text, migrants inspired by the Spirit, and by their own lives and experiences, are writing their own biblical narrative.

The biblical text takes on new dimensions previously overlooked. People begin to understand the Gospel message anew. Liberation theology's searing challenge concerning how to communicate the love of God to hungry and poor people extends to the homeless, displaced, and hopeless, as well as to undocumented migrants. Latinas/os consciously reclaim the numerous passages that display divine preoccupation for the dignity and good treatment of the orphan and the poor (Deut. 15:4, 15:7, 15:11, 24:12, 24:14, 24:14; Isa. 10:2, 11:4, 14:30, 41:17, 58:7, etc.) and the structuring of Israel's economy to make provision for the foreigner (Exod. 22:21, 23:9; Lev. 19:10, 19:34). Daniel Carroll reminds us that the theme of migration permeates the Old Testament.²¹ Such an intentional rereading of the Bible is a form of retrieval, designed to create parallels between the biblical narrative and people's experiences of migration. Looking through a migration lens, Latina/o Pentecostals readily discover the transient character of the people of Israel. Central figures in the Old Testament are reclaimed as those who migrated because they wanted to have a better life (e.g., Abraham), find a place where they would not starve (e.g., Joseph), or find a place of political refuge (e.g., Moses). There are inherited Latin American liberation theological claims on the book of Exodus.²² For migrants, the emphasis is not so much on

the liberation from Egypt as on the protracted journey of wandering through the desert and divine providential accompaniment. Notions of diaspora are also heavily informed by the Israelites' experience of displacement and deportation.

Because of multiple levels of connection with the migrant experience, the story of Ruth holds a unique place in these communities. Daniel Ramírez, for example, invites us to reread Ruth's narrative as a book about migration, including displacement because of economic constraints, solidarity with the dispossessed and foreigner, and the redemptive power of the foreigner. Instead of focusing on Ruth's submissive conversion to the beliefs and ways of Israel, he reminds us that the presence of Ruth, the foreigner, opens the possibility for the preservation of the messianic lineage.²³ Through his reading of Ruth, Ramírez helps us reclaim the redeeming value inherent in the presence of the foreigner.²⁴ These discussions are not exclusive to academic circles. I have heard Latina/o Pentecostals relate their own migration stories and extremely difficult situations to the story of Ruth. For them, the sense of hope that she has become part of a new people at the end of the story helps them imagine a divine solution in store for their lives. As Latina/o Pentecostals reflect on the story of Ruth, they are able to name the terrible experiences they have faced but also the wonderful people they encountered along the way in the form of various expressions of kindnesses, which are readily interpreted as gestures of the providential love of God for them.

But the reading of the Bible by these communities does not remain at the level of simply appreciating God's goodness. There is an imperative that is issued through the realization of their faith relationship with God. The Latina/o Pentecostal rereading of the Bible from the perspective of migration unveils a new ecclesial identity and new priorities as church: church is to be a church that accompanies undocumented migrants. For example, the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) serves as role model for the kind of Christian communities they ought to be. The account tells of the "foreigner's" responsibility to reach out with God's love to the needy and dispossessed. Many other passages could be mentioned, and certainly Jesus's own experience of dislocation as his family fled to Egypt in the Gospel of Matthew resonates with the experience many endure as they migrate.

The border is a central theological theme that emerges again and again in US Latina/o theology. The border is indeed a place of seared painful memories—it is *la herida abierta*, *la rajada* (open wound, the crack), as Gloria Anzaldúa, Latina spiritual activist and politico-cultural

theorist, would call it.²⁵ It is the place of daily extreme experiences of exclusion, despoliation, and violence.²⁶ The border is the place where we find the stories of Carlota de la Cruz, Oscar Reyes, and the many unidentified people whose lives were lost as they attempted to cross.²⁷ For Neomi DeAnda, the border is also simultaneously the source of stories of hope and a struggle for life.²⁸ The border is that in-between, liminal geographic space where people simultaneously face inhospitable terrain and the threat of premature death *and* see the possibilities for a better future. It should come as no surprise that the single most important source of forbearance and strength as people migrate is the faith/hope that God will guide them on the journey and as they attempt to cross the border. Be it the Lady of Guadalupe, El Cristo de Esquipulas, El Niño de Atocha, or another patron saint from their country, many bring deep-seated trust that God will accompany them as they cross the treacherous desert.²⁹ Pentecostals also carry a particular sense of hope and spirituality, which becomes concrete in the work of the Spirit, in the kind people they find along the way, and as they are able to reimagine a new life once they arrive in the United States. Through incredible good deeds, many Pentecostals experience concrete expressions of divine pervasive love and care along the way, and this benevolent human agency ought to be reclaimed and celebrated. Furthermore, among Pentecostals, it provokes a caring for other migrants. Pentecostals are being challenged to live out a radical message of good news by serving God concretely in the person of the undocumented immigrant.

Immigrants are condemned to work long hours in low-paying jobs and with no social safety net in case of accidents or illness. Although they pay taxes, they receive no police protection for crimes against them, including illegal exploitation, and they live with constant fear of deportation. The obstacles that migrants face are not a reflection of the Promised Land but an expression of what elsewhere I call the “nomad church.”³⁰ By that, I mean that the migrant church has a unique characteristic of being constantly in a state of pilgrimage and instability, not being able to find somewhere to settle. Nomadism is the experience of faith, determination, and survival among uprooted people. The experience of Latina/o migrants in the United States is that of wandering in the desert in the lands that sustain no life because they are unwanted. The present challenge is to learn to listen to migrants as they tell us that God sustains them in the midst of injustice and unjust laws.

BEING CHURCH AT THE BORDER: AN ECCLESIO-THEOLOGICAL PILGRIMAGE

Church as Place of Renewed Ethical Outreach

One of the better-known and longer-standing Christian ethical traditions relating to migration is the Sanctuary Movement. This has embodied a unique way of being church by creating physical spaces to protect and help migrants. In the United States, this movement has been interdenominational—involving Catholic and mainstream Protestant churches, many of which have worked painstakingly to protect the lives of migrants by offering them water and food and sometimes temporary shelter to recover their strength and continue their journey. In other extreme cases, churches have harbored migrants within their walls to protect them from local migration authorities. The legacy of Catholic and Protestant churches involved in former and contemporary sanctuary movements is great among Latina/os.³¹

Latina/o Pentecostals are not known for engaging in concerted efforts akin to the Sanctuary Movement. However, these cultural and religious communities intentionally protect the many undocumented among them in similar ways. They do not report them to the immigration authorities but rather attend to their needs: “Examples of sheltering, employing, feeding, and transporting of ‘illegal aliens’ are plentiful.”³² Latina/o Pentecostal churches have become places of refuge, where members and pastors help immigrants to find employment, regularize their migratory status, and sometimes even learn to beat the system.³³ Churches from different traditions, of course, also function as cultural centers and places of refuge from the dominant culture.³⁴ For Latina/o Pentecostals, the message of living “in God’s Kingdom” results in views on civic engagement that inspire them to accompany their fellow humans. In the midst of an inhospitable climate, these congregations are reinventing what it means to be church. This reconfiguration of church, in addition, is intimately connected with a reconceptualization of the divine provoked by people’s multi-form experiences of migration and their new understandings of calling as God’s children empowered by the Holy Spirit.

In theological terms, in the borderlands, the church becomes a place to be and act. As Latina/o Pentecostals live their version of the Christian life consistently, their faith extends to the political sphere.³⁵ Divine law supersedes human law.³⁶ This affirmation points to the simple realization that Christian life precedes the laws of the country.³⁷ Indeed, while converting to Pentecostal Christianity may encourage

many to become better citizens,³⁸ their actions reveal that what is at work is a more complex, nuanced interaction with the world, their faith, their Latina/o communities, and the reality of the divine. To be Christian and to be church means to act, to reach out beyond themselves, and to extend their aid and support to those in greater need.

Church as a Place of Humanization and New Gender Relations

As part of this dynamic reconceptualization of church, several shifts are taking place. Since God is king of this world—by which they mean that God governs and cares for the world and is bringing about a new just world—Latina/o Pentecostal believers perceive themselves as cobuilders of the reign of God. Such affirmation inherently points toward the reclamation of the created character of men and women as dignified children of God now called to act by the Holy Spirit.³⁹ These church communities open themselves to the immigrant population and welcome them. What we find among Latina/o Pentecostals is the reconstruction of valued human life at the most basic level.⁴⁰

The migration experience also contributes to changing gender relations within Latina/o Pentecostal churches. Although some churches claim in theory that women must submit to their husbands as “heads of the household” and some churches insist that the higher levels of leadership are the purview of men, conversion to Pentecostalism often brings about the “loosening up” of gender roles and subversion of the androcentric configuration of relations between the genders.⁴¹ The experience and reality of being immigrants in a new country contributes to these changes. Latina/o Pentecostals have often been unduly criticized because of their strong rejection of feminist perspectives and because their rhetoric feeds into patriarchal structures. Indeed, most Latina/o Pentecostals do maintain clear differences between the genders, emphasizing the subordination of women to their male counterparts. Surprisingly, however, Latina/o Pentecostal practices often run in the opposite direction. When people are perceived to be called by God, the church experiences a type of leveling by which social ranks are subverted and subsumed to the work of the Spirit. Those most respected are often those known for their charismatic giftedness regardless of their gender or social status. Women perceived to be especially anointed by the Spirit—even if they have only basic primary education—are often highly admired and respected and even invited to preach or become leaders.

Women’s contribution to Pentecostalism is not new. Since its inception, women have played a central role in the movement.⁴² Among

Latin Americans, Pentecostalism has been identified as a strategic women's movement because it empowers women and undermines patriarchal structures.⁴³ Conversion to Pentecostalism can bring about the reconfiguration of believers' perception of manhood and masculinity—from adopting cavalier, aggressive, and careless attitudes toward family members to caring for them and dedicating time to them—which often results in better relations between the genders.⁴⁴ As people migrate, they confront a new social context that also impacts gender relations. Migrants quickly realize that social and legal structures in the United States make it more difficult for men to abuse their partners without being legally accountable for it. The division of gender roles does not function well either because of the need for both partners in a household to work in order to make economic ends meet. In many families, women also work outside of the house, which can empower women in decision-making processes in family affairs.

These changes make for the humanization of believers. Pentecostals' relationship with Christ and the deeply held conviction that they are vessels of the Spirit alter the ways in which men and women interact. In other words, migration creates new avenues for reconfiguring gender relations. Patriarchal structures are not dismantled, however. What is taking place is rather the reinvention and transformation of patriarchy; emerging is a kind of soft patriarchy that makes men assume full responsibility for their lives and their families but with room to conceive the possibility of seeing their spouses as equal partners.⁴⁵

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

Among Latina/o Pentecostals, we are witnessing a reconfiguration of what it means to be and do church today. A new kind of church is emerging. As people migrate, they come into contact with other people's difficult journeys, and these movements of peoples, like the movement of the Spirit, extend and stretch our human understanding. In turn, the ways in which migrants view the divine-human relation and human-to-human relationships are reconfigured. Understandings of the church also change as a result of this, rooted in a profound shift in perception of the human person.

The attraction of Latina/os to Pentecostalism is closely connected to its compatibility with their cultures and their everyday experiences—not least of migration. As I have stated elsewhere, when people migrate they attempt to replicate the world they left behind.⁴⁶ Churches often take on the role of preserving people's cultures, in part because these

are connected to the religious framework they bring as they immigrate. It is at this intersection that transnational networks are gestated and made possible through immigration. These networks facilitate the active exchange of preachers, the importation of approaches to discipleship as strategies to stimulate local growth, and the organization of “missionary” groups to share their “abundance” with other churches in Latin America to support local pastors.⁴⁷ These transnational exchanges are not unique to Latina/o Pentecostals. What is unique is the reinvention of the church taking place in a new context created through migration and facilitated by the activity of the Spirit. Crossing socioeconomic and even political dimensions, now operative is the belief that the church is a live, dynamic group of people who configure themselves in support of the immigrant because that is part and parcel of being guided by the Spirit. Through such dynamic activity, the church is reconstituted around an “ethics of pneumatology” (Eldín Villafañe) as members go out and engage their new social context in support of the immigrant.

NOTES

1. I use “Latin American immigrants” to refer to those groups of people who come directly from their birth countries, speak Spanish, and try to reproduce the world they left behind. *Latina/o migrants* refers to those who arrived to the country young, who either are bilingual or only speak English, and who identify more closely with US Latina/o culture. I focus here on the segment of these communities who carry with them Pentecostal religious affiliation.
2. Manuel A. Vásquez and Marie Friedmann Marquardt, *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion across the Americas* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003).
3. Subsequent migratory waves from the island have taken place but remain inextricably linked to the events that transpired in the Cuban Revolution at the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century. See Teresa Chávez Saucedo, “Race, Religion, and la Raza: An Exploration of the Racialization of Latinos in the United States and the Role of the Protestant Church,” in *Protestantes/Protestants: Hispanic Christianity within Mainline Traditions*, ed. David Maldonado Jr. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1999), 177–93.
4. See Juan González, *Harvest of the Empire: A History of Latinos in America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000). Significant changes have taken place among the Latina/o population in the United States due to recent waves of immigration. For a fuller discussion on some of these changes, see David A. Badillo, *Latinos and the New Immigrant Church* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006). Immigration of Central

- and South Americans to the United States is also not new. Since the first half of the twentieth century, a constant influx of migrants has flowed from Latin American countries. See Néstor Medina, "Central Americans," in *The Encyclopedia of Hispanic American Religious Cultures*, ed. Miguel De La Torre (California: ABC-CLIO, 2009).
5. For a discussion on the emergence and growth of gangs in Latin America, see <http://www.ibtimes.com/ms-13-gang-using-deportation-expand-south-america-europe-report-1116915>, accessed August 15, 2013.
 6. Migration is a direct critique of globalizing markets that benefit richer countries while causing the exploitation and dislocation of those from poorer nations. See Orlando O. Espín, "Immigration and Theology: Reflections by an Implicated Theologian," *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series*, no. 10 (Fall 2006): 42.
 7. The number of migrant deaths at the US-Mexico border rose 27 percent in 2012, eclipsed only by the 2005 death toll of 492. See Stuart Anderson, *How Many More Deaths? The Moral Case for a Temporary Worker Program*, NFAP Policy Brief: March 2013 (Arlington, VA: National Foundation for American Policy, 2013), <http://www.nfap.com/pdf/NFAP%20Policy%20Brief%20Moral%20Case%20For%20a%20Temporary%20Worker%20Program%20March%202013.pdf>, accessed July 15, 2013.
 8. Néstor Medina, James Logan, Elaine Padilla, Stephanie M. Crompton, and Kamasi Hill, "Strangers No More: Conversational Essays between PhD Candidates," *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series*, no. 12 (Fall 2008): 87–88.
 9. See Daniel G. Groody, *Border of Death, Valley of Life: An Immigrant Journey of Heart and Spirit*, Celebrating Faith Series (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002); Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campese, eds., *Promised Land: A Perilous Journey* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2008).
 10. María Pilar Aquino, "La humanidad peregrina viviente: Migración y experiencia religiosa," in *Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization*, ed. Gioacchino Campese and Pietro Ciallella (Staten Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies, 2003), 123–31.
 11. For a fuller discussion of the effects of remittances, see Manuel Orozco, "Migration and Remittances in Times of Recession: Effects on Latin American Economies: A Report," *Inter-American Dialogue* (2009), <http://www.oecd.org/dev/americas/42753222.pdf>, accessed June 14, 2013; Mar García Dominguez and Denise Paiewonsky, *Gender, Remittances and Development: The Case of Women Migrants from Vicente Noble, Dominican Republic* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: United Nations Publications, 2006).

12. Ricardo Arjona, "Mojado," in *Adentro* (Mexico: Sony BMG Music, 2006); Los Tigres del Norte, "Tres veces mojado," in *Idolos del pueblo* (Mexico: Fonovisa, 1988).
13. Daniel Ramírez, "'Call Me 'Bitter'": Life and Death in the Diasporic Borderland and the Challenge/Opportunities for *Norteamericano* Churches," *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series*, no. 11 (Fall 2007): 53.
14. See, for example, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, *Strangers No Longer: Together in the Journey of Hope*, a Pastoral Letter concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States (2003), <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/strangers-no-longer-together-on-the-journey-of-hope.cfm>, accessed July 23, 2013.
15. Arlene M. Sánchez-Walsh, *Latino Pentecostal Identity: Evangelical Faith, Self, and Society* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2003); Gastón Espinosa, "El Azteca: Francisco Olázabal and Latino Pentecostal Charisma, Power, and Faith Healing in the Borderlands," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 597–616.
16. According to Espinosa, Pentecostals and Protestants are contributing to the growth of Latino Protestantism in the United States. See Gastón Espinosa, "The Pentecostalization of Latin America and US Latino Christianity," *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 268. On Pentecostals turning to Catholicism, see Edward L. Cleary, "Shopping Around: Questions about Latin American Conversions," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28, no. 2 (April 2004): 50–53; Edward L. Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism in Latin America* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2011).
17. Elizabeth Dias, "Evangélicos," *Time* (April 15, 2013), 20–28.
18. While in US and Canadian contexts, the categories of Evangelical and Pentecostal are perceived to be distinct, in Latin America the labels *Pentecostals* and *Evangelicals* are often used interchangeably because many of their expressions on the ground are strikingly similar. In order to do justice to this context, I also use them interchangeably.
19. See Jeffrey Passel and D'Vera Cohn, *Unauthorized Immigrants: 11.1 Million in 2011* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2012), <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/12/06/unauthorized-immigrants-11-1-million-in-2011/>, accessed April 8, 2013.
20. Espinosa, "The Pentecostalization," 290. See also Leah Sarat, *Fire in the Canyon* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).
21. M. Daniel Carroll R., *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church and the Bible*, foreword by Samuel Rodríguez, afterword by Ronald J. Sider (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

22. José Severino Croatto, *Exodus: A Hermeneutics of Freedom*, trans. Salvador Attanasio (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978); José Severino Croatto, "Liberación y libertad: Reflexiones hermenéuticas en torno al Antiguo Testamento," in *Pueblo oprimido, Señor de la historia*, Biblioteca Iglesia y Sociedad (Montevideo, Uruguay: Tierra Nueva, 1972), 219–23.
23. Ramírez, "Call Me 'Bitter,'" 41–42.
24. For similar interpretations of Ruth, see Dianne Bergant, "Ruth: The Migrant Who Saved the People," *Center for Migration Studies Special Issues: Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization* 18, no. 2 (July 2012): 49–61, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.2050-411X.2003.tb00316.x/pdf>, accessed June 30, 2014; Gale A. Yee, "'She Stood in Tears amid the Alien Corn': Ruth, the Perpetual Foreigner and Model Minority," in *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion and Theology*, ed. Rita Nakashima Brock, Jung Ha Kim, Kwok Pui-Lan, and Seung Ai Yang (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 45–65.
25. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 37.
26. Daisy L. Machado, "The Unnamed Woman: Justice, Feminists, and the Undocumented Woman," in *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice*, ed. María Pilar Aquino, Daisy L. Machado, and Jeanette Rodríguez (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2002), 161–76.
27. Aquino, "La humanidad peregrina viviente," 103–6.
28. Neomi DeAnda, "Border Cuentos: Sources for Reflection on Migration," *New Theology Review* 20, no. 3 (August 2007): 24–35.
29. Daniel G. Groody, "Jesus and the Undocumented Immigrant: A Spiritual Geography of a Crucified People," *Theological Studies* 70 (2009): 302ff.
30. Medina et al., "Strangers No More," 87–89.
31. Ramírez, "Call Me 'Bitter,'" 46.
32. Daniel Ramírez, "Borderlands Praxis: The Immigrant Experience in Latino Pentecostal Churches," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 588.
33. Kretcha Roldán-Rodríguez, "Finding a Home in the Immigrant Church," *Reflections*, <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/145857.pdf>, accessed July 4, 2013.
34. Samuel Soliván, *The Spirit, Pathos and Liberation: Toward an Hispanic Pentecostal Theology* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 117.
35. Machado, "The Unnamed Woman."
36. Daniel Groody, "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees," *Theological Studies* 70 (2009): 655.
37. Peggy Levitt, "'You Know, Abraham Was Really the First Immigrant': Religion and Transnational Migration," *International Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 864, 867.

38. See Tony Tian-Ren Lin, "The Best of Both Worlds: How Word of Faith Pentecostalism Teaches Latino Immigrants to Become Americans" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2010); Kevin Lewis O'Neil, *City of God: Christian Citizenship in Postwar Guatemala* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).
39. Otto Maduro, "Notas sobre pentecostalismo y poder entre inmigrantes latinoamericanos en la ciudad de Newark (New Jersey, E.U.A.)" (paper presented at the XII Jornadas Sobre Alternativas Religiosas Na América Latina, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2005), 11.
40. Ramírez, "Call Me 'Bitter,'" 63. See also Maduro, "Notas sobre pentecostalismo y poder," 17.
41. Lin, "The Best of Both Worlds."
42. Sánchez-Walsh, *Latino Pentecostal Identity: Evangelical Faith, Self, and Society*; Gastón Espinosa, "'Third Class Soldiers': A History of Hispanic Pentecostal Clergywomen in the Assemblies of God," in *Phillip's Daughters: Women in Pentecostal-Charismatic Leadership*, ed. Estrella Alexander and Amos Yong (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 95–111.
43. Elizabeth E. Brusco, *The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).
44. José Leonardo Santos, *Evangelicalism and Masculinity: Faith and Gender in El Salvador* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2012).
45. Rosalina Mira and Lois Ann Lorentzen, "Women, Migration, and the Pentecostal Experience," *Peace Review* 14, no. 4 (2002): 425. See also Maduro, "Notas sobre pentecostalismo y poder," 20n27.
46. Néstor Medina, "Rethinking Liberation: Toward a Canadian Latin@ Theology," in *The Reemergence of Liberation Theologies: Models for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Thia Cooper, New Approaches to Religion and Power (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
47. Néstor Medina, "Hybridity, Migration, and Transnational Relations: (Re)Thinking Canadian Pentecostalism from a Latina/o Perspective," in *Many Tongues: Globalization and the Transformation of Pentecostalism*, ed. Michael Wilkinson, International Studies in Religion and Society Series (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 210–26.

PART II



REIMAGINING TRADITIONAL
ECCLESIAL TASKS

CHAPTER 5



THE PROMISE OF A PILGRIM CHURCH ECCLESIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE ETHICAL PRAXIS OF KINSHIP WITH MIGRANTS

Kristin E. Heyer

On a visit to the Kino Border Initiative (KBI) in April 2013, I had the opportunity to speak with recently deported migrants at their aid center. One gentleman had spent 26 of his 27 years in central California, brought there as a one-year-old by his uncle. He had worked harvesting pistachios and almonds to support his wife and four citizen children without trouble, even on the occasions he could not produce a driver's license for a routine stop. In the past two years, each such stop landed him in jail—with the third resulting in deportation to Nogales. He expressed dread at starting over in a country foreign to him. Up the road at KBI's Casa Nazaret, I sat with deported women planning to reattempt the journey north in spite of the considerable dangers it posed. The women at the shelter were simply desperate to be reunited with their families in the United States or support their families at home in El Salvador or across Mexico. One had worked at a Motel 6 in Arizona for many years, supporting her two citizen children on her own after her husband left them; describing their initial reason for migrating to the United States from Mexico, she said, resigned, "At home you either eat or send your children to school." The Nazareth House residents repeatedly broke into tears as they shared the pain of being separated from their children and their experiences in detention.

January 2014 marks the fifth anniversary of the launch of this binational initiative in Ambos Nogales (Arizona, United States/Sonora, Mexico). Initially asked to send a Jesuit priest to staff a parish in Phoenix, the California Province of the Society of Jesus instead undertook a widely consultative needs assessment to discern its response to communities impacted by undocumented immigration along the US-Mexico border. One of its founders, Mark Potter, reflects, “Heeding the Brazilian proverb that ‘The head thinks from where the feet are planted,’ the California Jesuits were particularly interested in the geographic region along the border in southern, central Arizona—the area where most illegal border crossings take place due to the ‘squeezing effect’ caused by increased border fortification and enforcement efforts along the borders of southern California and western Texas.”¹

This same expanse of the Sonoran Desert was once traversed by the Jesuit missionary Eusebio Francisco Kino, who founded the region’s earliest Catholic churches. Ultimately, the Kino Border Initiative was established in partnership with Jesuit Refugee Services, the bordering dioceses and Jesuit provinces, and the Missionary Sisters of the Eucharist. Its threefold approach addresses the most pressing pastoral and social needs identified: it offers humanitarian assistance to deported migrants on the Mexican side, particularly unaccompanied women; educates and pastorally forms communities on the US side regarding Catholic teaching on migration (due to their findings that the closer to the border the more difficult communities found discussing migration openly); and supports research and advocacy on migrant abuses and immigration policy. Each dimension of the ministry informs the others, and the KBI’s self-understanding models “reciprocal evangelization” in the spirit of a pilgrim church.

The Kino Border Initiative’s origins and approach embody essential values for ecclesial responses to migration. Christian understandings of human rights, the nature of the state, and the universal destination of created goods ground a prophetic immigration ethic, manifest in social services for immigrant populations and advocacy for humane policy. Yet the treatment of migrants raises justice issues not only for civil societies but also for churches. The Second Vatican Council speaks in *Lumen Gentium* of the “eschatological nature of the Pilgrim Church.” Restoration entails “bringing people back together in Christ, breaking down the walls that divide cultural and religious groups (see *Eph. 2:14*).”² A “pilgrim church” signals both the “already” and “not yet” dimensions of a church on the way. This chapter considers how the church serves on earth as a sign and

instrument of full restoration and kinship, living out a reality that in Christ there are no longer strangers and aliens (Eph. 2:19); it also addresses ways in which churches' human dimensions demand ongoing conversion, including by way of newcomers.³

REPENTANCE FROM ENTRENCHED INHOSPITALITY AND INJUSTICE

In *Welcoming the Stranger among Us*, the US Catholic bishops note that solidarity with migrants “will take many forms, from participating in efforts to ensure that the US government respect the basic human rights of all immigrants, to providing direct assistance to immigrants through diocesan and parish programs.”⁴ Such outreach and advocacy constitute significant manifestations of a Christian immigration ethic. Yet kinship with immigrants demands not only mounting critiques of present practices but also countering root causes and contributing factors. Christian churches too seldom account for social contexts abetting sin. Pope Francis's example at Lampedusa reminds us that naming the reality of sin helps shed light on the structures and attitudes that harm immigrants. Eliciting repentance and conversion from patterns of unjust complicity calls communities beyond intermittent outreach ministry or legislative postcard campaigns. Many in the United States, Christians included, resist an ethic of solidarity with undocumented immigrants. I have encountered significant displeasure in parish settings at bishops' immigration statements that seemingly “condone law breaking” in terms of their immigration teachings, and the clear referent for “wrong action” or “sin” was always confined to living and working without documents. Without dismissing concerns about the complex relationship between law and morality or the political involvement of churches, fierce (or more subtle) resistance to an ethic of kinship may suggest Christian citizens' susceptibility to secular (dis)values. Churches are at least as well poised to address these dynamics as they are to engage in direct political advocacy.

The etymology of “conscience” (“knowing together with”) highlights the social dimension of moral knowledge, for “convictions of conscience are shaped, and moral obligations are learned, within the communities that influence us.”⁵ Adherents' divergent positions on social and political issues within religious communities raise questions not only about the adequacy of ecclesial teaching on evolving moral issues but also about spheres of influence and discernment. As Mark O'Keefe has written, “Constituted in part by his or her social relationships, people generally will appropriate uncritically the prevailing

values of a culture—even though from an objective standpoint an outsider may see . . . the prevailing hierarchy of values is seriously disordered.”⁶ Cultural forces that perpetuate myths about immigrants and that consistently elevate economic and security concerns above moral ones may wield significant influence on political and social behavior.

Renewed attention to developments in social sin could help Christian communities form consciences and practices. Twentieth-century Protestant and Catholic elaborations of social sin shed light on how socioeconomic, legal, and political structures that foster irregular immigration are related to ideological blinders that contribute to inhospitality to undocumented immigrants. In its broadest sense, social sin encompasses unjust structures, distorted consciousness, and collective actions that facilitate dehumanization. In the Americas, the adoption of the language of social sin emerged via liberation theology with the 1968 Medellín, Colombia, conference where the Latin American bishops explicitly identified their reality as a sinful situation of institutionalized violence rooted in “the oppressive structures that come from the abuse of ownership and of power and from exploitation of workers or from unjust transactions.”⁷ Subsequent Catholic magisterial articulations of social sin emphasize the individual’s role in sustaining sinful structures.⁸

Building upon sociological understandings of internalized structures,⁹ theologians have articulated stages of social sin that shed light on the relationship between its voluntary and nonvoluntary dimensions. For example, Gregory Baum outlines four levels of social sin: (1) unjust institutions and trends that embody people’s collective life; (2) cultural ideologies or symbolic systems that legitimate unjust situations; (3) false consciousness created by these institutions or ideologies that convince people their actions are good; and (4) collective decisions made by distorted consciousness that increase injustice.¹⁰ Following these four levels, the factors propelling undocumented migration include the impact of a system whose discrepancy between labor needs and legal avenues for work focuses on symptoms rather than root causes and has increased the volume and danger of extra-legal flows. The primacy of deterrence has institutionalized security concerns rather than concerns for human rights or family unity in US immigration laws, and the nation’s economic interests have been institutionalized in uneven free trade agreements.¹¹ Level 1 identifies institutions and dehumanizing trends: commodification trends are apparent in a privatized detention industry that profits from the prevailing enforcement-heavy approach and human trafficking networks.

Amid the present climate, terms like “illegal alien” and even “national security” can serve as idols to conceal a sinful reality and provoke demonization. At a more subtle level, a consumerist ideology shapes citizens’ willingness to underpay undocumented persons either directly or through indirect demand for inexpensive goods and services. At level 2, symbols enshrine values and penetrate the human imagination and worldview. When cultural or religious symbols mask values, “they support the structural relationships that perpetuate injustice and hinder authentic human development.”¹² Cultural ideologies like the use of lofty rhetoric to obscure exclusionary ends influence citizens’ outlook, as do religious symbols. For example, individualistic penitential rituals reinforce limited conceptions of sin, or the selective invocation of “cooperation with evil” language in the Roman Catholic tradition can obscure the urgency of moral issues outside the sexual realm.

These ideologically anchored structures of injustice produce blindness that can lull citizens into equating “law-abiding” with “just.” Social manifestations of these ideologies may aggregate to “large-scale hardness of heart.”¹³ In the US context, remaining oblivious to the plight of small family farmers in Mexico or the fatal realities of the border arguably enters the realm of culpable ignorance. Hence internalized fears, tribalism, or callous greed can directly lead to apathetic acquiescence (level 3). Internalized ideologies and distorted consciousness can then lead to collective unjust decisions and actions (passage of punitive local ordinances: level 4). Hence social sin underscores how socioeconomic and political structures that abet irregular immigration connect to ideological blinders that foster injustice. These various levels also intersect and interrelate in complex manners. Internalized ideologies make us susceptible to myths; operative understandings influence our actions or inaction. When bias hides or skews values, it becomes more difficult to choose authentic values over those that prevail in society, a tendency already present because of original sin.

Churches are well poised not only to defend the rights and meet the needs of immigrants but to name these entrenched, intertwined patterns of social sin. A pilgrim church calls for repentance from sustaining harmful myths out of fear or bias, from the greed of consumerism, and from what Pope Francis decries as the “globalization of indifference.” From repentance and conscientization,¹⁴ we are called to conversion toward interdependence in solidarity, toward kinship. Whereas many Christians remain too far removed from such realities

to be attuned to such an invitation and its demands, hope for metanoia persists.

Churches have appropriated prophetic and New Testament texts demanding justice and hospitality for the sojourner, yet explicitly naming the sinful realities surrounding migration would sharpen prophetic potential. This entails identifying subjective participation in the exploitative structures and ideologies traced earlier as “sinful” as well as underscoring their dehumanizing impact. As one example, the epidemic of sexual assault against migrant women typically goes unmentioned in bishops’ congressional testimonies on immigration or pastors’ preaching at the parish level. How can the church better institutionally embody such values and facilitate personal and social conversion?

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CONVERSION: ECCLESIAL RESPONSES

Given that countering social sin requires both personal conversion and social transformation, a case study of an ecclesial model that attempts a holistic approach may illuminate a way forward in terms of migration and ethics. The work of Dolores Mission Parish in East Los Angeles, California, exemplifies a hybrid pastoral-ethical response that integrates the conversion of hearts and institutions in ways particularly relevant to the multileveled barriers to receptivity explored earlier.¹⁵

This Jesuit parish engages in a range of dynamic outreach efforts, including provision of services to recent immigrants through its Guadalupe Homeless project. Every evening for 25 years, the church has opened its doors to the homeless and the day laborers of Los Angeles. Many of these are undocumented immigrants seeking a safe place to eat, shower, and sleep; cots are set up between the pews and alongside the altar, and “sanctuary” takes on all its many meanings. When the church first opened its doors and extended the notion of political sanctuary in the 1980s to include providing haven for economic migrants, a not uncontroversial decision at the time, then-pastor Gregory Boyle, SJ, reflected that the community dissolved the notion of “us versus them” that frequently characterizes debates about “illegal aliens.” This move was central to cultivating what Boyle identified as kinship, a virtue fundamental to the Catholic ethic regarding migration and reception.¹⁶

Beyond meeting the immediate needs of a vulnerable population, the Dolores Mission community’s mobilization in response to proposed immigration legislation in recent years has embodied nuanced

Christian social witness that confound typical binaries between the spiritual and political. For example, just prior to Lent 2006, as a shared spiritual exercise, the parish undertook a month-long communal fast for justice for immigrants, engaging personal and social dimensions not unlike the sin dialectic outlined earlier. Participants conceived of the fast as both prayer (in terms of the desire to empty ourselves of what distracts us from knowledge of God's love) and act of solidarity (a bond of sympathy with those who, like so many immigrants, suffer physical, spiritual, and emotional hunger). The prayer and fasting were coupled with prophetic preaching and consistent legislative advocacy and voter education on behalf of humane immigration reform.¹⁷ At the end of the Lenten season, the practice of undocumented men having their feet washed on Holy Thursday by the attending auxiliary bishop powerfully conveyed the parish's embracing posture.

On Good Friday, the community undertakes a Way of the Cross procession through the city; in 2008, it culminated at the federal building downtown. The parishioners united their own sufferings with Christ's passion; public devotionals at each station focused on issues such as poverty, families torn apart by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, and exploitative labor practices. The extensive media coverage of participants' witness to Jesus crucified in the undocumented person and efforts to illuminate hearts and minds in favor of humane reform presented a countersign to vitriolic anti-immigrant messaging in news media. (Elsewhere in the liturgical cycle they have hosted *posada* processions intentionally linked to migrant family separation.) The parish's multidimensional approach well represents the elements Peter Henriot identifies as constitutive of the church's social mission: prophetic word, symbolic witness, and political action.¹⁸

Hence Dolores Mission's response embodies a hybrid pastoral-ethical model appropriate to countering the interrelated levels of social sin and resistance outlined earlier. It incorporates methods that surface Christian duties to resist unjust social structures; respond to the needy in their midst who have fallen victim to institutional violence; and negotiate tensions between discipleship and citizenship.¹⁹ Such a pastoral-ethical paradigm can offer guidance for US Christians wrestling with faithful discipleship regarding issues beyond immigration alone. Siding with the "strangers in their midst" who, in fact, compose an integral part of this community, parishioners bear countercultural witness to dominant ideologies like cultural superiority. By integrating Christian practices of prayer, charity, solidarity, and

collaborative advocacy, this parish-based response begins to counter the matrix of social sins that conceal and oppress.

In terms of replicating its general approach, it is useful to note Dolores Mission's engagement of a "see, judge, act" methodology as it proceeds from encounter, to reflection, to multipronged action. The continual presence of undocumented immigrants through the Guadalupe Homeless Project keeps alive the memory of community members' roots and does not allow the human experience of suffering to become abstract. Hence initiatives that bring parishioners face to face with immigrant communities (in the United States or in countries of origin) can help foster hospitality and correct personal and collective outlooks that remain obscured at the level of ideology. Next within its base communities, members take seriously biblical exhortations and continually critique social issues like immigration through the lens of Catholic social teaching in order to reveal the sinfulness of political structures and other obstacles. This pastoral-ethical model commends churches to link education, outreach, and liturgical efforts, integrating structural and historical realities with the illumination of scriptural and magisterial teaching and naming the sinfulness of realities—rather than assiduously avoiding any perception of politicized faith.

Finally, as noted, Dolores Mission moves from encounter and analysis into opportunities for compassionate political action seamlessly integrated into the spiritual life of the parish, combining communal fasts with legislative advocacy, reflective prayer with direct service, and routinely incorporating undocumented persons' *testimonios* into liturgical and advocacy settings alike. Parish leaders participate in city-wide interfaith immigration reform networks and advocate on Capitol Hill. Empowerment and relationship building also constitute key elements: the parish has formed a group of *promotores*—including some Guadalupe Homeless Project residents—whom they train to inform immigrant residents about their rights. Families of mixed status and vulnerable workers are apprised on concrete steps to follow if detained, and parish-based community organizers have set up structures to help undocumented residents designate custody of their children so they do not end up in the care of the state.

More broadly, processes of communal conversion coupled with public repentance hold the potential to reframe public debate about immigration. Given the nonvoluntary dimensions of social sin, "love and goodwill alone" are insufficient to expose sinful structures. Rather, as Baum observes, "it is through moments of interruption . . . that shatter our perceptions, that we discover the human damage done by our taken-for-granted world."²⁰ In the US context, any public witness

to an ethic of kinship must engage repentance from complicity in patterns of imperialism and neocolonialism as well as from the sin of exceptionalism engrained in the nation's social psyche.²¹ Each of these "Christian" and "American" social sins directly bears on immigration, and credible witness cannot ensue without such repentance. Whereas determining the precise implications of such atonement in terms of culpability or reparations entails complex considerations, Baum identifies "readiness to mourn" and a "keener sense of personal responsibility" as proper spiritual responses to social sin. Shared grieving and assumption of the "burden of collective transgressions by spiritual solidarity" prepare participants for "social renewal and political action."²²

As Chapter 1 in this volume explores at length, the pope's 2013 Lampedusa visit stands out as an unprecedented example. During his first official trip outside Rome since his March election, Pope Francis celebrated Mass on the southern Mediterranean island that has become a safe haven for African migrants seeking passage to Europe. There he commemorated in ritual and word the estimated 20,000 African immigrants who have died over the past 25 years trying to reach a new life in Europe. Pope Francis's homily noted the pervasive idolatry that facilitates migrants' deaths and robs us of the ability to weep. In vestments of penitential violet, the pope celebrated Mass within sight of the "graveyard of wrecks."²³ Amid his admission that even he remains "disoriented" and his plea for the grace to weep, he did not *merely condemn "the world" for this indifference and its consequences but repented*: "O Lord, in this Liturgy . . . of repentance, we ask forgiveness for the indifference towards so many brothers and sisters, we ask forgiveness for those who are pleased with themselves, who are closed in on their own well-being in a way that leads to the anesthesia of the heart, we ask you, Father, for forgiveness for those who with their decisions at the global level have created situations that lead to these tragedies. Forgive us, Lord!"²⁴ Pope Francis's reflections and symbolism identify the need for ecclesial and civic repentance from complicity in injustice toward solidarity. In terms of smaller-scale sacramental practice, the church can facilitate and embody *conscientización* through communal examinations of conscience and penitential liturgies.²⁵ Religious and civic bodies' public repentance for past cooperation with the forms of social sin could begin to convert communities away from amnesic entitlement and toward solidarity with those on the underside of such histories.

INCARNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND MUTUAL EVANGELIZATION

How might the pilgrim church form members beyond the confines of ecclesial practices? Whereas Pope John Paul II elevated solidarity as the key virtue needed in an era of globalization, observers have described the *reception* of recent Catholic teaching on solidarity as “inconsistent, superficial or non-existent.”²⁶ Many factors contribute to such “moral torpor,” such as the privatization and domestication of sin and the distancing that geography and social circumstance impart.²⁷ Christine Firer Hinze points to a consumer culture whose “kudzu-like values and practices so crowd the landscape of daily lives that solidarity finds precious little ground in which to take root.”²⁸ She highlights its use of seduction and misdirection to obfuscate systemic injustices that solidarity would expose (akin to “level 3” from Baum’s four levels).²⁹ Isolated in enclaves, the “haves” can become detached from those who struggle in a globalized economy—connected though they may be by the goods and services the latter provide.

In response, incarnational solidarity calls us to immerse our bodies and expend energy in practices of presence and service in the real world. Hinze describes the virtue in terms of “cultivating concrete, habitual ways of acknowledging our we-ness by being *with* the neighbor, especially the suffering and needy neighbor.” She distinguishes incarnational solidarity from the “cheap, ‘virtual,’ or sentimental forms of solidarity proffered by a consumerist culture and economy.”³⁰ Churches are often well poised to overcome differences in this way, particularly in cases of socioeconomically and otherwise diverse congregations. As William Cavanaugh puts it, with God, the “Wholly Other” at the center, the pilgrim church can “simultaneously announce and dramatize the full universality of communion with God, a truly global vision of reconciliation of all people, without thereby evacuating difference.”³¹ As a community that ministers to protectionist and undocumented alike, the church is well poised to help move its members beyond episodic encounters in which they remain confirmed in their viewpoints or unwilling to generalize beyond “one trustworthy worker” or “one valedictorian.”

A church on the way, its members in need of conversion, can serve as a sign and instrument of that unity that is to come. I want to close by emphasizing that a pilgrim church should take care to move beyond charity not only in the fullness of its response and witness but also in its attitude toward migrants and ministry with them. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator notes that evidence from refugees’ experiences suggests a

certain “ecclesial marginalization” accompanies their economic and political marginalization. He warns, “Refugees are considered passive beneficiaries of the Church’s charitable services at best, or excluded as a burden to an already impoverished ecclesial community, at worst.” He and others rightly remind the church that refugees and migrants make moral claims on the church as sources of theological transformation.³² In its efforts moving forward, the church must continue to guard against a missionary or “assistential” stance toward migrants; its witness and welcome will be better served by a stance of genuine mutuality, a move from charity to kinship. Considering migrants as passive beneficiaries or burdens fails to appreciate their agency and contributions—to honor them as dramatic subjects like the Syrophenician woman rather than objects of mercy (Mark 7:24–30/Matt. 15:21–28).

Migrants’ ecclesial experiences highlight the tensions between rhetoric and practice of a church of welcome and communion. Where churches perceive migrants as primarily in need of assistance and demand they conform to an existing order, a cautionary tale takes shape regarding conventional models of church. Where migrants’ agency is welcomed, their diversity and plurality is valued; where their incorporation prompts self-examination (and attendance to power dynamics) and inclusive table fellowship, we may encounter (re)new(ed) models of authentic communion. The latter model offers a timely contribution to dominant understandings of church identity and evangelization given recent signs of the times in the US Catholic Church in particular, marked by Vatican investigations, the implementation of loyalty oaths, and “siege” rhetoric. Yet that narrative has been significantly challenged in the first years of the new papacy. Beyond his ecclesiological propensities for a street-bound to a risk-averse and self-referential church, Pope Francis’s desires for migrants’ authentic embrace in *Evangelii Gaudium* has ecclesial implications: “I exhort all countries to a generous openness which, rather than fearing the loss of local identity, will prove capable of creating new forms of cultural synthesis. How beautiful are those cities which overcome paralyzing mistrust, integrate those who are different and make this very integration a new factor of development! How attractive are those cities which, even in their architectural design, are full of spaces which connect, relate and favour the recognition of others!”³³ In churches all the more perhaps, understandings of “kinship” that circumscribe legitimacy of belonging and primarily enforce boundaries are challenged and leavened by the invitation to more universal solidarity and praxis with newcomers.

In this vein, Michael Blume, undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrations and Itinerant People, has suggested that “faith, conversion, and catholicity are continually in development as long as the pilgrim church carries forward the one People of God, composed of many cultures, on its way towards the fullness of the Kingdom of God . . . In the redeemed community the relation among individuals and groups of different cultures changes from hostile competition and dominance . . . to dialogue, appreciation of the other, and contribution to building up a ‘civilization of love.’”³⁴

Churches that genuinely live out the conviction that no person or culture is a stranger can make true interculturality possible.³⁵ This of course entails not uncomplicated implications for a range of pastoral activities. Blume suggests, for example, preaching “should not let any community get too ‘settled’ or feel too ‘stable.’”³⁶ The endeavor demands what Pope Francis has termed a “culture of encounter,” which may serve as a countersign not only to a culture of isolation and exclusion but also to conventional models of church as fortress or as shepherd to its flock, a teacher to its pupils. Hence a pilgrim church is not only on the move but also continually on the way: forces of migration that produce a “moving body” also invite the body to ongoing moral conversion.

To conclude where I began, the Kino Border Initiative marked by partnership and mutual evangelization offers a model in this regard. Its painstakingly inductive needs assessment and self-consciously binational partnership yielded a significantly different migration ministry than the initial request envisioned. Its pastoral formation initiatives have opened space for difficult dialogues about migration’s challenges, in contrast to perpetuating silence to keep peace of diverse congregations or avoid politically fraught topics. The initiative has undertaken a Catholic Relief Services–funded investigation of sexual violence to help ensure migrant women have access to legal and psycho-social services in response to violence; improve women’s capacity to exercise their rights; and inform and engage authorities, employers, and public opinion. In contrast to the dominant gender-neutral approach, such sensitivities alert the wider ecclesial community to the particular vulnerabilities women increasingly face and interrupt patterns of exploitation.³⁷

At a macro level, the KBI explicitly understands itself as “a point of contact and mutual transformation not only for the migrant community members who encounter one another in the context of [its] programs, but also for the Provinces of California and Mexico, the Missionary Sisters of the Eucharist, and Jesuit Refugee Services.”³⁸

This posture reflects a “two-way street” of social engagement, modeling partnership and reciprocal “evangelization” in the spirit of a pilgrim church yet on the way. In this vein, the church remains open to ongoing conversion by the suffering and resilience of those in need and empowered to contribute in new ways rather than triumphalistic in its possession of truth or static in its formulations. The subversive hospitality invited by a migrant God demands a pilgrim church to recognize the ways migrants breathe new life into organic ecclesial communities, impacting their self-understanding and discipleship. Whereas economic and policy reform offer important routes forward, a Christian immigration ethic invites concrete practices in spiritual, liturgical, and ecclesiological dimensions of our lives that anticipate the kin-dom on the way.

NOTES

1. Mark Potter, “The Kino Border Initiative: A New Ministry of ‘Solidarity with the Least and with All’ at the US/Mexico Border in Ambos Nogales,” *Explore* 11, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 24.
2. Rev. Fr. Michael A. Blume, SVD, *Towards an Ecclesiology of Migration*, Undersecretary, Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrations and Itinerant People, Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *People on the Move—N° 90*, December 2002, 113–27.
3. Portions of this chapter draw from chapters 2 and 4 from my *Kinship across Borders: A Christian Ethic of Immigration* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012).
4. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Migration and Refugee Service, *Welcoming the Stranger among Us: Unity in Diversity* (November 15, 2000), 175.
5. Richard M. Gula, “The Moral Conscience,” in *Conscience, Readings in Moral Theology No. 14*, ed. Charles E. Curran (New York: Paulist, 2004), 54–55.
6. Mark O’Keefe, OSB, “Social Sin and Fundamental Option,” in *Christian Freedom: Essays by the Faculty of the Saint Meinrad School of Theology*, ed. Clayton N. Jefford (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 135.
7. Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (CELAM), *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in Light of the Council* (Washington, DC: US Catholic Conference, 1973), 78, 49.
8. I analyze Pope John Paul II’s approaches to social sin in this regard in “Social Sin and Immigration: Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors,” *Theological Studies* 71, no. 2 (June 2010): 410–36.

9. See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor, 1966).
10. Gregory Baum, *Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading of Sociology* (New York: Paulist, 1975), 200–203.
11. Whereas the aggregate impact of the North America Free Trade Agreement or Central America Free Trade Agreement is complex, most agree they have taken a negative toll on the most vulnerable populations in Latin America, who more than ever rely on remittances sent home by family members who migrate to the United States.
12. O’Keefe, “Social Sin and Fundamental Option,” 137.
13. As Henriot suggests, “the act orientation of traditional moral theology does not provide much assistance in guiding individual Christian consciences [in the case of large-scale hardness of heart].” Peter Henriot, “Social Sin: The Recovery of a Christian Tradition,” in *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry*, ed. James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Easton Whitehead (New York: Seabury, 1980), 134.
14. In this chapter, I use the term “conscientization” to refer more broadly to the process by which all sectors of society, particularly privileged ones, become newly aware of the presence of injustice and the demands of justice rather than a Freirian notion of liberative education for oppressed populations. See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970).
15. As a disclaimer, I was a parishioner of Dolores Mission parish from 2005 to 2009. Sean Carroll, SJ; Michael Kennedy, SJ; and Arturo Lopez were interviewed for this section by Charles Bergman and me.
16. For a helpful discussion of how the overlapping virtues of solidarity, compassion, and hospitality link matters of social justice (including undocumented immigration) to moral formation, see Christopher Vogt, “Fostering a Catholic Commitment to the Common Good: An Approach Rooted in Virtue Ethics,” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 394–417.
17. The community’s efforts included letter-writing campaigns and visits to state senators, several marches and protests outside city hall and the offices of the Democratic and Republican National Committees, sustained collaboration with immigration reform coalitions across the city, and peaceful civil disobedience.
18. See Henriot, “Social Sin and Conversion,” 122–30.
19. I analyze such hybridity in terms of the mutual clarification of “radicalist” and “public” approaches to Christian social responsibility in “Bridging the Divide in Contemporary US Catholic Social Ethics,” *Theological Studies* 66 (2005): 401–40.
20. Gregory Baum, *Essays in Critical Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1994), 203.

21. I am grateful to Jonathan Y. Tan for drawing my attention to these significant elements, including counterexamples of repentance in Asian and Canadian contexts.
22. Baum, *Essays in Critical Theology*, 200–201.
23. John Hooper, “Pope Francis Condemns Global Indifference to Suffering,” *Guardian*, July 8, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jul/08/pope-francis-condemns-indifference-suffering>, accessed July 8, 2013.
24. “Pope on Lampedusa, ‘The Globalization of Indifference,’” Vatican Radio, July 8, 2013, <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-on-lampedusa-the-globalization-of-indifferenc>, accessed July 8, 2013.
25. James T. Cross, “Communal Penance and Public Life: On the Church’s Becoming a Sign of Conversion from Social Sin,” in *Faith in Public Life*, ed. William J. Collinge (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 289–90.
26. Christine Firer Hinze, “The Drama of Social Sin and the (Im)possibility of Solidarity: Reinhold Niebuhr and Modern Catholic Social Teaching,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 22, no. 4 (2009): 448.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Christine Firer Hinze, “Straining toward Solidarity in a Suffering World: *Gaudium et spes* ‘After Forty Years,’” in *Vatican II: Forty Years Later, College Theology Society Annual Volume 51*, ed. William Madges (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), 180.
29. *Ibid.*, 181–82.
30. *Ibid.*, 174.
31. William T. Cavanaugh, “Migrant, Tourist, Pilgrim, Monk: Mobility and Identity in a Global Age,” *Theological Studies* 69 (2008): 352.
32. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, “Justice for the Displaced: The Challenge of a Christian Understanding,” in *Driven from Home: Protecting the Rights of Forced Migrants*, ed. David Hollenbach (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2010), 43.
33. Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* (November 24, 2013), no. 210, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.html, accessed December 1, 2013.
34. Blume, *Towards an Ecclesiology of Migration*.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. In contrast to the United States and Vatican documents, the Latin American and Asian bishops underscored the particular vulnerabilities women face in response to certain forces of globalization as well as their positive roles in struggles for justice. See CELAM, *Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America* (Washington, DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979), 834–39; Alfred Hennelly, ed., *Santo Domingo and Beyond* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 106; and Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, “The Vocation and the

Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World of Asia,” in *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences Documents from 1970–1991*, ed. Gaudencio Rosales and C. G. Arévalo (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), section titled “Laity and the Plight of Asian Women.” The 2010 conference sponsored by Caritas Internationalis in Senegal that focused on migration’s female face offered another welcome exception; see http://storico.radiovaticana.org/en3/storico/2010-12/444699_caritas_internationalis_urges_its_national_members_to_unite_to_protect_the_rights_of_women_migrants_at_a_conference_held_in_senegal.html, accessed August 12, 2011.

38. Mark W. Potter, “Solidarity as Spiritual Exercise: Accompanying Migrants at the US/Mexico border,” *Political Theology* 12, no. 6 (2011): 842.

CHAPTER 6



MIGRATION, HIGHER EDUCATION, AND THE CHANGING CHURCH

James Walters

Karen is a second-generation immigrant from China to the United States. She grew up in Brooklyn, New York, where her family attended a close-knit charismatic Presbyterian church. She came to the United Kingdom to study for a master's degree at the London School of Economics (LSE), where she felt at home with the fairly conservative theology of the Christian Union. But life at LSE brought her into contact with people of different theologies and religious backgrounds in a way she had not previously experienced. A lot of her presuppositions were challenged, particularly when she took up the opportunity to join an interfaith trip for Muslim, Christian, and Jewish students to Israel/Palestine. Reflecting on the trip, she commented, "As a Christian, I was a bit too comfortable in my ignorance of Islam and Judaism and honestly believed I didn't need to learn any more about my own faith. This trip humbled me by challenging those beliefs and making me realize how much more I can learn about other people and about myself. As I learned more about the core principles of the other religions, I was constantly examining the reasoning behind my own faith, asking myself why I believe what I believe and what my actions and words said about those beliefs." In particular, Karen was shocked and challenged by her encounter with Palestinian Christians with whom the group stayed in Bethlehem: "I stayed with Teresa, or Mama Teresa, as she liked to be called, who was a petite woman

somewhat older in age but very much young at heart. She spoke openly about the tragedies in her family and about the difficulties of being Palestinian but reassured us of the peace and satisfaction she found despite the hardships.” On completing her masters year at LSE, Karen’s faith was changed profoundly by encounters with other Christians, by encounters with people of other faiths, and by newfound political connections with the issues of justice raised by this trip.

Karen’s story highlights a personal experience that results from the convergence of the three themes explored in this chapter: religious identity, migration, and higher education. The first section of the chapter explores the intrinsic relation between migration and higher education. This relationship is mostly concerned with the principle of universality, which is historically and conceptually linked to the “catholic” nature of the church. The second section addresses current concerns about the future of student migration, particularly in the United Kingdom. In the third section, I consider the impact that contemporary student migration is having on the configuration of the church and on broader religious life in Western universities, particularly my own institution, the London School of Economics (LSE). In the final section, I raise the question of whether this changed religious identity is a formative part of a broader shift in the attitude toward religion within the contemporary university.

MIGRATION AND THE UNIVERSITY

The gathering together of people from across national borders is not a recent development in university life. It is intrinsic to what the university has always been. In the Middle Ages, the university emerged as a community of scholars for whom locality and regional identity were subordinated to a collective pursuit of truth and wisdom. Historian of the university Hilde de Ridder-Symoens describes this as the “academic pilgrimage” (*peregrination academica*), a movement of students and teachers across medieval Europe in the common pursuit of learning. She highlights how this was made possible by the common use of Latin in all universities until the seventeenth century and by a uniform approach to study and examinations recognized across Europe.¹ The first universities emerged in Paris and Bologna in the twelfth century, attracting scholars from across the continent. University rolls show how both institutions drew students from as far as Scotland, Denmark-Sweden, Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland.

De Ridder-Symoens suggests that it was only toward the end of the fourteenth century, with the emergence of more unified national identities, that the preference shifted toward regional universities as each state and political or ecclesiastical unit sought to found its own *studium* so that citizens did not need to study abroad.²

The temptation in our era is to assume that the internationalism of our universities is merely a product of the much-discussed forces of globalization and marketization (students travel long distances to study because they want and can afford a quality of education abroad that they cannot find at home). But the gathering of people from different cultures and nationalities has always been essential to bring together different perspectives and traditions within institutions that have, since their inception, aspired to a cause more universal than simply national needs or priorities. Universities are committed to a truth and wisdom for all humanity. They are premised, as John Henry Newman points out, on a belief in “universal knowledge.”³ Just as Christianity teaches that there is one God and one baptism for all, so too are there no discreet forms of knowledge relevant to one section of humanity but irrelevant to another. The university is to pursue the interconnection between different narratives of meaning and understanding. It requires continual discovery and encounter. As such, it must be driven by a relentless curiosity for the new, the strange, the other.

Thus “diversity” is not just a modern buzzword for academic institutions seeking to eradicate discrimination. Diversity is what makes a university the kind of place that Karen has experienced, one where the narrowness of previous experience and thinking is challenged by a complex encounter of students and scholars from a variety of national, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds. It is worth emphasizing this because a key argument of this chapter is that the vocation of the university to pursue universal truth and wisdom and to promote this internationally is currently being challenged by more instrumental objectives, most notably national economic and political agendas, which are restricting the mobility of scholars and academics and constraining the university’s ability to pursue knowledge for its own sake.

It should be said that the kind of migration that takes place in higher education is different in character from the economic migration and asylum seeking that currently dominate public discourse and are primarily discussed in the other chapters of this book. First, student migration is usually temporary, although the extent to which degree courses are used as a platform for permanent migration is currently the source of much public debate.⁴ Second, student migration

has, by definition, a largely elite quality. Studying overseas is rarely an inexpensive option. The students coming from developing countries will invariably be among the most socially mobile and affluent in their home contexts. Some may have obtained scholarships and bursaries from their governments or from the universities to which they have applied. But simply to have attained the necessary educational level means that they are unlikely to have come from deprived backgrounds in countries where free public education, if it is available at all, will be minimal.

Thus student migration can often be viewed as a form of economic migration. It enhances the opportunities of students from poorer countries, either by giving them greater access to the labor market of the Global North or by giving them significant skills that they can take back to their own countries. This points to the profound social good that a university education can be not just in enhancing an individual's earning potential but in building up the social infrastructure of whole societies when graduates return as leaders. The LSE, for example, played a significant role through the twentieth century in training leaders for the postcolonial administrations of Commonwealth nations as British Imperial rule was withdrawn. Occasionally, student migration may even take on a more explicit social purpose in providing sanctuary. It is a little-known fact that under the directorship of William Beveridge at the outbreak of the Second World War, the LSE created a number of posts for Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe. In his history of LSE, former director Ralf Dahrendorf remarks how this act of altruism also greatly enriched the university, bringing "a further broadening of range, and an injection of new energy."⁵

Thus throughout history and in diverse contexts, higher education, travel, and migration have come together to resource the core purpose of the pursuit of universal knowledge, social justice, and the broader betterment of humanity. It is important to recall here the ecclesiological origins of the university. The first universities were a core expression of the life of the church in their attempt to interpret the diversity of the world through the unity of the God who has brought about universal redemption. Thus the universal vocation of the university is integrally linked to the "catholic" identity of the church. The four marks of the church—one, holy, catholic, and apostolic—describe the core characteristics of the church as a human organization directed toward God. When one of these characteristics is lost, we can, at very least, say that the church's identity is impoverished. In terms of the mark of catholicity, Hans Küng has written, "A Church is never there just for itself, but by its very nature is there for

others, *for mankind as a whole, for the entire world*. We must remember that the message of Jesus was itself quite literally universal.”⁶ In the early church, Paul’s message, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28), spoke powerfully into a highly stratified Roman Empire that did not consider the contribution of the “weaker members” (1 Cor. 12:22) to be of any consequence. Both a church and a university are to be judged, therefore, on the question of who is absent, whose voice is not contributing to its communal life. The universality of a university is not as total as that of the church, given its intellectually elite nature. But that kind of elitism should never become confused with socioeconomic, cultural, or racial exclusion; neither should there be any section of society whose voices are not, in some way, incorporated into the university’s research and learning. The university shares the church’s vocation to the universality of catholic identity and it does so for the same reason: humanity is raised to its full stature in the coming together of all people in wisdom and knowledge (cf. Eph. 4:3).

EDUCATIONAL MIGRATION UNDER THREAT?

This exploration of the theme of universality has demonstrated the integral relationship between migration and higher education. The two have gone hand in hand since the birth of the medieval university as an expression of the catholic life of the church. But it is worth reiterating these foundational principles because, as with other forms of migration in our era, the overall picture is one of growth accompanied by the political currents that threaten it. On the whole, international study is dramatically increasing. In the United Kingdom, the proportion of students who came from outside the European Union in the academic year 2002–3 was 8 percent. By 2011–12, this had risen to 12 percent.⁷ British universities are fishing in a pond of international students that has almost doubled to 3.6 million in the last 6 years and they are well aware of their dependence on them.⁸ A sharp decrease in the number of university applicants since the increase of tuition fees in England and Wales,⁹ combined with the government’s lifting of caps on individual institutions’ student numbers, has radically intensified the competitiveness of the higher education market, and not all institutions will survive. Elite universities like LSE have attracted large numbers of international students for a long time. Today, less prestigious institutions are also looking beyond the United Kingdom to make up their numbers.

Yet at the same time, student migration has become caught up in the wider political backlash against what are regarded as insufficiently regulated flows of people across national borders. False perceptions abound that international students take places away from home students or that student visas are used as a “backdoor” into permanent residence. The government has responded with a tightening of student visas and mandatory language tests along with other regressive measures such as the introduction of health care charges for non-EU residents. Recent research suggests that this increasingly hostile climate has led to a drop in the United Kingdom’s share of the international student market as international competitors prove more welcoming.¹⁰ Applications from India in particular dropped 24 percent in the year 2012–13 following a 50 percent drop the previous year.

Policies, such as the ones described here, have resulted from the broader political pressure to reduce net migration to the United Kingdom during a period of increased hostility to immigrants. It may have disproportionately affected students since educational migration is easier to control. But it may yet have an essentially negative impact on all parties. From the UK perspective, the policy contradicts the government’s desire that universities should be a driver of economic growth when it threatens the £10.2 billion tuition fees and living expenses international students bring to the United Kingdom and deprives the British economy of those graduates who may remain in the country after their studies, contributing their skills and talent. The impact on developing countries is obvious in the denial of the education to their young people that will drive forward their development. But third, for universities themselves, harm will come to the quality of their teaching and learning when the vision of participation in universal knowledge set out earlier is restricted.

We may hope this is a temporary and localized problem in British higher education at the present time. However, hostility to immigration is on the rise in many other developed countries, and universities ought to be centers of opposition to any migration policy driven by xenophobia and intolerance, both for the sake of social progress and for the intrinsic identity of their own institutions.

THE CHANGING IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE UNIVERSITY

We now turn to consider how the increased internationalization of higher education is shaping the Christian community present within Western universities, with particular consideration given to the LSE.

This discussion concerns rapidly changing ecclesiology in a complex globalized era. The radical diversity involved makes it difficult to speak comfortably about a homogenous “church.” Indeed, many younger Christians have an antipathy to this word and its connotations. So I use here the phrase “Christian community” to encompass the range of Christian groups present in today’s university.

The LSE today has students from around 140 different countries, and 46 percent of its staff comes from overseas. This has inevitably had a profound impact on the religious makeup of the student body. A recent student survey found that only 25 percent of our students describe themselves as Christian, 18 percent say they are of another faith, and 38 percent say they have no religion.¹¹ This, combined with the Single Equality Act’s requirement to give fair provision to all religious groups, has led to a radical reimagining of the university’s formal religious provision from a predominantly Christian chaplaincy to the opening in January 2014 of a new multifaith center. The LSE Faith Centre is designed to provide facilities for the range of different religious groups (for prayer, hospitality, worship, and meditation) as well as to draw these groups together in interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

It is a long way from the situation described to me by an alumnus from the 1950s who was president of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) when a very high proportion of students were members. In this period, the prominent American theologian William Stringfellow spent a year of study at LSE, during which he spoke on numerous occasions and took a leading role in LSE’s SCM group.¹² Given LSE’s longstanding internationalism, there was certainly not the kind of near Christian monopoly one would have found at most other British universities (a Hindu Society for the large number of Indian students had already been formed and the sizeable Jewish presence has been discussed earlier). But we can certainly speak of a Christian default that endured for three or four more decades. Today, nearly two-thirds of the university’s students are drawn from overseas and the religious paradigm is radically pluralistic. The first challenge for the Christian community within the university is to accept this shift and that there can be little justification for any particular privilege accorded to Christian identity. As examples of this shift in culture, space previously provided for Christian worship is now extended to all faith communities, and it needs to be understood that evangelistic activity on campus will no longer go uncontested. The ecclesial context is now essentially post-Christian.

The second challenge is to recognize how the radical diversity within the Christian community itself is resulting in a rapid transition in current modes of student organization. The most resilient group is perhaps the Roman Catholic Society, which, under the leadership of a diocesan appointed associate chaplain, manages to accommodate a broad international membership. The chaplain (himself a migrant from Angola) works with a diverse student committee to convene a range of activities, focused on a weekly celebration of the Mass. At the Protestant end of the spectrum, provision is less stable. The Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship-affiliated Christian Union has sometimes struggled to adapt to a more international student body. As its traditional constituency of white middle-class evangelicals has dwindled, there has been a hesitancy to recognize that the cultural assumptions and norms of their meeting need to be adapted. A new range of evangelical, charismatic, and Pentecostal groups have sprung up, some seeking formal students' union recognition and some not; some affiliated to large London churches and some entirely student led; some focused on evangelism and some focused on worship and Bible study. National groupings have also formed such as the Korean Bible Study, which is student led and unconnected with any one church or outside organization. While the SCM of the 1950s had sought an explicitly ecumenical vision, today's paradigm is diversification, reflecting a broader decline in the ecumenical movement.

An important dimension of these shifting patterns of Christian student organizations is the general erosion for many young people of denominational identity and a sense of "homelessness" in relation to Christian community. Across the range of traditional denominations, labels such as "Anglican" or "Methodist" are of dwindling significance to young people who may be on the margins of any particular church but are unwilling to let go of Christian identity altogether. Recent comprehensive research into Christianity in British universities has challenged the perception that the more rigid conservative Christians dominate the student scene. "The 'hidden Christians' constitute the majority, whether as quietly observant church attendees or more nominal or cultural Christians skeptical of organized centers of faith."¹³ My perception is that, within the LSE context of high numbers of students from overseas, two trends are taking place. On the one hand, for many evangelical or Pentecostal international students, finding a congregation in London is an important part of their integration into a new city. This may be a congregation linked with their nationality or a broader evangelical/Pentecostal church where neither nationality nor clearly identified denominational identity is ostensibly

significant. Many other students, however, find it difficult to situate themselves in a congregation because they fail to find a church with which they connect either culturally or intellectually. This complex new ecclesial context, patterned with both familiarity and strangeness, is one that requires both migrant students and host churches to be more understanding of the cultural form of church practices that can either alienate a newcomer or make them feel at home.

FAITH AND THE IDENTITY OF THE UNIVERSITY

Migration and the globalization of the higher education market have had a dramatic impact on the religious identity of the student body of LSE and many other Western universities. This in turn is impacting the identity of the institution itself. Many academics had long subscribed to the secularization thesis that religion was inexorably on the wane and that religious practice would soon be an external phenomenon confined to historical and ethnographic study.¹⁴ The internationalization of their institutions has highlighted the European exception with regard to progressive secularization, and facilities such as the new LSE Faith Centre point to a renewed religiosity within the university resulting from migration.

Migration has also fed into other factors contributing to a reappraisal of the Western conception of secularity. Many home students are also rediscovering religion as an important part of their own self-understanding. This is inevitably more conspicuous among the non-Christian religions where the relegation of faith to the private sphere has been less readily assumed and where the pattern of religious practice is not synchronized with the academic year.¹⁵ But we should not view Christians as an exception to this trend. Research conducted in Glasgow found the minority status of Christians among “generation Y” frequently resulted in a heightened sense of their religious identity and its distinctiveness from the wider culture.¹⁶ The research argues that while their parents’ generation may have been more likely to adopt a Christian label, today’s younger Christians take their faith more seriously. The evidence for whether young people are becoming more or less religious (and what that means) is unclear and contested. But it is certainly the case that for a sizeable proportion of young people, the public expression of religion is an important part of their identity. Christian students appear to be part of this renewed prominence of religion on campus. Some will certainly express that in efforts to reassert Christian privilege over other faiths. But our experience at LSE has found a broad recognition of the mutual benefit of

restructuring university provision to respond to a more diverse religious paradigm.

My contention is that the complex interreligious encounter taking place in today's universities is forming a kind of response to a broader crisis in higher education. Much has been written about the nature of this crisis and its possible causes. But it can be summarized as the sense that the ideals of learning for the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom have been subordinated to primarily economic imperatives. The government's higher education policy is oriented entirely toward producing the kind of graduates that will directly promote economic growth, and they have sought to engineer this through a marketization of education that recasts the student as a consumer who will be able to measure the benefit of his or her degree by the salary of the job it leads to. As Stefan Collini summarizes, "What is at stake is whether universities in the future are to be thought of as having a public cultural role partly sustained by public support, or whether we move further towards redefining them in terms of a purely economic calculation of value and a wholly individualist conception of 'consumer satisfaction.'"¹⁷

But the often unasked question is what narrative underpins the notion of the public that Collini sees as integral to the university's purpose. With ever increasing pressure to view education as a commodity bought by the individual to enhance his or her personal competitiveness in the labor market, from where does the idea come that you might actually be studying at university for the sake of other people? For the best part of a century, this question was commonly answered by the prominence of Marxist thought in the Western academy. The solidarity of human community in the quest for just economic relations was the background music to university teaching and the writings of its professors. It also sustained the positive view of student migration as enhancing social justice and contributing to a universal human knowledge.

The crisis of Western higher education is therefore one manifestation of the end of the Cold War. While it is likely that most university professors as (still) public sector employees remain critical of neoliberal capitalism, a progressive Leftist narrative no longer underpins the ethos and morale of university life. It is into this kind of vacuum that Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen, in their aptly named book *No Longer Invisible*, claim that the complex new religiosity of the university is speaking: "It is this new [pluriform] mode of religion that colleges and universities are re-engaging today, and it is this new mode of religion that may allow the academy to recapture

a nearly lost conversation about ‘things that really matter’ and how these deeper concerns of life relate to the more practical skills and knowledge that colleges and universities also convey to students.”¹⁸

They are certainly not arguing for a return to narrowly confessional universities with an uncritical embrace of theological dogma. Rather, they contend, “When the subject is handled well, discussed intelligently, and reflected upon seriously, religion (broadly construed) has the potential to enhance higher learning and open up a range of questions about the world and the human condition that otherwise might never be asked.”¹⁹ Karen’s experience on the LSE interfaith trip to Israel/Palestine is a good illustration of how an engagement with religion, both critical and devotional, led to a profound learning experience that opened up questions about politics, identity, community, and justice in a unique way. For the church, this represents a significant opportunity for renewing its contribution to higher education both in confidently promoting denominational universities such as the United Kingdom’s Cathedrals Group²⁰ and also in recovering its voice as a partner in the broader public conversation about the purposes of higher education.

While remaining in dialogue with other traditions, the church has a particular opportunity here. More broadly within academia, there may be some evidence that points to a rediscovery of the contribution of the Christian tradition on which Western intellectual life and the university itself were built. This is a difficult claim to substantiate conclusively and there can be no doubt that a dogged hostility to religion persists in many quarters. But three examples from recent public lectures at LSE spring to mind as illustrations for how the Christian narrative is once again resourcing the university’s thinking, particularly in relation to the underlying moral discourse. First was the inaugural lecture of the LSE’s new director Professor Craig Calhoun, in which he drew heavily on John Henry Newman’s articulation of the university’s commitment to universal knowledge, which we have explored earlier: “That idea was linked to the religious foundations of the university more than anything else: one god, one truth, one knowledge.”²¹ That the new vice-chancellor of a secular university in the twenty-first century should draw on such theological thought in their inaugural lecture is noteworthy.

The second lecture was by French sociologist Bruno Latour, whose work has done much to question the gulf between the language of belief and normative language of scientific rationality. He concluded a sophisticated lecture on the politics of climate change science with the quotation of the words from Genesis used at the imposition of the

ashes on Ash Wednesday, “Remember man that thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return.”²² This reflects a broader interest in Latour’s work in the religious contribution to moral and critical thought.²³ Similarly, in the third example, veteran Marxist sociologist Zygmunt Bauman concluded his lecture, “Has the Future a Left?,” speaking of “the inspirational value of the New Testament” and quoting Richard Rorty: “Children need to read Christ’s message of human fraternity alongside Marx and Engel’s account of how industrial Capitalism and the Free market, indispensable as they have turned out to be, make it very difficult to institute that fraternity.”²⁴

What do these allusions to the moral contribution of the Christian tradition by prominent academics tell us? Cynics might see them simply as the random selecting of inconsequential remnants of Christian faith amid the bricolage of postmodern thought. But they may, in fact, be indicative of a quiet overcoming of Western academia’s embarrassment or hostility toward religion. Even more, they may reflect a growing recognition that the resources of the Christian tradition in the Western world have outlived many of the modern ideologies that sought to supersede it. This may be particularly true in relation to the ecclesiastical origins of the university, giving the church the opportunity today to help rearticulate the purpose of institutions founded to pursue universal wisdom and knowledge for the public good.

This chapter has covered a wide range of themes, all of which require further investigation. But there can be no doubt that the escalation in migration that we have seen in the era of globalization is revolutionizing higher education across the Western world. This has fundamentally disrupted Western academia’s former relegation of religion to the private sphere and brings students of different faiths into a dynamic new educational encounter, such as Karen experiencing both studying in London and her visit to Israel/Palestine. Thus student migration is transforming Christian identity of both individual students like Karen and the form of churches and Christian groups on and off campus. This new environment is not without conflicts between different faiths, between religion and its opponents, and in the integration of religious perspectives with secular disciplines. But in a time of moral crisis in higher education, this new religious discourse has much to contribute to the fundamental renewal of the university’s purpose. It remains to be seen how great this contribution will be or how far it will be allowed to extend. The “academic pilgrimage” is more complex than it was in the Middle Ages. But it continues in an exciting form as Christian students from all corners of the world

interact with students of other faiths or no faith at all, joining together in pursuit of the universal wisdom and knowledge that our world needs.

NOTES

1. Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, "Mobility," in *The History of the University in Europe*, vol. I, *Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. Walter Rüegg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 280–304.
2. *Ibid.*, 285.
3. See especially John Henry Newman, "Discourse II: Theology as a Branch of Knowledge," in *The Idea of a University*, ed. John Henry Newman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 25ff.
4. Concern in the United Kingdom that overseas students were using higher education as an easy means of permanent immigration led to the coalition government's abolition of the poststudy work visa in April 2012. The UK Borders Agency also sought to clamp down on rogue institutions believed to provide a poor quality educational front for immigration by introducing "highly trusted sponsor" status.
5. Dahrendorf records how the majority of exiles spent some time at the LSE before passing on to other things, such as the labor lawyer Franz Neumann and social historian Ernest Kohn-Bramstedt. But many remained as academics at the school, such as Moritz Bonn and Sir Otto Kahn-Freund. He concludes, "It is a comment on LSE that those who came were made to feel at home, and that those who received them on the whole felt at ease with the newcomers. The Director [William Beveridge] deserves much of the credit. In the worst of his eighteen years at LSE he did one of his best and most consequential deeds"; Ralf Dahrendorf, *A History of the London School of Economics and Political Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 296.
6. Hans Küng, *The Church* (London: Search Press, 1971), 302, my italics.
7. Universities UK, *Patterns and Trends in UK Higher Education 2012*, <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2012/PatternsAndTrendsInUKHigherEducation2012.pdf>, accessed September 1, 2015.
8. UNESCO data, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/global-education-digest.aspx>, accessed March 2014.
9. There was an overall drop in enrollments to UK higher education institutions of 6 percent from 2011–12 to 2012–13; http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3103&Itemid=161, accessed March 2014.
10. Graham Able and Fraser White, *Education: A Great British Export?*, http://www.alphaplusgroup.co.uk/docs/REPORT_-_Education_-_A_Great_British_Export_-_Final.pdf, accessed March 2014.

11. Unpublished LSE student survey data, 2013, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/staff/equalityAndDiversity/docs/Equality-data-reporting/2014-Students-gender-identity-sexual-orientation-and-religion-and-belief.pdf>.
12. Documented in both the LSE archive and the Stringfellow archive at Cornell University.
13. Matthew Guest, Kristin Aune, Sonya Sharma, and Rob Warner, *Christianity and the University Experience: Understanding Student Faith* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 163.
14. The secularization thesis was espoused by Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and many other prominent social theorists of the modern era. For a full discussion, see Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, *Rethinking Secularism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
15. One reason for the “hiddenness” of much of Christianity on campus that Matthew Guest and his colleagues discovered is related to the Christian pattern of the academic timetable, with no teaching on Sundays and vacations scheduled on Christmas and Easter.
16. Giselle Vincett, Elizabeth Olson, Peter Hopkins, and Rachel Pain, “Young People and Performance Christianity in Scotland,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27, no. 2 (2012): 275–90.
17. Stefan Collini, “Browne’s Gamble,” *London Review of Books* 32, no. 21 (2010).
18. Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen, *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 156.
19. *Ibid.*, 154.
20. The Cathedrals Group comprises 16 British universities founded by the Church of England, Roman Catholic Church, or Methodist Church, who seek to retain Christian principles as a central part of their ethos.
21. Craig Calhoun, *Knowledge Matters: The Public Mission of Research Universities*, November 13, 2012, http://www.lse.ac.uk/assets/richmedia/channels/publicLecturesAndEvents/transcripts/20121113_1830_knowledgeMatters_tr.pdf, accessed March 2014.
22. Bruno Latour, *War and Peace in a Time of Ecological Conflicts*, February 20, 2014, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/newsAndMedia/videoAndAudio/channels/publicLecturesAndEvents/player.aspx?id=2270>, accessed March 2014.
23. See especially Bruno Latour, “Thou Shalt Not Freeze Frame or How Not to Misunderstand the Science and Religion Debate,” in *Science, Religion and Human Experience*, ed. James D. Proctor (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2005.
24. Zygmunt Bauman, *Has the Future a Left?*, March 14, 2012, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/newsAndMedia/videoAndAudio/channels/publicLecturesAndEvents/player.aspx?id=1423>, accessed March 2014.

CHAPTER 7



LITURGY IN MIGRATION AND MIGRANTS IN LITURGY

HyeRan Kim-Cragg and Stephen Burns

“We are tired and we are cold. May we please have shelter? . . . It is not by our own choice that we travel.”²¹ These words are placed onto the lips of Mary and Joseph in the Latino devotion, Las Posadas, a ritual enactment of the scriptural “memory” of the Holy Family’s difficult search for shelter in which Jesus could be born. In Las Posadas, figures of the Holy Family are “housed” at the homes of various parishioners through the Advent season, slowly making their way to church for Christmas Eve. The journey of the figures—makeshift by craftspersons, played by actors, or whatever—is a ritual enactment of the fraught journey that foreshadows Jesus’s birth, according to biblical tradition. The ritual elaborates the biblical portrait of their rejection: “You look dirty and you smell . . . for your kind there is no place, our inn is decent . . . For your reasons we care not, every room is taken . . . You are bad for business.”

Las Posadas is a liturgical enactment of a very significant narrative of migration in the church’s celebration of its central figure—Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Word to which the words of Christian liturgy give praise, celebrate, and extend invitations to encounter; He is the one who gives himself in the sacraments and the primary actor in church liturgies, gathering the Christian assembly. According to the gospels, Jesus experienced migration, and from neglected feast days to contemporary celebrations of vivid communal rituals like *Las Posadas*, his

migration is remembered in the church's prayer. The Catholic devotion of Stations of the Cross (latterly also appropriated into Protestant liturgical resources) developed out of so-called stational liturgies in fourth-century Jerusalem and Rome. The Advent tradition of *Las Posadas*—a Latin American practice that has become increasingly popular within churches in recent years—places the dynamics of journey close to the heart of the Christmas cycle of the liturgical year. In both scriptural memory and the liturgical year, this journey is held in close association with another traumatic journey, the flight into Egypt, a flight that was occasioned by the threat of violence and context of genocide and is memorialized in the sanctorale on December 28 as the “Massacre of the Innocents.”

“Liturgy” and “migration” are words that have not often been juxtaposed, and even the most recent official liturgical resources rarely include prayers for migrants among their “prayers for various occasions,” let alone more expansive rites such as *Las Posadas*, that might begin to recognize or address their circumstances. No space is created for migrants' narratives to be placed around the survival of the one they name as savior. Moreover, if we shift from church rites, or lack of them, to the academy, we find another absence: liturgical studies have barely begun to consider the impact of contemporary migration on churches. Such reflection is important, given a number of trends and conversations that impinge on contemporary thinking. Roman Catholic dynamics have accented—not without resistance—“superregionalism.”² Others have proposed that there are “transcultural” dimensions of Christian worship across cultures, and this notion, originating in Lutheran circles, has found wide affirmation.³ At the same time, some traditions are significantly recasting their inherited understandings of “common prayer.”⁴ The realities of migration need to be understood, acknowledged, and have an impact on numerous commonplace notions in liturgical studies. This is imperative because the church not only expresses itself in its liturgical life but is in fact formed by it.

This chapter attempts to showcase how the experience of migration evokes a creative tension in liturgy: between constancy and change. It also draws attention to migrants in liturgy as the work of and for the people. In our reflections, we attempt to juxtapose our keywords—migrant, migration, liturgy—in different ways, offering various starting points for thinking about them in relationship to one another. Our various reflections are piecemeal. Sometimes, we highlight ways in which liturgy has often been adapted and so moved—migrated—as it has evolved. Sometimes, we draw attention to new dynamics in light of

contemporary human migration. Piecemeal as they may be, our thoughts are organized around two key headings, “liturgy in migration” and “migrants in liturgy,” and we end with a meditation on worship in/as a “tent,” a gathering place for a people on the move in ever-changing environs and cultural milieu, which are themselves unsettled.

LITURGY IN MIGRATION

The Nairobi Statement

One of the most significant pieces of contemporary liturgical theology is the Nairobi Statement,⁵ an example of distilled thinking about liturgy and culture. It was originally produced by the Lutheran World Federation but has latterly been promoted by other Christian traditions, not least because of its dissemination by the World Council of Churches.⁶

The Nairobi Statement deftly identifies four interrelated dynamics in Christian worship: what it calls the “transcultural,” the “contextual,” the “countercultural,” and the “cross-cultural.” First, the statement suggests that worship is in certain respects “transcultural.” At the heart of this claim is the conviction that some elements of Christian worship—most obviously word and sacrament—are gifts of divine self-giving—that is to say, not simply human constructs, and hence, “for everyone, everywhere, beyond culture” (1.3). Second, the Nairobi Statement suggests that worship is in certain respects “contextual,” aimed at respecting “the fundamental values of both Christianity and of local cultures” (3.5). When this happens, “sound or accepted liturgical traditions are preserved” while “progress inspired by pastoral needs is encouraged” (3.6). Third, worship is said to be in certain respects “countercultural,” an absolutely necessary dimension because “some components of every culture in the world are sinful, dehumanizing, and contradictory to the values of the Gospel” (4.1) and therefore stand in need of not just critique but also transformation. Here, the statement directly advocates challenge to “all types of oppression and social injustice” and conscious “maintenance or recovery [either ‘from Christian history, or from the wisdom of other cultures’] of patterns of action which differ intentionally from prevailing cultural models” (4.2). Fourth, the statement speaks of worship as in certain respects “cross-cultural,” as in “the sharing of hymns and art and other elements of worship across cultural barriers [which] helps to enrich the whole Church and strengthen the sense of the *communio* of the Church” (5.1). In relation to this last aspect,

stress is laid on the imperative that “care should be taken that the music, art, architecture, gestures and postures, and other elements of different cultures are understood and respected when they are used by churches elsewhere in the world” (5.2). The authors of the Nairobi Statement intend that these four different dimensions of worship mutually enrich each other, correct imbalances, and shape a complex view of culturally engaged worship.

What the Nairobi Statement calls the cross-cultural perhaps most obviously relates to a phenomenon that might be called “liturgy in migration.” It points to some of the more obvious ways in which liturgy is appropriated and adapted in the process of migration across “cultural barriers.” But as a rounded view of the Nairobi Statement suggests, liturgy is rarely, if ever, bound to or by a particular local culture, however significant complementary “contextual” dynamics might be in the embodied, enacted, patterned events that constitute liturgy in any given place.

A Minimal Take on Liturgy in Migration: Bradshaw on Eucharistic “Dots”

The notion of the transcultural in liturgy is more controversial. By no means would all liturgical scholars endorse the Nairobi Statement’s first dynamic—that of the “transcultural.” Minimalist accounts of liturgy in migration have suggested that extant traditions are simply those that happen to have survived processes of adaptation out of the fragments that constitute the unsettled and unstable dynamics of early liturgical history. Notably, Paul Bradshaw’s studies have been concerned with reconstructing ways in which early liturgy may have migrated. He has challenged the once widely held view that liturgical developments were straightforward, linear, or easily traceable. So it is not the case that what we might find in a document from the fourth century stands in obvious or direct relation to things we might find in a document from the third century. First, these documents are ones that we are able to find, while many others might have been lost. Second, it is not necessarily the case that there is any textual or theological connection between them, given that they come from quite different places. We cannot draw bold and confident lines of development from one early source to another. Even less so can we, centuries later, rightly claim that a found document from a specific time and place conveys to us knowledge of what “the early church,” defined generically, held as its belief or practice. Rather, Bradshaw writes that the most that it is possible for us to do is to connect “dots”—feint,

unconnected traces—in scripture and in extant manuscripts from the early churches. His own work is concerned with finding “dots” dispersed across both regions and eras and how the dots do and do not join up in the transition from one place to another and appropriation by one community after another. Throughout, he insists that each dot was made by a regional Christian community in a specific period so that while a particular extant document might faithfully reflect that dot, it simply does not and cannot represent “the early church,” either spatially or temporally. Furthermore, Bradshaw argues that it is uncertain even whether extant early documents were ever actually used in the worship of the early churches—that is, early texts may have been “narrative[s that] functioned as a catechetical rather than a liturgical text.”⁷ In other words, they may not convey very much about lived practice anywhere at all. So even if the catechetical documents migrated, that does not necessarily mean that worship practices migrated.

A Maximal Take on Liturgy in Migration: Central Things from a Divine Elsewhere

In contrast more maximal accounts affirm that certain forms of liturgy mark Christian worship everywhere, endorsing the notion of the transcultural in liturgy that in some sense stands above all particular cultures. Engagement with the Bible and celebration of certain sacraments are the most likely transcultural practices. In such a view, the transcultural is seen as a theological as opposed to primarily historical category.⁸ Indeed, advocates of this or a similar position may suggest that supposedly “central things” in Christian worship are received “as if” divine gifts, without actually claiming that they are such⁹—that is, the tradition can be taken on trust.

The stronger form of this view asserts that liturgy as a “work of the people” is a form of human response to the grace of God. Divine initiative and agency is essential as the “first movement” in Christian worship to which people respond. In the case of baptism, the validity of the sacrament is granted by the grace of God as the gift from God that is not determined by the faithfulness of the person who presides over it.¹⁰ As a counterpoint, others might argue that any notion of the transcultural—historical, theological, constructed in whatever way—might be co-opted as a tool of colonialism, given that European liturgies (e.g., Roman Catholic liturgy or Westminster Reformed liturgy) have been supposed to be something like “universal norms” to follow whenever liturgy “traveled” or was “transplanted”

to non-European churches. In turn, notions like “liturgical integrity” have readily been employed as code for “assimilation,” forcing non-European worshippers to make necessary compromises to “fit in” to the dominant cultural liturgical norm at the expense of their own worship practices.¹¹

We suggest that it may be helpful to ponder what is meant by “constancy” in worship. On the one hand, it is hard to imagine how early Christians worshipped. It is also difficult to know accurately how Christians on the other side of the world, far from our own geographical location, have worshipped and currently do worship. On the other hand, it is not hard to see that they did not come as one complete pattern; the reality is much more fragmentary. It is possible to appreciate that the liturgies and various liturgical resources in use around the world today have borrowed from earlier resources, altered in a plethora of ways, and developed in all sorts of respects over many decades and centuries. James F. White describes this reality this way: “Various types of worship contain differing rates of both fixed formulas for word and action found in books and the spontaneity that ebbs and flows as the Spirit moves and cannot be found in print.”¹² We should certainly not assume that the sometimes rather well-organized liturgical formula that we find today has always been intact and neatly put together in the way we now may have it. And yet, we would also be mistaken not to notice certain kinds of “constancy” in worship.¹³ No matter how much spontaneity and variation has been and continues to be a part of the worship practice of Christians around the globe, a careful appraisal will notice those elements in worship that have remained more or less the same. The use of the Bible and the presence of prayers of certain genres are two likely examples. The sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist are other examples that demonstrate a transcultural constancy in worship—for all that they might be celebrated in very different styles more or less consonant with the mores and tastes of the local umbrella culture.

A creative and healthy tension between constancy and change, between being deliberate and being spontaneous, is part of the story of liturgy in migration. And in a more maximal account, it may be that it is not so much that liturgy migrates but that liturgy makes known a God who is present in every culture or location—a conviction that is perhaps not insignificant for human migrants amid overwhelming dynamics of dislocation. One may say that God is at the crossroads between human migration and humanly constructed liturgy. And the transcultural claim that at least aspects of liturgy hail from a divine elsewhere may for some migrants mean that they sense being “held”

in certain liturgical dynamics. They are able to recognize their own relatedness to God, which is mediated by a liturgical familiarity both before and after their quite possibly traumatic travels.

There are different things to recognize in these reflections: at the very least, some liturgical traditions no doubt die out because they do not migrate widely or for long enough while others become more and more robust in migration, strengthened for further adaptation elsewhere. As shown in the discussion of Bradshaw in the Nairobi document, liturgy in terms of texts and traditions, in light of its practices and movements, has been shaped by migration. This points to a context and an experience at a particular time. For example, in the study of vessels used in the Eucharistic table practice in the first century, Edward Foley shows how the meal tradition of Judaism has been migrating significantly as Christians successfully borrowed from the Jewish domestic (nonsacred) practice and then adopted and changed it into their own. By doing so, they developed Eucharistic theology through shared experiences of the (ordinary) community.¹⁴

MIGRANTS IN LITURGY

Life Cycle Sacraments and Sacred Worth

James F. White makes the point that much liturgical study has centered on the Eucharist and not enough on other rites and celebrations that may be more important.¹⁵ The point may be transmuted to consider the experience of migrants. Aside from scripture and the “Sunday” sacrament of the Eucharist—that is, the oft-repeated ritual that has through the twentieth century into the twenty-first century been widely held to constitute the “fundamental” *ordo* of the service of “the Lord’s day”—many “historic” forms of worship (which is to say, those forms that have endured migrations from one culture to another, over time) cluster around the sacramental schema of Catholic tradition: the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, reconciliation, unction, marriage, and orders, which with the Eucharist make up the seven on which Catholic tradition has settled, at least since the eleventh century. Even when Protestant traditions limit the language of sacramentality to all but baptism and Eucharist, they retain focus on the choices, episodes, and transitions on which the seven concentrate (as perusal of many a Protestant prayer book or liturgical directory quickly confirms). This schema does not directly acknowledge migrants in any obvious way but is as open to migrants as anyone else. It may be argued that the sacraments can serve to “humanize” or

rehumanize migrants amid and after traumatic experience, asserting the sacred worth of persons. The following reflections may, in addition to the *Las Posadas* tradition with which we began our chapter, provide examples that are open to embrace experiences of migration.

Sanctorale Personalities

Throughout the liturgical year, the Church celebrates significant dates and events, including the lives of saints. There is scope for migration to have a considerably stronger presence within the “sanctorale cycles”—the calendar commemorating saints’ days. Just one relevant example among others is Caroline Chisholm, a woman commemorated in the calendars of numerous traditions—for example, the Church of England (May 16, as “social reformer”) and the Uniting Church in Australia (March 26, as “renewer of society”). She is an English woman of Anglican background who married a Roman Catholic and in the 1830s traveled, via a significant sojourn in India, to Australia where she expended herself in an exemplary way in advocacy of vulnerable migrants, particularly women and children. Migration should be recognized and remembered more strongly in her story, as her experience of migration will undoubtedly have shaped her theology and faith.

To take this a step further, the migration experiences of everyday marginalized people should be central to all liturgical celebration. The very word “liturgy” merges two Greek words—“people” and “work”—hence both its commonplace rendering as “work of the people” and the importance laid upon “participation.”¹⁶ A legitimate but currently less popular definition, the notion of liturgy as public service,¹⁷ is sometimes invoked to propose the imperative of an “open door”¹⁸ when Christians assemble for worship. At any rate, liturgy is of or for people; hence, James F. White’s insistence that in Christian worship, “people are the primary document.”¹⁹ Along with the focus on “people as the primary document,” another insight that weighs on our discussion of migrants in liturgy is the “phenomenon” of liturgy.²⁰ Something “happens” when people gather for worship. Attention to the phenomenon that is unfolding in any given liturgy is taken seriously in recent scholarship in practical theology where diverse disciplines come together to grapple with the phenomena of congregations and faith communities marked by growing movements of migration. Mary McClintock Fulkerson, for instance, represents an approach to the study of congregational life that has involved shifting from an earlier more “systematic” theological approach toward a

“practical” theology that in fact argues that “all theology is practical and situated.” In her ethnographical study found in *Places of Redemption*, she sees, attends, and describes what happens to the people of a particular congregation when they come together for worship.²¹ If the human experience of migrants is missing from our liturgical life, a core element that makes for full, rich worship is absent.

From “Journey” to “Migration”

The centrality of scripture and sacrament in Sunday worship seems obvious, yet this centrality is not static but moves. For example, *Common Worship*, of the Church of England, suggests that “the journey through the liturgy has a clear structure with signposts for those less familiar with the way. It moves from the gathering of the community through the Liturgy of the Word to an opportunity of transformation, sacramental or non-sacramental, after which those present are sent out to put their faith into practice.”²²

The service book of the United Church of Canada, *Celebrate God’s Presence*, sets out to “enhance the celebration of the Christian year; be sensitive to the diversity of human experience; draw on the gifts of prophetic voices from near and far.”²³ There is nothing obviously related to contemporary experience of migration in the two resources, but there is in this notion of journey, at the very least a resonance that might be opened to contemplate dynamics of contemporary migratory experience. Yet the books at least convey a sense of knowledge that traditions travel from one place to another even in one set liturgy, or “near and far” places, as well as a partial recognition of “diversity” and differences embedded in culture and customs of the worshiping assembly (arguably more successfully in *Celebrate God’s Presence* than in *Common Worship*). At some level, this may correspond to the recognition of migrant people that their journey toward finding their identity, including their liturgical origins in today’s world, seems to be perpetual. Many persons seek a state of being “en route” rather than a definite destination understood in terms of one’s past roots.²⁴ This sensibility itself speaks to the existential connection between migration and liturgy. To further explore this connection, we want to unpack the concept of “home” in regards to “liturgical homeland.”

From “Liturgical Homeland” to “Unhomely Diasporic Spaces”²⁵

While “home” may conjure up cozy feelings of comfort and security, and rightly so, it has never been easily understood or simplified to

mean one thing or one universal experience. The concept of home has always been both contested and complicated.²⁶ Homi Bhabha coined the awkward term “unhomely” in order to capture the unsettling reality of the concept of home that emerges from migration through displacement and relocation. “To be unhomed,” he writes, “is not to be homeless, nor can the unhomely be easily accommodated in that familiar division of the social life into private and public spheres.”²⁷ Concurring with his thought, Kim-Cragg has argued elsewhere that “in a world where transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political and economic refugees are so prominent we can no longer afford to assume that home is a place where a guest can easily return to or find security or comfort.”²⁸ In this sense, the home is the world and the world is the home, “the world-in-the-home and the home-in-the-world.”²⁹

Such an ambivalent view, however, puts another challenge to our view on the necessity and the value of liturgy, especially whatever may be a familiar liturgy, which seeks to provide the security and comfort of a “home” to those worshippers who need it. Carol Doran and Thomas H. Troeger call this a “liturgical homeland,” where a familiar pattern is ingrained as a part of our experience of worship, such that few questions and perhaps no surprises arise in relation to it. This may or may not correspond to something supposed to be transcultural, because if one knows the language and the action of a rite, then one knows what to expect, so to speak. While arguing the benefit of such a familiar and repetitious nature of liturgy, Doran and Troeger contend that in a liturgical homeland, persons may “give themselves entirely to focusing upon Christ, to becoming open to the Spirit without any awkward reservations about the correctness of the liturgical action.”³⁰ If liturgy is the work of people who gather as a community and building up that community involves creating a common (rather than dissident) story through the use of a kind of muscle memory, then it is difficult to dismiss the important role of any such liturgical homeland, however constituted. The key to liturgical leadership, after all, can be depicted in terms of encouraging worshippers to develop “persistent muscular habits,” which include awareness of such acquired habits, critical appraisal of the habits, and an openness to change them in order to participate in worship at a deeper level.³¹

However, not everyone shares a common story or the same muscle memory. To make this point more poignantly, we might say that one should never make the mistake of identifying “a common experience” with “the same experience.” In fact, someone’s common familiar story or ritual can be at odds with the other’s familiar story or ritual.

A liturgical homeland for one group of Christians can create a quite unhomely liturgical experience for others. Kathy Black offers a vivid example of this scenario:

A European American worshipper felt so uneasy and awkward when she heard (but did not see) a group of Korean men praying in a form known as “*Tong Song Kido*”—roughly translated as “praying aloud,” which also often involves rocking their bodies. In this particular case, they were sitting in a chair, sounding to this woman’s unfamiliar ear, banging things, making the noise of the chair being rocked against the wooden floor. Not knowing this kind of liturgical practice, certainly unusual sound to be expected in a sanctuary this woman assumed that “it was a homeless person possibly destroying the sanctuary” so she called the police.³²

For those Christians whose liturgical homeland of prayer is associated with silence or with singing in harmony, it may be difficult to embrace noisy, unharmonious, and physically active prayer as “normal,” while such cacophonous prayer is regarded as natural to others and might very well serve as security and comfort to those others.

For this reason, we suggest that it is crucial to consider the issue of the “narrative agency” from which a perspective is located. Narrative agency “allows possibilities for continual (re)negotiation and (re)interpretation of subjectivity”³³ toward articulating one’s own multiple identities—identities that have been negotiated in the fluid context of the postmodern, postcolonial, transnational, and migrating world. Such articulation does not happen without a cost. It inevitably engages and, to some extent, generates power dynamic. In the case of the incident described earlier, we are compelled to ask, whose narrative is claimed and whose narrative is silenced? Whose liturgical homeland has been endorsed as normal and whose liturgical homeland is called into question? One may not be able to argue against the point that “Western” or “European” is, in this incident, conflated with “Christian.” A particular non-Western form of prayer is in danger, because it is expressed within a context that sees Western liturgy as rule and norm of Christian worship and hence finds itself being regarded as non-Christian, uncivilized, or even illegitimate. Because Western forms of worship and spirituality have been overwhelmingly privileged, a “homeless” class of worshippers has also been created. Russell Yee begs the question, “What if Europe had been evangelized by Asian missionaries who insisted on establishing and perpetuating a transplanted Asian expression of Christian faith and worship, and

then transplanted those Asian forms onto the first churches in North America? Would anyone think that was a good idea? Yet that is exactly the kind of transplanting and cultural imposition that ANA (Asian North American) church has inherited.”³⁴

This question leads to another challenge, which lies in the nature of *ekklesia*, church, the people, and, we insist, migrants in liturgy. Theologically speaking, *ekklesia* is a primary expression of a Christian worship service, yet it is first about God’s service to us before it is about our service to God. The nature of worship—of attributing worth to God—is a response to God who calls us to gather in community. Theologically, it is God who initiates the relationship. We, the people, respond to this gathering in, through, and beyond worship.³⁵ The irony is, however, that the people are far from being homogenous or static. Even without going deeper into discourses of identity politics and ethno-gender-cultural identity studies, it is easy to see that human beings are different from one another in a whole host of ways and that human lives constantly change. A notion of a self—whether a self as an individual or as a homogenous community of faith—that leans on a modernist outlook on selfhood as unified and indivisible is clearly outdated and, thus, increasingly irrelevant to the current world in which we live. A sense of selfhood, and likewise of community, needs to be seen as fragmented, situational, and shifting. The key insight of pastoral theology carried into liturgical reflection that “people are a living and primary document,” raised earlier, can be closely connected to the notion of narrative agency, ascribing to people power and the ability to create, alter, adopt, and re-create their own lives. “Simply put, people will appeal to religious narrative formulas . . . to ‘script’ their own life narratives,” writes Tran.³⁶ In this light, what we mean by people as “migrants in liturgy” becomes richer and more textured, perhaps, than at first blush.

At the very least, instead of clinging to a “liturgical homeland,” we suggest that it is imperative also to consider the notion of the “unhomely” and of unhomeliness, as well as the dynamics of “narrative agency.”³⁷ People, as living primary documents, open up and create “diasporic spaces”—and not least, but not only, migrants. We propose that a nuanced understanding of liturgy as diasporic space could fit and serve the church well, helping some persons to cope with and respond to their changing contexts due to migration and other experiences. What kinds of liturgical symbol may tangibly embody diasporic spaces of liturgy? We end with a suggestion, a meditation, on “tent.”

DWELLING IN A LITURGICAL TENT/ TABERNACLE INSTEAD OF A TEMPLE

In the letter to the Hebrews, the homilist talks about earthly sanctuaries and heavenly sanctuaries in order to teach followers of the faith how to worship God and help them understand the meaning of God's new covenant. The letter aims to point to Christ as mediator of a better covenant by articulating the idea of a tabernacle (*skhmb*, translated as "tent" in the NRSV) that was built according to the pattern revealed on Mount Sinai (Heb. 8:5). This tent/tabernacle is juxtaposed to the temple and is understood to enable them to encounter the God who dwelled with the Israelites as they moved around in their wilderness wanderings (Exod. 40:34).³⁸ The tabernacle's portability reflects the nomadic nature and the pilgrim life of Israel at the time of the exodus. It also illuminates the context of migration that is part of the reality for many twenty-first-century Christians.³⁹

The United Church of Canada has made a commitment to become "intercultural" in 2006,⁴⁰ just as the Uniting Church in Australia—a church that often calls itself a "pilgrim people"—did in 1985.⁴¹ In reflecting upon what this means, Adele Halliday suggests the metaphor of the tent:

For so many years, the United Church [of Canada] and other denominations have lived as if the normal way to "be church" is as a *temple*: the large, organized, and organizing institution . . . But what if we're living in a time when there is no temple or the temple is falling in, big stone by big stone? Maybe the wisdom we need in a time like this is coming to all of us from the margins, living in "tents" rather than "temples." In *tent* church, these people have learned to be flexible and nimble, open to change and the Spirit's movement.⁴²

For many mainline denominations including the United Church of Canada, it is critical to respond to the contemporary reality of migration. We cannot afford not to wrestle with the unfamiliar (yet increasingly growing) model of church as tent and its liturgical practices of creating diasporic spaces while struggling and learning to let go of the familiar and settled notion of church and its liturgical practice. On this uneasy and frightening journey ahead, the image of a tent may shelter us from despair and encourage the making of space for the vulnerable who are, as a matter of fact, all of us. Speaking of vulnerability and reimagining the church as a tent or an inn,⁴³ the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 can also be helpful to

support the metaphor of the tent as church. This is the place where the wounded person, “half dead” (Luke 10:30), teaches us how to be vulnerable and how life giving the experience of receiving mercy from others can be. The inn is a critical space, a necessity of life, but it is not a static or a permanent space. Although it is whole, real, and full, an inn like a tent represents a temporary, transient, and partial reality that shapes our view on the church in the twenty-first-century migration contexts. What if we imagine the church where people understand themselves to be in a tent? As sojourners and travelers, we learn to pack, to leave, and to settle into a new place, living in between diasporic spaces serving as the inn, and at the same time to be vulnerable on the way by learning to be interdependent. We are all under this tent together. The church Kim-Cragg attends is near the university where many students knock on the church door to worship every week. They are migrants. Although most of them may end up going back to their place of origin, the church is a place where they find a home to stay, rest, and be cared for while they are studying. It is also the place where they participate in the life of the church, care for others, and teach what it means to be living as migrants. While it is unlikely that they take up the leadership position in a permanent sense of commitment, their presence is a gift to the church. Through receiving them and recognizing their presence and their offering of gifts, we are able to encounter God on the move and to witness who we are as Body of Christ, the body of faith on the journey.

NOTES

1. United Methodist Church, “A Christmas Eve Service of Los Posadas,” in *United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 282.
2. See Mark R. Francis, *Local Worship, Global Church: Popular Religion and the Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), for recent discussion of this dynamic in Roman Catholic contexts.
3. See Glauca Vasconcelos Wilkey, ed., *Worship and Culture: Foreign Country or Homeland?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), for an extensive discussion.
4. See Mark Earey, *Beyond Common Worship: Anglican Identity and Liturgical Diversity* (London: SCM, 2013), for Anglican reflections; Teresa Berger, ed., *Liturgy in Migration: From Upper Room to Cyberspace* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), was published after the bulk of our own writing in this chapter.
5. Remarkably, the Nairobi Statement is no longer found on the website of the Lutheran World Federation. The official text is, however, housed

here: <http://easternsynod.org/ministries/worship/files/2010/08/LWF-Nairobi-Statement.pdf>.

6. For more information, see World Council of Churches, “So We Believe, So We Pray: Towards Koinonia in Worship (The Ditchingham Letter and Report),” August 15, 1994, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/ii-worship-and-baptism/so-we-believe-so-we-pray-towards-koinonia-in-worship-the-ditchingham-letter-and-report>.
7. Paul F. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins* (London: SPCK, 2004), 15.
8. Consider Gordon W. Lathrop, *Central Things: Worship in Word and Sacrament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), and his numerous more technical studies.
9. See Stephen Burns, “A Fragile Future for the *Ordo?*,” in *Worship and Culture: Foreign Country or Homeland?*, ed. Glauca Vasconcelos Wilkey (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), which traces the details of Lathrop’s arguments.
10. Ruth Duck, *Worship for the Whole People of God: Vital Worship for the 21st Century* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2013), 161. A well-known Latin phrase, *Ex Opere Operanto*, literally meaning “from the work worked,” substantiates this claim of God being the author of the sacrament as a result of Christ without depending on the attitude of the minister.
11. Kathy Black, *Culturally-Conscious Worship* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2000), 19.
12. James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2000), 18.
13. *Ibid.*, 41.
14. Edward Foley, *From Age to Age: How Christians Have Celebrated the Eucharist Revised and Expanded Edition* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 29.
15. James F. White, *Christian Worship in North America: A Retrospective* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 312–13.
16. See Stephen Burns, *Liturgy (SCM Studyguide)* (London: SCM, 2006), 1–12.
17. See Stephen Burns, *Worship and Ministry: Shaped towards God* (Melbourne: Mosaic, 2012), 30–52.
18. Gordon W. Lathrop, “Strong Center, Open Door: A Vision of Continuing Liturgical Renewal,” *Worship* 75 (2001), 36.
19. James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1989), 16. Anton Boisen’s concept of the “living human document” is influential in pastoral theology. See, for example, the discussion in Robert C. Dykstra, *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings* (St Louis, MO: Chalice, 2005), chaps. 1–3.
20. White, *Introduction*, 18.

21. Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7.
22. Church of England, *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England* (London: Church House Publishing, 2000), x.
23. United Church of Canada, *Celebrate God's Presence: A Book of Services for the United Church of Canada* (Toronto: United Church House Publishing, 2000), xiv.
24. Ann Wonhee Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 60.
25. By "diasporic spaces," we mean "an in-between space, a temporary space, a place away from one's land of origin," taking Tran's definition. She begs a further question, "what must take place for individuals who occupy such spaces?" See more Mai-Anh Le Tran, "Narrating Lives, Narrating Faith: Organic Hybridity for Contemporary Christian Education," *Religious Education* 105, no. 2 (2010): 189.
26. See valuable reflections in Seforosa Carroll, "Reimagining Home: Diasporic Perspective on Encounters with the Religious Other in Australia," in *Asian and Oceanic Christianities in Conversation: Exploring Theological Identities at Home and in Diaspora*, ed. Heup Young Kim, Fumitaka Matsouka, and Anri Morimoto (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 169–84; Seforosa Carroll, "Homemaking in the Diaspora: From Displaced Guest to Responsible Host," in *Home and Away: Contextual Theology and Local Practice*, ed. Stephen Burns and Clive Pearson (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 124–36.
27. Homi K. Bhabha, "The World and the Home," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 445.
28. HyeRan Kim-Cragg, "Postcolonial Suggestions for Intercultural Ministries," *Ecumenist* 49, no. 2 (2012): 8.
29. Bhabha, "The World," 445. While we contest the essentializing notion of home or homelessness in this chapter, it should be noted that it is meant not to identify "homeless" as "exile" or to associate "unhomely" with "refugee." Our point is that the experience of homeless and unhomely can be found in any one who has migration experiences—in other words, the experiences of dislocation and those of crossing the boundaries (nationality, language, gender, race, religion, to just name a few).
30. Carol Doran and Thomas H. Troeger, *Trouble at the Table: Gathering the Tribes for Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1992), 23.
31. John D. Witvliet, "Teaching Worship as a Christian Practice," in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 127.
32. Black, *Culturally-Conscious Worship*, 75–76.

33. Tran, "Narrating Lives, Narrating Faith," 201.
34. Russell Yee, *Worship on the Way: Exploring Asian North American Christian Experience* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2012), 96.
35. HyeRan Kim-Cragg, "To Love and Serve Others (or to Be Loved and Served)," in *Intercultural Visions: Called to Be the Church*, ed. Rob Fennell (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 2012), 24.
36. Tran, "Narrating Lives, Narrating Faith," 197.
37. Alongside this, we would set the notion of "uncommon worship" as a foil for "common worship"; see Richard Giles, *Creating Uncommon Worship: Transforming the Liturgy of the Eucharist* (Norwich: Canterbury, 2004), a text that accents practices of journey.
38. We note too that the image of the tent has been fruitful in revisionist liturgical practice; see Richard Giles, *Repitching the Tent: Reordering the Church Building for Worship and Mission* (Norwich: Canterbury, 2004); Stephen Burns, ed., *The Art of Tentmaking: Making Space for Worship* (Norwich: Canterbury, 2012).
39. Mary Ann Beavis and HyeRan Kim-Cragg, *Hebrews Wisdom Commentary*, ed. Barbara Reid (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015).
40. Visit <http://www.unted-church.ca/intercultural>.
41. See Rob Bos and Geoff Thompson, eds., *Theology for Pilgrims: Selected Theological Documents of the Uniting Church in Australia* (Sydney: Uniting Church Press, 2008), 619–26. On worship in the Uniting Church, see also Stephen Burns, *Pilgrim People: An Invitation to Worship in the Uniting Church in Australia* (Adelaide: MediaCom, 2012).
42. Adele Halliday, "Introduction: A Transformative Vision," in *Intercultural Visions: Called to Be the Church*, ed. Rob Fennell (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 2012), xi.
43. HyeRan Kim-Cragg and Mai-Anh Le Tran, "Turning to the Other: Interdenominational, Interethnic, Interreligious Activism and A New Ecclesia," in *Complex Identities in a Shifting World: Practical Theological Perspectives*, ed. Pamela Couture, Robert Mager, Pamela R. McCarrroll, and Natalie Wigg-Stevenson (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2015).

CHAPTER 8



WORSHIPING WITH THE HOMELESS

FOREIGN ECCLESIOLOGIES

Cláudio Carvalhaes

Every people felt threatened by a people without a country.

—Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*

INTRODUCTION: WELCOME CHURCH¹

A group of people gather together at Logan Square or Suburban Station in Philadelphia every Sunday afternoon. They call themselves a church without walls—the Welcome Church—because they don't have a building. The members are people from different Christian churches and homeless people. The liturgy is mostly from the Lutheran Church, but it changes and adapts and adds what is needed. One day, they did not have Eucharist, but a homeless person said, "What about our Eucharist today?" The pastor said, "We didn't bring the elements." The homeless woman then opened her bag, pulled out a loaf of mushy bread, and said, "I got it." And Eucharist was celebrated and shared. On Ash Wednesday,² this church celebrated death and life in the midst of a bitter cold winter at Logan Square in Philadelphia. We heard stories of extreme poverty, abandonment, frostbitten feet, and dignity not heard elsewhere.³ On Good Friday, we walked through the main points of the suburban subway station where homeless people stay to hide from the cold. This church started outside of the restrooms of this station, and

the stations of the cross were the many places within this station: places to rest, dollar stores, abandoned places where they could hide, warm places, a women's store, a place to eat, and so on. In each station there was a song, a prayer, a biblical text, and a story of pain and perhaps some redemption. Somebody gave them \$10 gift cards from McDonalds to get some food. From there they returned to the streets to hunt for the next meal.

Every week somebody is missing or dying. The pastor holds together the vivid tension of life and death pulsing in every breath of this community. While Welcome Church is a local church supported by the Lutheran and Presbyterian churches, it challenges these denominational ecclesiological boundaries and expands the markers of the church. What kind of ecclesiology is this? Once I asked the pastor of Welcome Church, Violet C. Little, to describe how the relationships among worship, homeless people, food, and social justice form her ministry:

There is a witness to a different way of being and relating in our very midst. The sacrament of the Eucharist is the in-breaking of God's economy of abundance in the midst of human economies of scarcity. It is the creation of free-flowing relationships of power in which the roles of server and served are blurred and reversible. This establishes a community of partnership and cooperation wherein each experiences, elaborates, and shares her or his humanity as a free gift of God's grace. When we gather at the communion table, we form a circle; for the One towards whom we move stands in our midst answering the needs of each with the same gift of love and mercy given without stint to all . . . Homeless? Perhaps, though we need to be aware of how many reject that title because they have learned that they do have a home among God's people and within God's Kingdom. And above all, none of us are any longer nameless and invisible. That is a source of strength we all need when we next have to lay aside our dignity and stand in line like supplicants to receive food, or clothing, or the simple respect that is due to all of God's children . . . We ask the volunteers who bring snacks for Coffee Hour to serve the food they bring, to circulate and share what they have brought. That is why we ask all who are present to share in that process. Yes, I have seen someone grab a whole case of crackers and run off. But that is what happens to people when they have spent too much time standing in lines. They lose their awareness of community and of themselves as members of a community. This is the terrible cost visited upon those living in the extremes of poverty; and this is what I believe God is calling us to address by attempting to instantiate, each time we gather, a taste of that Beloved Community that awaits us all.⁴

This chapter comments on the life of the Welcome Church with homeless people and proposes a new form of ecclesiology, one that migrates from buildings to where the poor, the displaced, the disfranchised, and the homeless live. It also stretches our understandings of migration and the church to include the daily local migration of human beings who live on the streets and in shelters. Dislocation and forced migration is not only a transnational reality but a deeply local one. This chapter proposes a conversion to lower classes of people in order to create liturgies that literally sit on the disasters of the world. The hope is that employing the fourfold use of one of the liturgical orders—gathering, word, meal, and sending—can be a source for understanding migration and be the beginning of a new development of this foreign ecclesiology.

URBAN DESIGN: ECCLESIOLOGICAL WALLS AND THEOLOGICAL SPIKES

Church buildings, fundamental shapers and consequences of our ecclesiologies, contribute to the social urban design. Ecclesiologies build walls and theologies build spikes so we can protect our sense and experience of God and therefore avoid the realities of movement and migration that mark the lives of many. Churches are symbols of urban design, and our theologies are stories that foster and confirm our ecclesiologies.⁵ Recently, new forms of urban design around the world are developing ways to keep the poor/homeless away from site/sight. Here is some recent news from London, England: “Any Londoner will know that the number of so-called bum-proof benches has risen sharply. Wave-shaped benches with central armrests made from slippery or buttock-numbing materials such as stainless steel are designed to prevent the homeless from kipping in public. Sloping seats at bus stops barely provide a perch, let alone a place to actually sit.”⁶

From São Paulo, Brazil, the journalist Sakamoto tells of strategies in urban design intended to get rid of the homeless: “Bridges and tunnels closed with gates and concrete, streets with some inclination, pieces of glass on concrete, or metal. Showers on front stores to disperse enough water to wet the homeless, chemical products placed on streets, walls, shortening the size of sidewalks.”⁷ There are spikes placed all around the world now, making it impossible for the homeless to sleep in places they could find a little more comfortable or warmer.⁸

These urban design trends are influenced by our church walls and lack of work with the homeless. The lack of the presence of homeless

people in our churches evidences the spikes in our class ecclesiology. Welcome Church shows us that we too have theological spikes and strategies to make the gospel easy to take and comforting to live away from the poor. Mainline Protestant churches have moved up the ladder and have made clear commitments to a middle and higher class. That commitment makes it difficult for us to engage with lower-class people. However, a call to conversion is at stake for us all. We must move our ecclesiologies/theologies to the places the poor live, for any theology that does not articulate the pain and the hurt of the poor is a theology covered with spikes that prevents people from changing, moving, and transforming social situations of oppression. For instance, the budgets of Christian denominations, seminaries, and institutions poured into the financial market feed this scheme of injustice that produces the end product of spikes on the streets.

Our ecclesiologies should be formed with denominational budgets in mind. What kind of ecclesiology must come out of the \$9.2 billion assets of the Presbyterian Church (USA)? Budgets are stories of people that depict the ways we worship, understand, and do mission. Along with budgets, salary differences between employees of these churches also show the spikes in our faith, marking an inequality never mentioned in our ecclesiologies. Unless we can see the central armrests in our ecclesiological benches, the spikes in our detached theologies, and the walls of our buildings that do not serve the poor, the oppression against the homeless will continue unaltered, as if they are not results of our political inaction and contribution to the urban design of our societies.

When we worship with the homeless, we hear stories and parables and tales that can transform reality and sustain people and narratives of liberation that create the possibility of ongoing changes. When describing the stories that sustain the Vietnamese people, Trinh T. Minh-ha says,

With the creative works of the disfranchised and of political prisoners around the world in mind, one can say that just as poetry cannot be reduced to being a mere art for the rich and idle, storytelling is not a luxury or a harmless pastime. It is, indeed, in the tale that one is said to encounter the genius of a people. Tales are collective. The tales not only condense certain characteristics of the everyday person and the people's customs, they often also deal with complex social relations . . . As with stories among oppressed and disfranchised groups around the world, the Vietnamese tale allows its tellers to allude to issues of poverty, social injustice and class conflict. Tales often read like profound strategies of

survival. In them, divergence and inequality, if not conflict, are often set within the framework of a patriarchal economy. The human condition and its dilemmas are featured in the fate of an individual who is likely to be poor, unfortunate, rejected or plainly stupid, but whose honesty and goodness usually lead to a rewarding ending.⁹

Ecclesiologies should be collective stories of justice and social and individual liberation, stories of people meeting God and each other and turning the world into the Imago Dei, for we have lost the Imago Dei by our sinful ways of living, relating and organizing our social economic life. What is the true hope of the gospel manifested in our ecclesiologies that can offer liberation to our brothers and sisters on the street? What tales and parables are we creating with our ecclesiologies? Our ecclesiologies are thin ropes of hope that sustain us before falling into homelessness, as well as ropes that can take us back out of homelessness.

Any ecclesiological story/tale that disrupts the urban design of rural and urban settings must create a space for refugees and prisoners, displaced and homeless people. Every ecclesiology, as well as any theology, comes from the choices we make, fundamentally marked by an understanding of social and political structures where we live. Ecclesiologies must influence our theologies as our understanding of the “assembly” articulates the shift toward the poor and builds a beloved community, a house, an *oikos* in our midst. Such articulations must provide the conditions for the possibility of a crucial shift in the living of our faith(s) and the undoing of the spikes already embedded in our insulated, wall-guarded, monitored, self-protected theologies/ecclesiologies and their consequent high-class, suburban commitments, faith-in-budgets mission, and hidden and disastrous financial investments.

Our ecclesiologies thus must help us to dislocate ourselves toward the areas of no-people’s land and enable just, fair, and equal ways of living together. Then, as a second act, our worship services will be able to provide a space where everybody is foreign and undocumented, a refugee camp turned into home, a *displaced* place transformed into *this place* of love. How do our ecclesiologies and theologies respond to that? Perhaps our understanding of the worship might help us.

MOVING WITH OUR WORSHIP

Worship *is* what we, together, decide it will be, the *is* always in flux. Don Saliers tells us that in worship, Christians are always caught up

between the *is* and the *should be*.¹⁰ The *is* entails a correlation between the conditions in which the world is living at this present time and how it *should be lived* from the perspective of justice rehearsed in liturgy for the sake of the poor. In other words, worship hangs between what we hope for and that which takes away our hope, between the discourses of hatred and exclusion and the counter discourses of love and inclusion that we rehearse/enact in our worship services.

Ecclesiologies, like our liturgies, are moving vessels, moving along with God's love and those who resist the forces of death. In the midst of war, starvation, and every kind of violence, our worship services should stand as a sign of peace and resistance, building opportunities for people and the earth to utter, joyfully, "Glory to God, peace and joy to the world." In the midst of violence and bombs, we stand up shielded by the gospel with the work of pacifists and lovers of justice. We kneel and stand, offering prayers, songs, and acts of change. Carrying a kernel of revolution, we share treasures old and new, helping each other to dream, to organize, and to deal with the brutality of symbolic and concrete realities of our lives and our societies. "Embodying the legacy of living," a fair, honest, dignified living for all, is our ecclesiological/liturgical task.

Quoting Urban Holmes, Aidan Kavanaugh says that "liturgy leads regularly to the edge of chaos, and from this regular flirt with doom comes a theology different from any other."¹¹ Only when we see the disasters of the world, the destruction of the earth, and the possibilities of our annihilation can we create theologies that can make a difference in our world. Otherwise, theologies are no more than the scratching of empty ideas and belly buttons. At the edge of chaos, before God, Kavanaugh says that liturgy always calls us to convert, to change our lives. When we are before God, everything is transformed and everything we are can be changed. At the edge of chaos, we are always about to lose everything.

Where is the "edge of chaos" in our worship services, our ways of being church? We have turned this chaos, meaning this moment/space where everything can fall apart, into a comfortable sanctuary where God is our butler. Nonetheless, the liturgical space is as it should be, fundamentally: a place for conversion. Far from being committed to the gods of our world (money and privacy, the status quo, the preservation of social class, liturgical order, theology, or ecclesiology), our most important commitment is to Jesus, who lives with the least of these. In that sense, it does not matter much which liturgy we use or what ecclesiology we decide, as long as it issues a call for us to convert to God in Jesus Christ in the service of the poor. Change is indigenous

to liturgy, and liturgy's "nature" is a call to radical changes. What, then, are the liturgical/theological/ecclesiological consequences of a church that is brought to the edge of chaos time and time again? How does the church exist as and alongside the force of chaos in the lives of the homeless, the refugee, and the undocumented person?

A NEW ECCLESIAL BASE COMMUNITY?

The Welcome Church is a legitimate heir of the Latin American Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs). Both *events* start where the poor live: the liturgies and the idea of the community are done by and on behalf of those who are poor; they invert the hierarchical structure of the church; they are bound to a context and work from their locality; they start with the difficult socioeconomic conditions; they make a clear social and class decision based on God's preferential option of the poor; they reallocate spiritual and economic resources to where the poor live; and they read the Bible and build a movement from these frail locations.

In Latin America, disastrous socioeconomic conditions, coupled with military interventions, caught the attention and commitments of priests and theologians. They were converted into social agents of change using the theological, ecclesiological, and religious symbols of the church. How were they to think about faith from the marginal places? The reading of the Bible by the poor was one of these powerful new practices, a new reformation of the Catholic Church. This commitment entailed the beginning of a new form of church that challenged the religious, social, and political powers that be.

It was also a time of change and dreams and utopias. The church organized a place in between the political party and the social struggle, fostering people's agency in the larger social political scenario. As Michael Löwy says, "A significant sector of the Church (both lay and clergy) in Latin America, changed position in the area of social struggles, going with their material and spiritual resources to the side of the poor and to the struggle for a new society."¹² The church not only paired the reading of Bible with social reality but also made a choice to be on the side of the poor, strengthen grassroots social movements such as local labor union, and empower them with the strength and weight of the institution of the Catholic Church. In this process, the social and individual bodies of the poor lived in the everydayness of life became the crucial (crux/cross) point of articulation of liberation theology. The historical materiality enacted through theory/practice, faith/experience was lived/thought together, one fixing and

expanding the other. As Frei Betto says, “There is no theology without experience, without liberating practice.”¹³

At Welcome Church, the social analysis is not as deep as it was with the CEBs, but there is no way to serve and worship with the homeless without thinking about the inequities, social exclusions, and disasters of the larger society. It is one thing to worship in the midst of a well-fed group and another totally different experience to worship with the outcast of society, discarded people who have nowhere to go. At Logan Square, some of the prayers are the same as those found in worship books, but even they are heard differently than in most American churches due to the concerns and urgency of homeless people. Preaching is a different beast! The sacraments are the lifeline of people. Literally!

CEBs and the Welcome Church are clear departures from the theologies and practices of church communities marked by class preferences and belongings. CEBs and Welcome Church make a choice to live and work and be with the poor. They choose to serve the disfranchised people of God on the streets instead of feeding the already well-fed middle and higher class. In that seemingly small way, they redistribute the wealth of society. To be with the poor is to start to understand the social economic conditions of their disastrous situations, and when put in relation to the gospel of Jesus Christ, it reflects back on our own Sunday practices and commitments. In these excluded settings, with precious people turned into the disposable garbage of our society, we are confronted with the *Imago Dei*.

In this piece, Frei Betto is talking about the CEBs in Brazil, but he could be describing the Welcome Church in Philadelphia: “Small groups are organized around urban or rural parishes by lay people, priests, or bishops, and usually meet people from working classes, who belong to the same Church and live in the same region (periphery, squatter areas, slums, or on the margins of the big cities). They all have the same problems of survival, shelter, fighting for better living conditions, and have the same longings and hopes for liberation.”¹⁴

These two churches help us think and experience church in ways many of us who are more privileged have never done. The Welcome Church challenges power structures inside the church and in the public domain, subverting the generally accepted laws that allow only certain people to be the holders of the divine and social resources, pointing to injustice, segregation, and social exclusion. The Welcome Church turns the eyes of God to the homeless and places them as the privileged loci of God’s epiphanies. Emmanuel, if God is indeed with us, must be primarily in the midst of the poor! In a dialectical

movement, the *Imago Dei* represented in this community is disconnected from exclusive powers that control the sacred, and yet it is deeply connected with the God they belong, represent, or point to. The Welcome Church is a temporary, foreign, frail, and dispossessed movement without hierarchical sustenance. Since it is made possible by the offerings of these churches, it can disappear at any time these churches do not want to support it anymore. But perhaps not anymore. The church has created such a crowd of supporters that it will continue no matter what happens to their funds because the movements of the Spirit cannot be tamed or controlled.

At the heart of this church, the *work of the people* (liturgy) stands out as a revolutionary practice that enacts the meaning of liturgy. The hierarchy lived in these communities is based on a common sharing of activities; everybody can lead the worship and preach and sing and decide what the worship should do and be. As such, these communities are great interpretations of the “priesthood of all believers” (1 Pet. 2:5).¹⁵ Leonardo Boff describes the CEBs in Latin America as a response to the hierarchical structures of the Roman Catholic Church: “Theologically they signify a new ecclesiological experience, a renaissance of the very church, and hence an action of the Spirit on the horizon of the matters urgent of our time. Seen in this way, the basic church communities deserve to be contemplated, welcomed, and respected as salvific events.”¹⁶

The salvific events might be altogether unrecognizable by official ecclesiological parameters, but they are found, appropriated, elaborated, and represented by this community in ways that the people who participate need it to be. The Welcome Church places, perhaps inadvertently or unwillingly, the class struggles right in front of our eyes and under our noses so we cannot avoid it when worshiping God. More than that, they steal the holy things from those who own them and divide them up accordingly, preferentially to the poor, doing what we mentioned before: redistributive justice.

The poor disrupt the sacred since they “steal” the perceived sacred sense of the worship space and disrupt the traditional use and meaning of the holy things and locations by placing it all in the hands of the homeless. Jamal, Ana, John, Tirone, Ann, and many other “members” of Welcome Church have no building, and churches would not allow them to sleep in their sanctuaries. The very gesture of worshiping on the street, for many months in the bitter cold of Philadelphia, clearly shows the class differences between homeless Christians and Christians who have warm sanctuaries and do not want the poor in their buildings with them.

Thus our homeless people, or the absence of them in our worship services, painfully attest to the dissymmetry of our theologies of class: we discard the homeless—those displaced and migrating within our own cities—in favor of the middle- and upper-class church people as evidenced by Christian ecclesiologies, which we sustain through our theological confessions, homiletical statements, missiological programs, and liturgical practices.

LITURGICAL ECCLESIOLOGIES

It is with and for the sake of the poor, the destitute, and the lame that we must begin to practice and to think about our provisional liturgical ecclesiologies. In these worship spaces, unlike in the liturgies of the state or police, no documents are required! No proper theological trajectory is demanded, since it is the Holy Spirit who will be drawing the lines of our direction/orientation to encounter God. Our worship spaces, thus our ecclesiologies, are the places for those who do not have anywhere else to go in the world, for Jesus didn't have a space to recline his head either (Matt. 8:20).

God has many names tattooed upon the diverse lives of the poor, in the mind of the afflicted, in the empty belly of the hungry, in the shame of the outcast, in the territories of those whose lives and homes were taken by the powerful, and in the cries of those who live under utter injustice. Those who hunger are the ones who should interpret faith and shape our theologies. The homeless daily migrant tells us who God is and what our ecclesiology is all about. Ecclesiology, then, depends on the undocumented immigrants around the world, the millions of children suffering from malnutrition, illiterate people, the dispossessed Palestinians, the battered women across the globe, the orphans and the children on the street, the communities of transgendered people torn apart by hatred and vicious violence, and the Syrian refugees. They will give the limits and the possibilities of our faith.

Our worship spaces are too safe. We should sell our churches and move ourselves into zones of conflict to bring peace—churches without walls. We should worship at the walls/borders of US and Mexico and Israel and Palestine, with heavy military presence between us. We should learn how to say our alleluias and glorias at Catatumbo, one of the most dangerous places in the northeast of Colombia, where guerrillas and the government battle every day. We should learn how to say our prayers in the midst of narcotraffic, where there is no infrastructure and violence is rampant. These foreign spaces must be our places of worship! We would quickly learn that half of our prayers are

good for nothing except to embellish our aesthetics and our sense of safety and protect ourselves from God. At these places, as Žižek says, “What cannot be said must be shown.”¹⁷ We are people who *do* our faith, called by God to live out this love that sets people free. We must become used to living like undocumented immigrants: no place is ours; we are always in a foreign space.

In the gospel of John, true worship is done in neither Gerazim nor Jerusalem but somewhere else.¹⁸ There is a third space where we all meet, which is a frail, provisional tabernacle made of things that move, that we carry along the way. It is in this third space, neither yours nor mine, that the worship of God can become a space for immigrants. It is only when we learn that we are all immigrants walking through confiscated land, pilgrims in private places, displaced people on soil constantly stolen by governments and agribusiness that we will be able to see the face of God in the face of those who are the wretched of the earth. Then we learn that along with people, we need to *resist, occupy, and produce*—that is, to resist those who want to take the land from the poor, occupy territories that want to serve private interests, and produce food for all to eat. Our worship is always a concrete place, a place of resistance and change!

As Jesus said, we do not belong to the world, but we are sent to the world with a mission. In this endless movement around the globe, we gather in “rest areas,” places that belong to none and to all, to worship God. In these provisional spaces, we learn what we need to see, we shift our ideas, we gear up to go in new directions, we renew our struggle for the poor, we make sure every traveler is doing well, we honor each other along the way, we heal each other’s wounds, we wash each other’s feet, we feed each other’s mouths, and we move along until we meet again. When we meet, we are continuously undoing the sense that worship spaces belong to denominations. When we worship God, we learn that we are each other’s keepers. In God’s *oikos*, God’s house, we live together in all our differences and receive those who come to us.

WHAT NOW?

Every time we meet to worship God, we have to ask again and again, “What now?” What should we do now in our liturgies, in light of daily tragedies in the micromigration of the homeless? What is this call to worship demanding from us now when we are together with undocumented people and women who have been raped? What does the remembrance of baptism have to do with this situation and what

does this situation have to do with the remembrance of baptism? What should we sing now that we are sealed off in this refugee camp? For what should we ask forgiveness? What is this gospel saying to us? What dialogue is spurred from this sermon as we look in the eye of this storm and the debris of its devastation? Where does the feeding and eating of the Eucharistic service take us? What testimony and witness should we offer? Who is here that needs to be lifted up? Protected? Cared for? These are the questions and demands that Welcome Church asks again and again. In so doing, it shows that Christian worship can interrupt and change our chaotic world. The worship space as a foreign space is a way of creating “inventive engagements”¹⁹ with the world, imagining understandings and practices of worship that can foster a material space for those who are displaced, and engaging in a certain power that will provide conditions for the least of these to live a just life.

When we answer these questions, we will speak with one another on behalf of each other, learning with one another for the defense of each other and all those who are poor and fighting each other’s battles for the sake of dignity, justice, and the *Imago Dei* in each other!²⁰ Unless we see all of us as displaced (foreigners, idiots, fools, lost, immigrants) and in constant need of shelter and safety, we will continue to think that we are “God’s employees”—that is, owners of worship spaces, theologies, and ecclesiologies.

Having been changed by the Spirit to God’s preferential option for the poor and having committed ourselves to the disfranchised and displaced, now we can migrate, move, and make the *oikos* of God where the poor live in order to start to see how our ways of being a church can happen. As a consequence, we will all feel like living our faith in a foreign space where nothing is completely comfortable or safe but nothing is completely unknown as well.

Within this ecclesiological sense of migration, the fourfold liturgical structures can be of help: gathering, word, meal, and sending can frame and offer a response to the social disasters of our time as we juxtapose our holy things with the disastrous places of the world. The church cannot be a mirror to itself and work only inward with its own symbols and sources. We have become an insulated community that does not know how to open itself to the world. We attract only those of our own culture and we expect that folks will come to us and agree with our ways. But the Christian faith is a troubling faith that entails negotiations of beliefs, liturgical practices, social sources, and capital.

Let us consider the fourfold movement of this one liturgical order in our new ecclesiological, missional, and theological understanding of faith:

1. *Gathering.* We go to where the homeless are, bringing our material and spiritual resources. We will spread a tent for all to be under, clothes for all to be warm, food for all to consume. There, we remember the Psalmist and say together, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of God!’ Our feet are standing within your gates, O United States!”²¹ We call each other to worship God, saying, “God owns the earth and all there is! Everybody has the right of shelter and if one person doesn’t have a roof no one does. ‘Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.’”²² There we ask God forgiveness for not caring for the earth and one another. We remind ourselves that our world is sinful, that we are disconnected from one another and the earth. And we sing what people bring from their own backgrounds.
2. *Word.* The very precious word of God is what challenges us to live together, trusting God’s mercy to live faithfully bounded in this sinful/diabolic/disconnected world. We read the Bible together in the midst of cultural class differences, intellectual challenges, emotional gaps, and linguistic accents. Because of so much difference, we must read the word of God very slowly, listening very carefully to one another. In the word of God, Christ is in our midst, challenging us to serve each other and God’s earth.
3. *Meal.* The Eucharistic meal consists of what people bring with them. Everything will be connected with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. People suffered from violence and died on the streets yesterday, and we sing our kyries and sad songs to remember those who were crucified in this world like Jesus. We share the stories of violence, horror, and death that are all around us. Then the revolutionary memory of Jesus’s life and death will fill us with stories of hope from amid the community. We will eat and drink a full meal. At the table, whatever table/altar, we cry out loud, “Under the name of Jesus Christ, *no* one goes hungry in this city!”
4. *Sending.* When we are ready to go, after burning with this passion, we will check on each other and make sure that everybody will have enough to go through the week: shelter, food, health care,

school. And we will only leave after all are wrapped up in this full and caring ecclesiology.

Jaci C. Maraschin, an Anglican liturgical theologian from Brazil, said that “any liturgical reform should also be related to the mission and should be based on a new theology, mission related to joy and freedom. Liturgy and mission are sisters dancing together towards the beauty of God’s kingdom.”²³

NOTES

1. Violet C. Little, “The Welcome Church, a Church Without Walls,” August 20, 2015, <http://www.thewelcomechurch.org>.
2. “Ash Wednesday Logan Park,” YouTube video, 2:47, posted by Claudio Carvalhaes, February 14, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6t63AatspA4&index=60&list=UUTOc5PmgWWmdH_naVcNJx0Q.
3. Ibid.
4. Violet C. Little, in an e-mail sent to my class Intro to Worship at Lutheran Theological Seminary, March 20, 2014.
5. The following story relates deeply to what we are talking about in this chapter: John Burnett, “Statue of a Homeless Jesus Startles a Wealthy Community,” NPR, April 13, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/2014/04/13/302019921/statue-of-a-homeless-jesus-startles-a-wealthy-community>.
6. Maryam Omid, “Anti-homeless Spikes Are Just the Latest in ‘Defensive Urban Architecture,’” June 12, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/us>.
7. Leonardo Sakamoto, “Londres enxota sem-teto com pinos na calçada. São Paulo é mais profissional,” in Blog do Sakamoto, UOL, October 6, 2014, <http://blogdosakamoto.blogosfera.uol.com.br/2014/06/10/londres-enxota-sem-teto-com-pinos-na-calcada-sao-paulo-e-mais-profissional>, accessed September 7, 2015.
8. Richard Rowe, “Homeless Spikes Popping Up All over the World—Oligarchs Rejoice,” June 8, 2014, <http://aattp.org/homeless-spikes-popping-up-all-over-the-world-oligarchs-rejoice>; Colin Daileida, “Store Abandons ‘Anti-Homeless’ Spikes After Citizens Protest,” June 12, 2014, <http://mashable.com/2014/06/12/anti-homeless-spikes-london>, accessed September 7, 2015.
9. Trinh T Minh-ha, *Elsewhere, within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism and the Boundary Event* (New York: Routledge, Kindle Edition, 2011), 16–17.
10. Don Saliers, speech given at Societas Liturgica in Wizburg, August 2013. Not published.

11. Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville: A Pueblo Book, 1992), 73.
12. Michael Lowy, *A Guerra dos Deuses: Religião e Política na América Latina* (Petrópolis: Vozes/CLACSO/LPP, 2000), 12.
13. Frei Betto, *O que é Comunidade Eclesial de Base* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1981), 38.
14. Ibid., 7.
15. I made this video with Tirone, a member of Welcome Church: “Poet and Song Writer Tyrone at Logan Park, Philly, PA,” YouTube video, posted by Claudio Carvalhaes, February 15, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48yV7ww216c&index=59&list=UUTOc5PmgWWmdH_naVcNjx0Q.
16. Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiology: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1986), 1.
17. Slavoj Žižek, *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2013), 23.
18. John 4:1–42 (New Revised Standard Version). Also, for a development of this theme, please see my chapter, “In Spirit and in Truth: The Liturgical Space as Territory,” in *Common Worship in Theological Education*, ed. Garrigan, Siobhán (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 118–32.
19. Jacques Derrida, quoted by Elisabeth Weber, “Introduction: Pleading Irreconcilable Differences,” in *Living Together: Jacques Derrida’s Communities of Violence and Peace*, ed. Elisabeth Weber (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 4.
20. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–316.
21. Psalm 122—my version.
22. Isaiah 55:1 (NRSV).
23. Jaci Maraschin, *Da Leveza e da Beleza. Liturgia na pós-modernidade* (São Paulo: ASTE, 2011), 21.

CHAPTER 9



“WOMAN, WHERE HAVE YOU COME FROM AND WHERE ARE YOU GOING?”

CIRCULAR FEMALE MIGRATION, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, AND PASTORAL CARE IN INDIA

Patricia Santos, RJM

Lavina was born into a Roman Catholic family. At the age of eight, she moved to a slum in Mumbai with her parents and three sisters because they were poor. Since her father was an alcoholic, her mother worked part time as a domestic worker in three different houses to raise her children. She took them to church regularly, but on a few occasions when they went to meet the priest after Mass, he would simply look past them and continue talking to those who were rich and well dressed. Lavina mournfully expressed that the priests and others rarely came to visit them in the slums because they found it was dirty and there was no room to sit comfortably—since people were huddled together in small houses. After marriage, her sister chose to become a born-again Christian because she felt welcomed by the community and also had an experience of Jesus as her personal Savior. She kept encouraging Lavina to join the same group. Lavina initially refused but later chose to follow her sister when she began to experience a lot of problems in her married life and received no help and guidance from her local priest, who told her that she should see a counselor. She began to feel supported, encouraged, and enriched in her faith after joining this new community.

While this is not the case with all Catholic priests, this story draws our attention to the urgent need for pastoral care of women migrants who—while being excluded, exiled, and exploited for their labor—do not receive sufficient care and recognition from their local church community. This calls for a transition from a pastoral approach that focuses on ecclesial issues and concerns to one that embraces the disempowered and marginalized, leading ultimately to a re-evangelization and re-envisioning of the traditional ecclesial task of pastoral care. Pastoral leaders and local church communities need to make efforts to offer migrant women compassionate care, respect, inclusion, and effective opportunities for growth and empowerment. This would enable such women to rise beyond their existing situation and status, and contribute actively to the development of both church and society.

CONSOLATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS OF INTERNAL CIRCULAR MIGRATION FOR WOMEN

While the phenomenon of migration can be permanent, temporary, irregular, or forced, internal circular migration of the poor living in agriculturally marginal areas is increasing in India. Migration involving a constant shift between rural and urban areas for better prospects and an improved livelihood can be referred to as oscillatory or cyclical migration.¹

Migrants are often seen as a menace despite the invaluable services they offer, especially through undertaking jobs that are considered dirty, dangerous, and degrading. A large proportion of migrant women in India belong to the lower castes.² Priya Deshingkar sees caste as an important determinant of exclusion from positive migration streams with lower castes hardly having any opportunity for structural improvement.³ This is because there is a strong correlation between belonging to a low caste and being poor, illiterate, and assetless as well as being discriminated against by employers and contractors. A major issue with circular migration is that it is often undocumented and invisible, with a number of migrants choosing “to keep one foot in the village because of social ties, lower costs, other safety net aspects, and a long-term intention to pursue a better life in the village.”⁴ New opportunities bring new challenges and difficulties; hence, there is an urgent need to develop comprehensive and realistic policies at all levels as well as to offer material, emotional, and spiritual help.

Most women and their families who move to Mumbai take up temporary dwelling in the slums that represent a social, economic,

political, and cultural spatiality that determines the dwellers' identity, work, relationships, and mobility.⁵ Living in close proximity to each other within the slum allows women to bond together and enter into diverse reciprocal relationships; it also lends itself to tension, conflict, and cutthroat competition arising out of self-interest and survival needs. Women are generally multitasking—playing the role of wife, mother, daughter, housemaid, caretaker, and so on. They have more access to work opportunities in the informal economic sector as domestic workers because urban middle-class women need help with household chores to successfully pursue their careers.⁶ According to the National Domestic Workers Movement (NDWM), about 90 percent of domestic workers are women, girls, or children between the ages of 12 and 75, most of whom are illiterate and from low castes. Since domestic work does not require any specific training or education, poor, illiterate women can be employed for low wages with no added benefits. Besides the pressure of work, childcare, and maintenance of the family, they are often discriminated against, exploited, and deprived of their dignity, equality, and freedom, both within the private space of their family and in the multiple spaces they share with others.

In my interviews with a number of Catholic and Christian women migrants from the state of Tamil Nadu to the slums of South Mumbai, I found common complaints of being neglected, despised, and humiliated even by the local church community to which they belonged. Meena, a young middle-aged woman migrated to Mumbai with her parents twenty years back.⁷ After moving to the slums, her parents arranged her marriage with a Catholic boy from the same slum. The Eucharist—which they faithfully attend every Sunday—is celebrated by the chaplain for Tamil Christians who comes from another parish. Meena laments,

If only the priest had more time for us. He rushes with the Mass and rushes off as soon as he finishes. He has no time to visit us, and we do not get a chance to talk to him about our problems and concerns. I am worried because the children are going astray. There are different festivals celebrated in the slum, and we take part in all the celebrations. But we do not know the significance of these festivals. People also are very superstitious and make offerings to different deities. We go each year to the village during vacation time, but even there we are unable to get guidance from the priests as they are on holiday. I fear for my children.

This not only reveals lack of care and concern for the entrusted flock; it signals the missing communitarian dimension of hospitality among the Catholic community. Many Catholics today exist only in name for the sake of procuring admission in a Catholic school and for burial in a Catholic cemetery. There is also lack of education on matters of the Catholic faith as well as the salient elements that can be found in other religious traditions. Pope Benedict XVI's message for the 2010 World Day of Migrants and Refugees is a plea to build "one human family" in the midst of multiethnic and intercultural diversity, where "people of various religions are urged to take part in dialogue, so that a serene and fruitful coexistence with respect for legitimate differences may be found."⁸ In addition, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), in its seventh plenary assembly on migration, identified five major areas of concern: "labor migration, migrant women, refugees and internally displaced persons, the family, and human rights."⁹ In the context of the growing *feminization of migration*, the assembly asserts that "the Church should continue to address issues in migrant labor with sensitivity to women's concerns and rights. She should advocate for migrant women's rights by, among other ways, convincing more States to ratify the International Convention on Women's Rights."¹⁰ However, we can see that local ecclesial communities have failed to engage effectively with women at the margins—at times, even treating them with contempt and callousness. It is often not the least, the last, and the lost that are sought out but the wealthy, the influential, and the powerful who are warmly welcomed in our parishes and other Catholic institutions. The ecclesiological challenge is thus for pastors and church leaders to move out of their comfort zones toward women on the margins, offering them comfort, care, and guidance and integrating them into the local ecclesial community. Since women play a key role both in the family and in society, their creative contribution has to be recognized and taken seriously.

CURRENT ECCLESIOLOGICAL TRENDS AND RESPONSES

The church, both universal and local, has been mandated with the responsibility to see that "every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated."¹¹ The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, in its instruction, *Erga migrantes caritas Christi*, focused on the centrality

of the human person and the need to promote the dignity and rights of migrants. Felix Wilfred affirms that social, religious, and cultural values need to be radically transformed if “women in our societies are to truly savor the freedom that is the birthright of every human being.”¹² God’s word is revealed at the margins to “powerless and suppressed identities.” Thus, “for Christians and Christian communities, moving to the margins means positioning themselves to listen to the speaking of God through the struggles and experiences of suppressed identities, indigenous peoples and minority groups. The vocation of Christians is to be permanently at the margins with God and the oppressed ones.”¹³

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India (CBCI), in the final statement of their Thirtieth General Body Meeting on March 8, 2012, committed themselves to “the liberation of the weaker sections like tribals, women, and dalits” and, in particular, to “unorganized groups like fisher-people, farmers, migrants, domestic workers, victims of trafficking and so on.” The church has a major role to play not only in striving to eliminate the exploitation of women but also in creating structures whereby these women are able to live a more dignified life. Almost all the dioceses in India have a social service center to respond to the needs of the poor and marginalized. On my visit to Andhra Pradesh, a state in Southern India, I was amazed at the self-confidence and organization of the women in the villages brought about by the Andhra Pradesh Social Service Centre. Using Paulo Freire’s methodology, the women who were abused and exploited by their drunken husbands were able—through conscientization, discussion, and dialogue—to organize themselves into small groups and tackle the problems facing them. They even managed to ban the sale of liquor in many of the villages. The Office for Justice, Peace, and Development of the Indian bishops (CBCI-JPD) organized a workshop on Catholic social teaching on September 26 and 27, 2013, in collaboration with its local office in Andhra Pradesh. Catholic social workers were asked to take up social activism to secure the rights and dignity of the poor, especially in the villages.¹⁴

SEWA (Self Employed Women’s Association)¹⁵ has been successful in bringing poor, home-based women workers into workers cooperatives; imparting to them political and legal literacy; and helping them to develop critical consciousness. The NDWM, founded by Sr. Jeanne Devos, ICM, is now active in 23 states of India. They work with domestic workers and migrant workers to educate them of their rights, restore their dignity, and build their capacities. They have also initiated pastoral collaboration with the Archdiocese in some parishes

in Mumbai. The most recent ecclesial initiative is an insurance scheme designed by the Xavier Institute of Management and Research (XIMR) in Mumbai and in collaboration with the Chotanagpur Migrant Tribal Development Network (CMTD) and the Mumbai-based Jesuit Social Center, Seva Niketan. This scheme is expected to help more than 20,000 migrant tribal people from the states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and West Bengal who are living in Mumbai.¹⁶

These and other efforts are just a drop in the ocean; greater ecclesiological commitment, concern, and consistency are needed to offer care and guidance to marginalized women. There is also need for greater collaboration and networking between ecclesial and secular organizations within and across states in India.

TOWARD RENEWED EFFORTS

While engaging in policy reform and advocacy to promote the flourishing of the marginalized is imperative, there is a pressing need for theological, spiritual, social, ethical, ecclesiological, and pastoral renewal. This would enable the church to respond appropriately to women and others on the margins so that their voices can be heard; their rights acknowledged; and they are allowed to share social, cultural, and religious spaces.

Theological and Spiritual Renewal

Circular migration challenges contemporary theologians to conceptualize a dynamic and ever evolving theology, firmly rooted yet flowing with space and time. While circular migration involves a constant process of shifting and moving, leading to displacement and uprootedness, it also allows for a process of centering and integration, enabling us to become aware of the core space within oneself and the other. The journey of circular migration thus provides not just a *locus theologicus* but a *via theologica*, allowing for theological analysis and reflection along the way and leading to ongoing appropriation and concretization of action. *Via theologica* is a more apt metaphor than *locus theologicus*, because migrants have no fixed home or *locus*. Thus we need to speak of God “from more than one place,” a reminder that “all theology is ‘on its way;’ the *via theologica* requires a *theologia viae*.”¹⁷ It is only when we keep God at the center of the process and the journey that we can discover the divine spark in all persons, especially those at the margins.

Daniel Groody sees the phenomenon of migration as an invitation to cross borders and examine one's relationship with God and with the entire human community. He believes that theology needs to confront the dehumanizing labels used for migrants and to help "those on the move discover an inner identity that fosters their own agency rather than an imposed external identity that increases their vulnerability and subjugation."¹⁸ A theology of hospitality encourages us to welcome and respect each other, in particular the stranger and the migrant, as a true brother or sister. The Catholic Biblical Association of India (CBAI), in its statement on October 23, 2012, affirmed that "the theology of migrants needs to discover the heart of hospitality, not in 'giving' or 'doing' but 'being,' which signifies human relationships. Therefore, hospitality means not simply 'to do something for' or 'to give something to' somebody, but 'being with' somebody."¹⁹ Spirituality need not be restricted to prayer and religious activity; it must include anything that is a celebration of one's life and humanity. When we engage with those at the margins, we will experience communion with the divine and with humans, serving not just by doing things for the marginalized but by being with them in their struggle for a better life.

Social and Ethical Renewal

The main approach and response of the church has remained one of charity with leanings toward justice. The deplorable situation of women on the margins in Mumbai calls for new approaches in relating to them as persons, starting from the level at which they are. Rather than looking at migrant women as outsiders or *outcasts* and a threat or nuisance, they need to be recognized and treated with love, respect, and dignity. Restoring their sense of worth and dignity is a vital ecclesial task to engage them in their process of liberation.

The value and dignity of labor is also to be ascertained; no job is to be distinguished as dirty, degrading, or demeaning, and those who carry out these tasks could do with better treatment. While acknowledging cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity and differences, the fundamental identity of all humans as beloved daughters and sons of God, created in God's image and likeness, must be upheld. The entire ecclesial community could reflect on the human and cultural rights of migrants so as to engage in pastoral action for their liberation from oppressive agents and structures.²⁰

In the national seminar on Dalit Catholic Women Leadership Building in Nagpur, Maharashtra, on November 19, 2013, the

Dalit Catholic women of India strongly recommended that church authorities work toward leadership development of women from the community.²¹ This is an area that needs immediate attention so that women on the margins can be trained to be effective leaders and community builders, creating networks of resistance to combat oppression, poverty, and discrimination.

Ecclesiological and Pastoral Renewal

The church as *pilgrim*, *pastoral*, and *universal* is called to be ever on the move, accompanying and integrating all persons and providing them with effective care and guidance. John 10:1–18 provides a good model for pastoral care and shepherding: “I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me . . . I lay down my life for the sheep.” The Good Shepherd “calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” An imperative ecclesial challenge is to seek out and find the lost and isolated migrants and to engage compassionately with them at the margins. As Rabindranath Tagore rightly emphasized in his poem,

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!
Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with
doors all shut?
Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee! He is there where
the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is
breaking stones.
He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with
dust.
Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty
soil!²²

What women and men desire most are compassionate presence, a listening ear, caring guidance, and support. With compassionate caring and empathetic listening, women on the margins could be helped to move from being displaced and rootless to being rooted in God, from being on the margins to moving toward the center in order to speak and act with dignity, from being alienated and fragmented to being included and integrated, from using individual strategies of resistance to participating in supportive communities of resistance.

Pastoral ministry with women on the margins could provide a space for common worship and community building. Migrant women with their rituals and devotions have developed strong resilience to cope

with all kinds of difficulties and hardships. Their journey through life is a pilgrimage of faith, hope, love, and fortitude. Regardless of the diversity of faith, language, and beliefs, marginalized women experience in Mary of Nazareth a powerful source of inspiration and strength.²³ Marian devotion provides a space for women to bond together in prayer, to rejoice, lament, and draw strength to cope with their daily trials and difficulties. This common space could also provide networking and collaborative action that is creative, committed, and radical to denounce and overturn the tables of wealth and power that divide, dominate, discriminate, and dehumanize.

CONCLUSION

The growing phenomenon of circular migration poses challenges and difficulties at every level. It is thus necessary to attend to the dynamics of the encounter between persons, cultures, religions, and contexts that are responsible for shaping or marring identities. In learning to respect, appreciate, and care for the beauty and value in everyone, we can to some extent restore human dignity and work together for the common good of all.

Hagar, the slave, was the first woman in the biblical account to be twice blessed by God; she is also considered the first theologian who, from her lowly position, was empowered to name the Lord as well as name the well that provided water for her dying son. In the first account (Gen. 16) she chooses to run away from her mistress on account of the jealousy and ill-treatment she had to endure. On the way, she encountered the angel of the Lord in whom she experienced comfort, consolation, and the reassurance to return to her mistress. In the second account (Gen. 21:8–21), she is forced to flee; this time she receives water from the Lord to quench her son's thirst, symbolic of the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to her to make of her son a great nation. Many migrant women take Hagar as their model for endurance, resilience, and faith.

While the relationship between Sarah and Hagar is one of discrimination and distress, we find supportive relationships of care, concern, and compassion between Ruth and Naomi as well as Mary and Elizabeth. Women on the margins could learn from these positive relationships to support and care for each other.²⁴ There is also need to train pastoral animators and facilitators for a prophetic mission with migrant women offering them compassion, care, and counsel. Working in mutuality and partnership with each other and with those we serve can create shared sacred spaces to reflect, dialogue,

and collaborate with each other for a common vision and mission. As we *dream the impossible dream* to create a loving, just, and equitable world order to promote the flourishing of all persons, let us unite in our endeavors to *right the unrightable wrongs* and to walk humbly and equitably with God and with each other within and across borders.

NOTES

1. The main harvesting season for the rice paddy crop in India is during the rainy season (July to September). Preparing the field and sowing the seed is done before that. This works out well for those migrating since they can prepare the fields and then move to the city and back again at the end of the season to harvest the crop. This also coincides with the academic school year, which begins mid-June. Since many nongovernmental organizations provide free or subsidized education for poor and marginalized children, migrant children stand to benefit.
2. The word *caste* relates to the Portuguese and Spanish term *casta*, meaning lineage or race, and originates from the Latin word *castus*, meaning pure or chaste. See J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India: Its Nature, Functions and Origins* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1961), 47.
3. Priya Deshingkar and John Farrington, *Circular Migration and Multi-local Livelihood Strategies in Rural India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 10. Even though it is shameful for women from certain castes to leave the village and go out to work, they see it as a way to escape from the rigid caste structures still prevalent in rural areas. While there are four predominant castes in India, each state has its own division of castes and tribes.
4. *Ibid.*, 297–300.
5. See Jan Nijman, “A Study of Space in Mumbai’s Slums,” *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 101, no. 1 (2010): 4–17, for an explanation of slums, especially in distinction to the Western understanding of slum. He quotes the definition of slums by the government of India as “housing that is unfit for human habitation or detrimental to safety, health and morals of the inhabitants.”
6. Domestic workers are also referred to as servants or housemaids. Most of the women on the margins work part time doing menial chores like cleaning the house, washing utensils, and doing the laundry. For more information, see National Domestic Workers Movement website, <http://www.ndwm.org>, accessed December 2013.
7. Names are fictitious to protect the real identity of the persons.
8. “Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for the 97th World Day of Migrants and Refugees,” from Castel Gandolfo, September 27, 2010, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/migration/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20100927_world-migrants-day_en.html, accessed April 15, 2013.

9. “Seventh Plenary Assembly: Workshop Discussion Guide,” *FABC Paper 92f*, <http://www.ucanews.com/html/fabc-papers/fabc-92f.htm>, accessed April 15, 2013.
10. *Ibid.*, VIII. Issues and Challenges for Church Action.
11. Documents of Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes 29*, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/gaudium-et-spes_en.html, accessed May 15, 2013.
12. Felix Wilfred, *Asian Dreams and Christian Hope: At the Dawn of the Millennium* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000), 166.
13. Felix Wilfred, “Identity: Suppressed, Alienated, Lost,” *Concilium 2* (April 2000): 31–38.
14. Press release, Secunderabad, October 2, 2013, <http://www.ucanindia.in/news/church-workers-asked-to-take-up-social-activism/22146/>, accessed October 4, 2013.
15. SEWA, a trade union in Ahmadabad, is an organization and a movement that organizes women workers to obtain work and social security. For more information, see <http://www.sewa.org>.
16. “Mumbai Jesuits Design Insurance for Migrants,” December 1, 2013, <http://www.ucanindia.in/news/mumbai-jesuits-design-insurance-for-migrants/22913/daily>, accessed December 1, 2013.
17. Nancy Bedford, “To Speak of God from More than One Place: Theological Reflections from the Experience of Migration,” in *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation*, ed. Ivan Petrella (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005).
18. Daniel H. Groody, “Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees,” in *And You Welcomed Me: Migration and Catholic Social Teaching*, ed. Donald Kerwin and Jill Marie Gerschutz (New York: Lexington Books, 2009), 4.
19. Statement of the Catholic Biblical Association of India (CBAI) during the Immigration in the Biblical Perspective Conference, October 7–9, 2012 at NBCLC, Bangalore, <http://cbci.in/statements.aspx>, accessed November 10, 2013.
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21. Press statement, New Delhi, November 20, 2013, <http://www.ucanindia.in/news/dalit-catholic-women-seek-bigger-role/22771>, accessed November 20, 2013.
22. “Gitanjali: Selected Poems,” <http://www.schoolofwisdom.com/history/teachers/rabindranath-tagore/gitanjali>, accessed May 20, 2013.
23. Many of the women I have ministered to have shared this experience with me. This has also been affirmed by Gemma Cruz. See Gemma

- Tulud Cruz, "Faith on the Edge: Religion and Women in the Context of Migration," *Feminist Theology* 15, no. 1 (September 1, 2006), 14.
24. For Chung, "when women of faith and commitment who are breaking new ground recognize one another's mission in their sisterhood, they overcome their fear of ostracism and annihilation. When they overcome their own fear by supporting one another they can make a bigger move. Their hearts extend to solidarity with all who are struggling to claim their dignity and power as people." See Chung Hyun Kyung, *Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), 80.

CHAPTER 10



PATRON SAINT OF CATHOLICS AND HINDUS

SAINT ANTONY AND ECCLESIAL
HOSPITALITY IN EAST LONDON

Alana Harris

Every Tuesday evening at 8 p.m. throughout the year, a Catholic church in Forest Gate, East London, is the scene of remarkable religious fervor.¹ Most weeks at least two hundred people of diverse ages and ethnicities buy and light hundreds of candles, a knot of people gather around a plaster statue of the Franciscan Antony of Padua (rubbing their hands along the folds of his brown habit), or they place slips of paper in a large wooden box marked “petitions.”² Meanwhile, a number of men and women walk on their knees from the back of the church to the altar, silently praying with lips moving and a lit candle, while others embrace and greet each other with kisses as they enter the church. This diverse congregation has come for the Novena of Saint Antony, but the two-hour-long devotion of intercessory prayers, hymns, scripture readings, relics veneration, and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is unlike most encountered in other Catholic churches—it brings together people from highly diverse faith backgrounds, including a substantial number of self-identified (and publicly acknowledged) Hindus. As the longstanding and now recently deceased parish priest, Father Denis explained, “The Franciscans built this church . . . [and] when the Franciscans went to India, there was a great devotion

*to the saints with the Hindus anyway, and St. Anthony they all particularly liked, and the devotion spread into the Hindu community. [Therefore here in London,] many Hindus come as well as Catholics, especially from India [and] especially on a Tuesday night for the novena. But they come during the week as well, so a lot of people pop in. So it's a very used church.*³⁸

In Father Denis's explanation, the shared diasporic identities of Tamil Catholics and Hindus (auspiced through St. Antony) allow for the circumvention of differences of religion, class, and caste and the identification of common intercessory needs in times of austerity in contemporary London.⁴ Moreover, this form of devotional practice resonates with people within (and well beyond) this parish in London, providing a striking example of religious dynamism and vitality beyond traditional measures of church growth or decline through Sunday attendance.⁵

After a brief introductory background to the saint and the history of this shrine church (compiled through consultation of the Franciscan archives), this chapter draws upon extended ethnographic observation, written materials generated through fieldwork, and oral history interviews to examine the gendered, performed, and embodied dimensions of this extraliturgical devotion.⁶ It advocates a methodological approach that takes seriously the "lived religious experience," "ordinary theology," and religious language of participants, moving beyond rigid and seemingly impermeable doctrinal and denominational categories.⁷ Through concentrating on the shared diasporic identities articulated by Tamil Catholics and Hindus⁸ and the colonial legacies and Christian missionary histories that contextualize this contemporary practice, it provides a case study of an evolving, flexible, and inclusive local Catholic ecclesiology.

THE SAINT AND HIS SHRINE CHURCH IN EAST LONDON

Fernando Martins was born in Lisbon to a wealthy family in 1195 and, after a brief period in an Augustinian abbey, joined the newly established Franciscans order, inspired by early martyrdoms and the Franciscan emphasis on poverty and evangelistic fervor. He initially intended to preach the gospel to Muslims in Morocco, but ill health forced him to abandon this plan and, after a period as a hermit in Romagna (Italy), he discovered his true vocation as a preacher and served as St. Francis's second-in-command, training novices and

preaching widely, including at the papal court. He was provincial superior of the order, establishing a monastery in Padua—hence the idealized Tuscan background often present in church art portraying the saint. He was canonized a year after his death in 1232 by Pope Gregory IX and made a doctor of the Church in 1945.⁹ He is venerated all over the world, known as the patron saint of lost things and credited with many miracles.¹⁰ In Spain, Portugal, and Brazil, he is thought to be particularly efficacious in marriage creation and reconciliation.¹¹ He is usually represented, as on the front cover of the Forest Gate Novena booklet, in his Franciscan habit with lilies to represent saintly purity and with a book, on which the Christ Child is seated, to symbolize his learning and biblical preaching.

Following their post-Reformation absence in Britain for more than three hundred years, Franciscan monks established the parish of St. Antony in 1884 and the neo-Gothic church built by Peter Paul Pugin. The church can accommodate one thousand people, and from its foundation, it served a lively parish community: in 1903, it had four thousand parishioners and was the largest parish in Greater London.¹² From its foundation, St. Antony's has functioned as a shrine church, with the first altar to the saint installed through the donation of a Mrs. Keane in 1892; a replacement statue was erected in 1931,¹³ the seven hundredth anniversary of the saint's death. A further commemoration of this landmark celebration was a door-to-door petition of all residents of the street (followed by an application to West Ham Council) to change the name of Khedive Road to St. Antony's Road—a lasting public reminder to the neighborhood of the presence of the saint's church.¹⁴ For well over a century, the church (in its materiality but also ritual functionality) has offered a site of escape or pilgrimage from the dreariness of the everyday—an encounter with the numinous through beauty, enacting the insights of Roman and Anglo-Catholic incarnational theology of the late nineteenth century.¹⁵

Devotion to St. Antony seems to have remained strong throughout the changes in composition of the parish over the decades—from the predominantly Irish Catholic community at the turn of the century through to the 1960s when a parish history recorded the introduction of a Polish Mass and welcomed “the very large communities of Caribbean and Asian families . . . come to swell our numbers.”¹⁶ The newly inaugurated parish newsletter in 1964, perhaps commenced in response to the Second Vatican Council's desire for increased parochial involvement of the laity, recorded the following news item: “The Novena has shown a gratifying increase in the numbers of those attending and Tuesday evening is beginning to mean a full Church.

Fr. Gordon is always anxious to hear of petitions from those desiring Novena prayers. His postbag always carries Masses of thanksgiving for favors received. Perseverance in prayer is one of the greatest ways of increasing a deep and personal faith and trust in God—and only faith moves mountains!¹⁷ Further tangible evidence of faith in St. Antony's intercessory powers was the sale of votive candles recorded in the parish financial return of the previous year, 1963. Compared with £4,936 received from annual collection takings (from a mass attendance of around 3,200 people), a further £1,138 was added to church coffers through the sale of candles.¹⁸ This devotion, palpably expressed in material (and indeed monetary) terms, continues to be strong in 2014 despite the departure of the Franciscans in 2001 and a differently configured congregation of around 4,000 people from more than 106 different countries.¹⁹ The newly appointed parish priest, a 44-year-old Irish-born religious of the Community of St. John, confided that the sale of candles, for a suggested donation of £1, amounts to “probably between £60,000–£70,000 a year. Which is basically keeping the parish afloat. Because they're very poor people—90% of people in Newham earn less than £25,000 a year.”²⁰ Alongside this outlay implicitly funding the church's upkeep, devotees also make very generous donations to “St. Antony's bread”—which may only be used to fund emergency relief activities within the parish. With an astonishing surplus of around £30,000, this financial safety net allows for discretionary cash distributions in cases of immediate and dire need, such as immigration difficulties, imminent eviction, hunger, or unforeseen funeral costs.²¹ For these recipients (as around £500–£1,000 is distributed each week), St. Antony continues to work minor miracles in this corner of East London. Illustrating the continuing salience of faith-based organizations as a supplement to the modern welfare state,²² these contributions also substantiate an understanding of church as extended family, in which the more fortunate support the more needy through a form of spiritual (and actual) remittance.

DIASPORIC DEVOTIONS: CUSTOMIZED IN LONDON

Recounting a typical Tuesday within his church and the hundreds of people that stream through the door throughout the day, Father John reflected,

Sometimes they're there at 6:15, but usually its 6:30 a.m.—there [are] usually people waiting [for me to open the church]. And they have these big bags and they're going up to the statue and they're holding out [items]. And you can feel the intensity of the whole thing. Six thirty in the morning and they are coming in . . . Sometimes I just think I could just sit there and pray and watch the world go by. It's very touching. A lot of the Hindu people that come in during the day, they'll greet you but they won't come up and [talk]. They are very much in their own little liturgy.²³

Later, at the 8 p.m. Novena, the crowd is much more diverse. Around a third of those in attendance are from the Indian subcontinent and are a mostly balanced mix of men and women.²⁴ African; Caribbean; Eastern European; and longstanding, white East End devotees are also in evidence, but the other strikingly distinct group is a knot of young, white men with shaved heads, tattoos, and an Irish lilt, lighting candles and praying conscientiously. Among them are half a dozen couples with young children, some of the women with carefully coiffed, bouffant hair and sparkling costume jewelry. I am told by Father John that the traveler community is fervent in its devotion to St. Antony: "Their prayer system, religious belief system is very petition orientated . . . St. Antony's the perfect, perfect guy for them . . . They just dig St. Antony. It's right up their street, religious wise." These Irish travelers come from all over London each week to offer their intentions and to seek forgiveness within the confessional. Father John continued, "Because they're [in] such a dysfunctional world and there's all these immediate problems coming in—domestic violence and all kinds of alcohol and abuse-related stuff, money worries or whatever—they cling to St. Antony as hope. They have no system of counselors, they have no—they have nothing. It's all hush-hush. Everything is like taboo. So St. Antony is the outlet for their deepest problems."²⁵

Drawing upon the insights of Mary McClintock Fulkerson in reading the exposed "wounds" of those engaged in these devotional practices, ranging from economic privation to emotional dysfunction, it is possible to discern a radically reconfigured notion of church beyond a monochrome ecclesial identity. Through these embodied practices, we see the "marking out of a shared communal reality as well as traditioning of that reality by authoritative Christian [scripts]."²⁶

The proceedings on Tuesday evenings commence with a series of archaic Novena prayers in front of the statue of St. Antony—marked by repetitive refrains like "St. Antony, powerful in word and work,"

with the collective response, “Grant us what we ask of thee.”²⁷ Another prayer in trite rhyming couplets conjures the intimate relationship between penitent and saint: “All dangers vanish at the prayer / so too incessant care and need. / Let all who know thy power proclaim / Padua tell, it’s so decreed.”²⁸ These formulas are punctuated by Catholic hymns, a reading from the New Testament, and then perambulation from the north altar to the front of the church, where a selection of the intercessions “posted” to St. Antony are read from the pulpit. On the evenings that I have attended, more than fifty of these written petitions were read aloud, and these prayers, anxieties, and thanksgivings fell into a discrete number of categories.

Petitions lodged for the Novena on March 25, 2014—which were preserved with ethics clearance for permission to use in this research—numbered more than three hundred, on diverse scraps of paper, which recorded, in personal terms, requests for help, comfort, and assistance. Health and relationship issues emerged as the prime concern for most of those present that evening (like most others).²⁹ Cancer, pending operations, mental health, and sickness were ubiquitous, but preservation from black magic and evil spirits was also mentioned in a couple of petitions. Allied to these concerns were prayers for family life: for marital stability, for a safe birth or infant development, and for the troubles (or illnesses) of children or grandchildren. Work and relief from money problems featured strongly, as well as practical prayers to find (or keep) a house, to secure or sustain employment, and to deal with taxation issues. Here we see the church as a site for the articulation, and potential attainment, of everyday succor—a crucible for intercession and intervention in a context in which the mostly migrant congregants present feel powerless and without deep and well-established temporal networks of patronage to address these concerns. There is also embedded within this prayer formula a sense of gainful activity and agency—the loyalty, perseverance, and reflectiveness of the penitent attending more than nine consecutive Tuesdays is implicitly deserving of a due hearing and just reward.

A very striking and heartrending strain of the correspondence addressed the desire for love and companionship, for either oneself or a loved one. The search for a “good Catholic husband” and the desire to start a family are just some of the aspirations laid at the feet of the saint. The well-recognized role of the church as a context for “cosmopolitan sociability,” a community in which to find belonging, relational support, and even love, is echoed in these petitions.³⁰ More tangible and material but perhaps just as intractable, problems brought to the saint included prayers for exams, visas, resolution of

immigration problems, lost things (mostly mobile phones), and legal problems.³¹ In the week intensively surveyed, there were also a few prayers of personal thanksgiving and some for world-related, generalized prayers, such as for the victims of the lost Malaysian airplane or the London homeless.

Among these hundreds of slips of paper were 34 petitions written in a foreign language, mostly Tamil (but one in Sinhalese). Translation of these intercessions revealed an array of similar concerns but also rhetorical differences, including more fervent petitions of St. Antony drawing upon his biography (“You must have faced a similar problem”)³² and traditional iconography (“Your hands that held the baby Jesus should guide us”).³³ Some of the prayers also invoked the Trinity and the communion of saints (as almost a pantheon of deities), such as this multifaceted intercession: “Father St. Anthony, Mother Mary, Jesus, my husband is having problems because of his illnesses. Please heal him. We don’t have visas; the two of us are having so many hardships. You are the one[s] who can help us.”³⁴ A potential explanation for these discursive differences in intercessional tone and petitionary strategy was made explicit within one prayer (in English) that read, “My wife Mrs. J. is coming to this church since four months. From recent time[s], she suddenly got ill for no reason. We are Hindu but we believe in Jesus too. She has to get well soon. Please pray for my wife.”³⁵ On Tuesdays when the Tamil priest stationed in the parish attends the Novena, the weekly petitions proffered in that language are read out. On more than one occasion, these requests are signed “from a Hindu devotee,” and the attitude of the former priest and the newly arrived religious is that “all are welcome” at this service or throughout the day when they create “their own little liturgy.” Nevertheless, there are limits: while veneration of the relic of St. Antony at the Novena is open to all, announcements have had to be made at the 10 a.m. Mass that the Eucharist is strictly reserved for Catholics. But there is also an acknowledgment that many Hindus come up for communion innocently and that it is sometimes difficult to detect the differences, physically or attitudinally, between Hindus and Tamil Catholics. In this ecclesial setting, as McClintock Fulkerson would put it, the complexities of “racialized, normalized, and otherwise enculturated bodies and desire[s]” should be acknowledged, cutting across exclusionary definitions of religious affiliation.³⁶ In speaking to Father John about the deluge of pain, grief, insecurity, and worries articulated—and off loaded—each week at the Novena, this sensitive pastor acknowledged that “it does give you a glimpse of the reality of people’s [lives]. It’s almost an X-ray of people’s prayer. You really get

the idea of what's . . ."37 Here he paused, leading me to ponder the conclusion to his sentence. On my assessment, these prayers offer an intimate insight into the innermost longings, aspirations, and anxieties of those who implore the intercession of St. Antony (and, often inchoately, Christ) each week.³⁸ It is a form of church that offers hospitality and healing, reconciliation, and hope.

Devotion to St. Antony is popular throughout all of India and Sri Lanka, and interreligious places of pilgrimage on the subcontinent are not uncommon.³⁹ The sharing of sacred space between Catholics and Hindus has its most famous example in the Marian shrine, Vailankanni, and visitation of this pilgrimage shrine, the "Indian Lourdes," was mentioned by some of the Novena devotees.⁴⁰ Alongside this, there is also an intensely popular, longstanding pilgrimage site to St. Antony in Uvari, Tamil Nadu, the region of origin (alongside northern Sri Lanka) for a significant proportion of the Forest Gate congregation. According to legend, Portuguese sailors off the coast of Madras who were saved from cholera in the sixteenth century established a shrine to St. Antony in thanksgiving and installed his carved wooden statue.⁴¹ The shrine church, the site of large festivities in February and on the saint's feast day in June, was created in the 1940s. Here, Catholics and Hindus undertake rituals together across caste and religious boundaries, with locals opening their homes to pilgrims free of charge and all devotees, irrespective of background, sharing ceremonial meals. Elsewhere in Portugal, Turkey, and Morocco, Catholics and Muslims similarly coinhabit sacred spaces and customize devotional practices to St. Antony.⁴²

Against this background, an openness to Catholic-Hindu common worship and the mutual, syncretic participation in religious experiences is a diasporic legacy brought to East London by these migrants—part of a shared cultural and postcolonial understanding, common to Tamils from southern India and Sri Lanka, that is reenacted (and transformed) in Forest Gate. As 38-year-old Jeyachandra, who was born in Sri Lanka and fled to India as a Tamil Tiger refugee before coming to East Ham in 2008, put it, "I am Hindu but you know it doesn't matter, the thing is I like to pray, I love to pray. I like to take bread and wine, the body of Jesus . . . My parents were Hindu, we worship at Temple, but my father and mother also know Jesus, Mary, [and] they teach me like this."⁴³

Yet it is also important to recognize that it is not just recent arrivals like Jeyachandra who find solace at the shrine. Reflecting on the draw to the parish each Tuesday night, Father John also observed, "I think it's . . . [a]lso [because] it's been going for so long—150 years—that's

a [period of] time to really take root in the consciousness of the people here that there is a place you can go, a kind of place . . . you get people saying, ‘My mother used to, my father used to come here.’ Not—there are certain strands of people—many people have moved out now. But you get the feeling that it’s been going for so long, it’s become part of the . . . culture and the background of East London, really.”⁴⁴

The appeal of the shrine and its saint therefore vests in its historicity but also its flexibility. The Novena is a traditional practice within an institutional setting but is administered in a way that prioritizes ecclesial hospitality and allows for pluralism in practice. More recent Tamil arrivals like Jeyachandra may identify within the liturgical familiar modes of prayer, such as vow rituals, dharma practices (like knee walking), or supplication to a guru, a “master.” Simultaneously, the knot of elderly white parishioners present with their rosaries and missals connect into a preconiliar Catholic piety that has a longstanding presence and purchase in this part of London. For both, it is the rootedness of these prayers, and their efficacy, that give the Tuesday Novena an unmistakable attraction and ritual coherence. Following the lead of ecclesiologists Nicholas Healy and Cheryl Peterson, this narrative-focused approach prioritizes the “ecclesiological context,” in which the concrete church performs its task of witness and pastoral care,⁴⁵ illuminating different and responsive ways of being church focused on a *koinonia* of relationships and outward witness within a broken world.⁴⁶

MOVING BODIES, EVERYDAY PRAYERS, AND FAITH IN THE CITY

This case study of a dynamic extraliturgical devotional practice raises a number of issues for consideration when contemplating where (and why) certain forms of religious practice—and churches—are flourishing. Within the Tuesday-night Novena, distinctively Catholic practices and confessional boundaries (most especially surrounding communion reception) are acknowledged and enforced. And yet these understandings are also crossed, reconfigured, and sometimes transgressed, as the church becomes a space for the expression of multivalent faith identities and the customization of a range of devotionals.⁴⁷ Polysemic prayer practices can also spill outside the ritual event and spatial confines of the church. For Jeyachandra, his Tuesday-night homage to St. Antony continues throughout the week at home; it is his custom to buy two candles, one for the church and the other for

his own house shrine, where it burns for nine days (a *novena*) in front of his statue of St. Antony.⁴⁸ For this fervent devotee, there is a ritual and spatial continuity between his Tuesday-night observances and his everyday, home-based prayer life.

Materiality and notions of embodiment—articulated in the sensory, bodily practices of the faithful in their enacted encounter with a metaphorically embodied saint—are key features of these complex rituals and their appeal across differences of gender, class, ethnicity, and generation.⁴⁹ The presence of St. Antony is always capable of invocation through the materiality of his shrine and statue. Parents take their children up to the life-size figure and place a hand on his foot or cloak and then touch the head of their child. Others pray and rub the foot of the statue (or generate a “contact relic” through the encounter of saint and object), and the result of this constant tactile encounter is a wearing away of the paint on the saint’s foot (despite the statue’s restoration just a couple of years ago). Devotion leaves its mark or impression on the saint, as he too impacts the lives of his clients.⁵⁰ In the procession of the congregation to the altar to kiss the first-class relic (continued in a glass panel within a wooden cross), there is another form of physical encounter, but this time with the historic body of the saint, thereby creating a connection across time and space. It is this element of the Novena that makes the most striking impression on Father John: “The young, the old . . . big travelers—and they kiss it like it’s a diamond. They go down [to kneel to kiss the relic] like it’s the rarest diamond. So it’s very touching and very beautiful to see that, their devotion.”⁵¹ The incarnational logic enacted through these practices is heightened by the next ritual action within the Novena—the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on the altar, in which Christ’s incarnation is remembered and reenacted through the doctrine of the real presence. There is a paradox of presence and absence, materiality and metaphor at the heart of these practices, which Father John and I spoke about in our conversation:

They’re a very concrete people and they’re not much [into] abstraction. Very few of them are people who sit back and reflect, who have time to even reflect on their lives . . . So whether it be kneeling, whether it be the sign of the cross, its physical movement that sets your soul in movement. So “smells and bells” . . . the reaching out, the touching, the taste, the vision, the hearing, it’s all very much, for them, through their body, through the visible signs the soul is reaching out as well . . . there is a physical touch there that helps to incarnate their prayers.⁵²

As we have seen from the prayers of St. Antony's clients—chiefly as materialized on slips of paper and presented at his feet—this is also an intensely immediate, pragmatic devotional practice. Requests for help and gratitude for blessings received all relate to profoundly everyday, personal, and often familial issues. There is a commonality and consensus across gender and generation, religion and race of a shared vulnerability and the need for divine understanding and assistance. The vast majority of prayers are articulated within a relational framework: they ultimately pertain to family difficulties, be they marital formation or crisis, economic insecurity, or the ill health of a loved one. Saint Antony is incorporated into this relational, familial framework as a “father” (in Jeyachandra's words) or an attentive brother among a company of sibling saints (like St. Francis) whose statues are also found around the church⁵³—much like a Hindu temple—and who are also solicited for help on Tuesday evenings.⁵⁴

In his 2013 Apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis undertook an extended reflection on the “new evangelization for the transmission of the faith,” including a reevaluation of the parish not as “an outdated institution” but as a necessary “presence of the church in a given territory” and a community with “flexibility, [as] it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community.”⁵⁵ When ideally so configured, Francis sees it as a “community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach.”⁵⁶ Undoubtedly drawing upon his pastoral experiences in South America, the pope spoke of the need to evangelize cultures to address problems such as “machismo, alcoholism, domestic violence, low Mass attendance” and wholeheartedly endorsed “popular piety itself . . . [as] the starting point for healing and liberation from these deficiencies.”⁵⁷ These insights were deepened by his observations on urban life as a “privileged locus for the new evangelization,” where a “connective network is found in which groups of people share a common imagination and dreams about life, and new human interactions arise, new cultures, invisible cities.”⁵⁸ With particular application to my discussion of the everyday and embodied interreligious devotion to St. Antony in East London, the pope opines, “Genuine forms of popular piety are incarnate, since they are born of the incarnation of Christian faith in popular culture. For this reason they entail a personal relationship, not with vague spiritual entities but with God, with Christ, with Mary, with the saints. These devotions are fleshy, they have a face. They are capable of fostering relationships and not just enabling escapism.”⁵⁹

As Francis concludes, there is an active evangelizing power within these forms of popular piety, and they present a *locus theologicus*.⁶⁰ They also offer, as illustrated by this case study, a way of “being church” that is simultaneously “catholic” and “evangelical,” modeling an incarnational ecclesiology well adapted to the demands of a global, hospitable church called upon to offer service and solace to a “pilgrim people.”⁶¹

NOTES

1. For an extended discussion of the religious landscape in East London, see Jane Garnett and Alana Harris, “Church without Walls: Mapping the Sacred in East London,” in *Rescripting Religion in the City: Migration and Religious Identity in the Modern Metropolis*, ed. Jane Garnett and Alana Harris (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 115–30.
2. Ethnographic material within this chapter is based on fieldwork undertaken over various Tuesday evenings throughout 2009 and 2012 and Tuesday evenings in February and March 2014.
3. Rev. Denis Hall (b. 1941), interview, July 17, 2009, transcript #92 and 93. All interviews deposited at the Bishopsgate Institute, London, EC2M 4QH.
4. See also Jane Garnett and Alana Harris, “Wounding and Healing: Dealing with Difference in Christian Narratives of Migrant Women in East London Since 1980,” *Women’s History Review* 22, no. 2 (2013): 1–20.
5. See Peter Brierley, *Capital Growth: What the 2012 London Church Census Reveals* (London: ADBC Publishers, 2014); David Goodhew, *Church Growth in Britain: 1980 to the Present* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Steve Bruce, “Secularization and Church Growth in the United Kingdom,” *Journal of Religion in Europe* 6, no. 3 (2013): 273–96; David Goodhew, “Church Growth in Britain: A Response to Steve Bruce,” *Journal of Religion in Europe* 6, no. 3 (2013): 297–315; Steve Bruce, “Further Thoughts on Church Growth and Secularization,” *Journal of Religion in Europe* 6, no. 3 (2013): 273–96, 316–20.
6. All material gathered for this research has been passed through ethics clearance via the City of Oxford Central Research Ethics Committee, CUREC1A/14-201.
7. Meredith McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Nancy Ammerman, ed., *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Giuseppe Giordan, “Towards a Sociology of Prayer,” in *Religion, Spirituality and Everyday Practice*, ed. William H. Swatos Jr. and Giuseppe Giordan (Chicago: Springer, 2011), 33–44; Jeff Astley and Leslie Francis, *Exploring Ordinary Theology: Everyday Christian Believing and the Church* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

8. On Tamil diasporic identities generally, see Ann David, "Local Diasporas/Global Trajectories: New Aspects of Religious 'Performance' in British Tamil Hindu Practice," *Performance Research* 13, no. 3 (2008): 89–99; Nick Van Hear, "Between the Local and the Diasporic: The Shifting Centre of Gravity in War-Torn Sri Lanka's Transnational Politics," *Contemporary South Asia* 20, no. 1 (2012): 61–75.
9. Sheilah Ward Ling, *St. Anthony of Padua: Friend of All the World* (Slough: St. Pauls, 1995).
10. Jack Wintz, *St. Anthony of Padua, Saint of the People: His Life, Legends and Popular Devotions* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Antony Messenger, 2005).
11. Mitch Finley, *Heavenly Helps: St. Anthony and St. Jude: Amazing True Stories of Answered Prayers* (New York: Crossroad, 1994).
12. Derek Calder, "St. Anthony's Church Centenary, 1891–1991" (unpublished, 1991), 22 (AOFM, File Box 41: Centenary, Albums and Photos).
13. *Ibid.*, 17.
14. Fr. Justine McLoughin and Fr. Andrew Cloonan, *A Parish Centenary: Reflections on St. Anthony's Forest Gate 1884–1984* (London: Printexpress, 1984), 231 (AOFM, File Box 17: Forest Gate Docs/Photos Church and Locality).
15. See Sheridan Gilley, "Vulgar Piety and the Brompton Oratory, 1850–60," in *The Irish in the Victorian City*, ed. Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 255–66, and in an Anglican context, Alana Harris, "Building the Docklands Settlement: Gender, Gentility and the Gentry in East London, 1893–1939," *Material Religion: Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 9, no. 1 (2013): 60–85.
16. McLoughin and Cloonan, *Parish Centenary*, 30.
17. *Bulletin*, no. 27, May 31, 1964, 1 (AOFM, Box 17).
18. *Account of Receipts and Payments* (1963) (AOFM, Box 41).
19. Rev. John Moloney (b. 1969), interview, March 17, 2014, transcript #113.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. Matthew Hilton and James McKay, eds., *The Ages of Voluntarism: How We Got to the Big Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); cf. Frank Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
23. Moloney, interview.
24. Cf. Marta Trzebiatowska and Steve Bruce, *Why Are Women More Religious than Men?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
25. Fr. John, interview.
26. Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 22–23.
27. *St. Anthony's Novena Prayer Book* (St. Anthony's Church, Forest Gate, n.d.), author's copy. These prayers adhere to the universal format for

- Novenas—see <http://www.ewtn.com/devotionals/novena/anthony.htm> for details.
28. Ibid.
 29. See also, in an Anglican rural context, Tania ap Siôn, “Distinguishing between Intention, Reference and Objective in an Analysis of Prayer Requests for Health and Well-Being: Eavesdropping from the Rural Vestry,” *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 11, no. 1 (2008): 53–65.
 30. Nina Glick Schiller, Tsyplma Darieva, and Sanda Gruner-Domic, “Defining Cosmopolitan Sociability in a Transnational Age: An Introduction,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 3 (2011): 399–418.
 31. See also Tania ap Siôn, “Implicit Religion and Ordinary Prayer,” *Implicit Religion* 13, no. 3 (2010): 275–94.
 32. Handwritten petition, March 25, 2014, #11. My thanks to Sivashanke Sivashanmugam for invaluable translation assistance.
 33. Handwritten petition, March 25, 2014, #14.
 34. Handwritten petition, March 25, 2014, #26.
 35. Handwritten petition, March 25, 2014, #34.
 36. McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption*, 21.
 37. Fr. John, interview.
 38. For further exploration of prayer as a social as well as subjective practice, see Giuseppe Giordan and Linda Woodhead, eds., *A Sociology of Prayer* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).
 39. See Selva Raj, “Dialogue ‘On the Ground’: The Complicated Identities and the Complex Negotiations of Catholics and Hindus in South India,” *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies* 17 (2004): 33–44; Selva Raj and William P. Harman, eds., *Dealing with Deities: The Ritual Vow in South Asia* (New York: SUNY, 2007).
 40. <http://www.vailankannishrine.org>, accessed September 7, 2015.
 41. <http://uvari.com>, accessed September 7, 2015.
 42. Dionigi Albera and Benoît Fliche, “Muslim Devotional Practices in Christian Shrines: The Case of Istanbul,” in *Sharing Sacred Spaces in the Mediterranean: Christians, Muslims and Jews at Shrines and Sanctuaries*, ed. Dionigi Albera and Maria Couroucli (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 94–117; Willy Jansen and Meike Kühn, “Shared Symbols: Muslims, Marian Pilgrimages and Gender,” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 15 (2008): 295–311.
 43. Jeyachandra Jacuma (b. 1978), interview, April 15, 2014, transcript #114.
 44. Fr. John, interview.
 45. Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 38.
 46. Cheryl M. Peterson, *Who Is the Church? An Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 144.

47. For a recent discussion of interreligious ritual participation, see Marianne Moyaert and Joris Geldhof, eds., *Ritual Participation and Interreligious Dialogue: Boundaries, Transgressions and Innovations* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).
48. Jeyachandra, interview.
49. On the “material turn” in sociology and history of religion, see, for example, Manuel Vasquez, *More than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Material Christianity: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011); Sally Promey, ed., *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).
50. For a related study of incarnational popular piety among British Catholics, see Alana Harris, “Bone Idol? British Catholics and Devotion to St Thérèse of Lisieux,” in *The Sixties and Beyond: Dechristianization as History in North America and Western Europe, 1945–2000*, ed. Nancy Christie, Michael Gauveau, and Stephen Heathorn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 429–52.
51. Rev. John, interview.
52. Ibid.
53. On the popularity of St. Francis in an English Catholic context, see Mary Heimann, “St. Francis and Modern English Sentiment,” in *Christianity and Community in the West: Essays for John Bossy*, ed. Simon Ditchfield (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 278–93.
54. On English Catholic devotion to the saints generally, see Alana Harris, *Faith in the Family: A Lived Religious History of English Catholicism, 1945–82* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 202–57.
55. *Evangelii Gaudium*, November 24, 2013, §28, <http://www.vatican.va/evangelii-gaudium/en/>, accessed September 7, 2015.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., §69.
58. Ibid., §74.
59. Ibid., §90.
60. Ibid., §126.
61. *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (November 21, 1964), chap. 7, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html, accessed September 7, 2015.

CHAPTER 11



NOT QUITE HERE QUEER ECCLESIAL SPACES IN THE FILIPINO DIASPORA

Michael Sepidoza Campos

*When my grandmother died a few years ago, I flew home.
As soon as I reached Manila, a sense of foreboding engulfed me.
The anxiety increased as I inched closer to the immigration gate.
Huddled against fellow passengers, I worried that my papers wouldn't
pass muster.
It was an old fear embedded in body and memory.*

*I successfully traversed the threshold;
to the attending officer, I was just another balikbayan.¹
But for me, he embodied the threat of unending expulsion.
Belonging neither here nor there, I felt exposed,
queered by an inability to fully come home.*

Wanderers and exiles, Filipinos are found in every corner of the earth. Economic need compels us to work as caregivers, domestic helpers, doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers, and entertainers. Accountable to home, we grasp at the fantasy of an originary place.² We participate in a colonial trajectory that blurs past and present, haunted by the specter of an impossible future.³ We are nomads who interrupt citizenship.

In this chapter, I engage Filipino diaspora as *locus theologicus* to explore the ephemeral boundaries of ecclesial space and its attendant

technologies of belonging. More than a phenomenon of twenty-first-century global life, diaspora recontours economics of selfhood, identity, and meaning making. In their ability to broaden space and multiply homes, diasporic lives facilitate the unveiling of transcendence that expands the reach of ecclesial belonging.

Among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) Filipinos, queerness speaks of selves consolidated through enduring expulsions and interruptions. Never quite at home anywhere, we echo the stranger's yearning for an impossible hospitality. We incarnate the non-/ab-normativity of queer bodies that live in between.⁴ To speak queer is thus to "disrupt monolithic discourses" uttered at the margins of citizenship.⁵ *Queer speaks diaspora.*

In this short reflection, I *queer* diaspora as a site for theological engagement. Drawing from a documentary of five *baklâ*⁶ overseas contract workers, I suggest that *paglaldad*—"self-unfurling"—unveils theological intuitions that subvert temporal and geographical confines of ecclesial belonging. To the extent that *paglaldad* transgresses the divide between in/appropriate bodies, concealment/unfurling, re-/dis-memberings, I trace theological utterances that thrive at the interstice of home and exile, among un/belonging bodies.

I deploy *church*, *bodies*, *space*, and *belonging* broadly, interchangeable descriptions of Filipino diaspora. Because twenty-first-century migration speaks much about empire/colony, center/periphery, theological speech necessarily hedges against colonial discourse. Articulations of selfhood point less to agency as illuminate "bodies" consolidated over and again before conflicting narratives of home and exile. Rather than propose any theological framework, therefore, I situate theology against critical readings of postcolonial space/time as metaphors for ecclesial belonging.

QUEERING ECONOMIES OF BODY AND EMPIRE

While undertaking a study of Tel Aviv's queer life, Israeli filmmaker Tomer Heymann stumbled on a group of Filipino expatriates who compose a drag troupe called Paper Dolls.⁷ Heymann befriended and penetrated the glittering world of their extraordinary dance around gender, economics, religion, and racism. He gained familiarity with not only variations of Filipino and Israeli queer cultures but also the quotidian struggles of migrant workers.

Chiqui, Sally, Giorgio, Jan, and Cheska compose the troupe. Their "stage names" define the performative spaces of their professional and personal lives.⁸ Onstage, they lip-synch Madonna, Cher,

and Bananarama. Exaggerated gestures, elaborate costumes, and garish makeup contour their interpretations of femininity. Offstage, they support Tel Aviv's economy as domestic workers "imported" to support an aging population.

Beyond space, they secure belonging through time. By day, they expend affect and nurture as caregivers to elderly, predominantly Orthodox clients. They participate in a global economy that binds developing nations like the Philippines to the interests of first-world nations such as Israel. By night, these migrants-turned-female impersonators peddle sexuality to cull desirability and fame. In labor and leisure, they equivocate a feminine artifice that succeeds and fails translation.

Among Filipinos, the Paper Dolls are simply *baklá*, hypereffeminate, gay men who occupy a third space in the Filipino gender universe.⁹ While Heymann describes them interchangeably as "transgendered," "gay," or "transsexual," the Dolls attend to these elisions just so, enough to resist their total misnaming.¹⁰ Discerning an implicit "dissonance [between Western conceptions of gayness] . . . vis-à-vis the baklá," they shift multiple iterations of gender and sexuality.¹¹ Thus they loosely dance around "gay," "men-women," or even "(straight) men" to expose the fantasy of an essential self.¹² When asked if he saw himself as a man or woman, Giorgio exclaimed, "A woman, of course!" But this is an ambivalent claim to the extent that he is also haunted by the specter of authenticity; he is merely a "paper doll." Like his friends, Giorgio negotiates an unending coming out—a *paglaldad*, or "unfurling"—of an imagined femininity.

The insufficiency of the Paper Dolls' gender performance magnifies the interruptions that migrants confront in diaspora. They iterate selves that (mis)translate.¹³ Indeed, only Sally is able to live openly before Haim, her employer. She describes their relationship as affectionate. "I'm like his only daughter . . . He knows what I am."¹⁴ Such relationships are atypical. And even at their best, there are times when Sally's presumably stable identity falters—"He treats me like a man. But I dress like a woman." During a particularly excruciating scene, an Israeli taxi driver disparages Jan and his friend as "disgusting creatures . . . as [unreal] men and as fake, sleazy women." His repulsion runs deep, disclaiming *all* Filipinos as essentially "disgusting [and] stinky . . . Homosexuality is natural for them. That place is the devil's cradle, the origin of all evil."¹⁵ Indelibly carved on the Paper Dolls' bodies is a hotly contested colonial encounter that conflates economy, racism, misogyny, and homophobia. Their status as migrant workers in Israel—itsself a nation that emerged out of the specter of

exile—exposes the complex ways bodies are simultaneously expelled and embraced. Theirs is the precarious body that Judith Butler situates “at the mercy of another body [able to] produce a great source of pleasure and/or a terrifying fear of death.”¹⁶ Abject strangers in a nation of exiles, the Paper Dolls queer the linearity of diaspora, never quite succeeding at “[respecting the] borders, positions, rules”¹⁷ that secure Israel’s tenuous existence.

The colonial, gendered, and economic matrices on which the Paper Dolls thrive secure ephemeral selves that emerge from “a process of materialization [stabilizing] over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and . . . matter.”¹⁸ In a sense, their femininity is constructed on competing national, global, and personal interests. By working at the margins of Israel’s caregiving economy, they expose asymmetries between producing/consumer markets that render specific bodies beholden to another.

Jason DeParle traces contemporary Filipino migration to the labor-export policies implemented by the Marcos regime in the 1970s in order to address “soaring unemployment, a Communist insurgency and growing urban unrest.”¹⁹ Doctors and nurses flowed into North America while engineers and construction workers flooded the oil fields of Arab nations. As East and Southeast Asian economies flourished, demands for domestic labor increased. So much have global trends defined Philippine economic policies that “from Jan. 1 to Nov. 21, 2006, a total of 1.01 million OFWs [overseas foreign workers] left to work in over 180 countries, representing a growth rate of 12.4 percent.”²⁰ For Raquel Z. Ordoñez, labor exportation privileges domestic work as the most efficient avenue to revive a sputtering economy. This “feminizes” labor, with droves of women—un/skilled, professional, mothers, daughters—leaving home to attend to the world’s domestic upkeep. Men would follow suit, rarely far behind. Ordoñez asserts that where an “earlier wave of overseas workers . . . consisted predominantly of male construction workers, the OCW population has recently become increasingly female . . . 52% of all OCWs [are] women.”²¹ Such trends have relegated Filipinos to the domestic sphere. OCWs reinscribe an insidious misogyny that constrains developing economies to the periphery of progress.

Arbitrating interests of home/exile, the Paper Dolls find themselves forced to affirm the domestication of migrant work, participating in the further emasculation of nation. They forge ambivalent spaces that set in relief the precariousness of their lives, abject bodies in between, threatened by expulsion and risks of possibility.

UNFURLING SPACE AND ECCLESIAL BELONGING

Therefore, if we are to be able to speak about God,
we must metaphorically rebaptize and extend all our words.

—Edward Schillebeeckx,
*Church: The Human Story of God*²²

In Christian theology, the word “church” can be traced to both the Greek *kyriake*—“belonging to the Lord”—and the Latin/Greek *ekklesia/ecclesia*—the “political assembly of citizens” in Greek city-states that later referred to a collective of urban Jews who followed Jesus’s teachings.²³ There are multiple tensions in “church” that allude to local/empire, secular/religious, Jew/Gentile. Embedded in its articulation are direct engagements with *belonging* and *space*.²⁴ Transcending the limits of social order, members of *ekklesia* reinhabit (past) witness to God to herald temporal and spatial openings of a world and time “to come.” To speak of church is to stand in between, the here and the not yet.²⁵ For theologian Elizabeth Stuart, a critical reading of church rehabilitates early queer impulses that resist stability.²⁶ Pointing as much to the future as to the present, ecclesial energies draw from the potency of memory—*anamnesis*—to reanimate a present belonging.²⁷

If church functions as a mechanism for belonging, it evokes dynamics of citizenship that inscribes/expels bodies to/from nation. For Judith Butler, citizens coexist with stateless bodies to buttress national enclosures.²⁸ Nations exist insofar as they are capable of differentiating in/appropriate bodies. Stateless bodies, in a sense, magnify the hope of a belonging “to come.” They do not, *cannot*, speak of place. In resonant ways, Edward Schillebeeckx intimates a similar trajectory among early Christians—themselves marginal bodies at the edge of the Roman Empire. For Schillebeeckx, “the *ekklesia* . . . [has always] understood itself as the eschatological people of God.”²⁹ Ecclesial belonging points to futurity. To articulate a theology of church, therefore, is to attend to the arbitrariness of the present. *Ekklesia* speaks as much of hope as the melancholia of an impossible arrival.³⁰ Weaving between citizenship/exile and present/future, the church enters diasporic time. In its failure to secure belonging, the church teeters at the cusp of eschatological fulfillment, always on the verge of coming out. Ecclesial belonging is *queer*.

Among baklâ, coming out is imagined as the “unfurling of one’s cape”—*pagladlad*—the playful unveiling of a real versus imagined self. *Pagladlad* alludes to the spectacle of a beauty pageant, the

metaphorical stage on which one flouts/flaunts, reveals/conceals a constructed femininity.³¹ Intimating a body that is both real/imagined, *pagladlad* evokes the ephemerality of stateless bodies grasping at an impossible belonging. *Pagladlad* thus disrupts integrity of place, akin to moments that Jean-Luc Nancy describes as *éclosure*—larva emerging from pupa, life breaking through the womb.³² This tension between containment and unfurling illuminates an *opening* that is as “penetrable as a cloud.”³³ As a mechanism for self-consolidation, *pagladlad* irrupts the integrity of place, always grasping for what is to come, the *more*, within a hair’s touch of transcendence.³⁴

Among Filipinos, diaspora compels a reconsideration of transcendence outside/beyond conceptions of place/space. Undulating between home/displacement, diasporic bodies trace ecclesial spaces that “[confront] threat, violence, and annihilation, time and again.”³⁵ Metaphors of church, faith, and community thus require a “re-baptism” that is able to intuit the porous, transtemporal unfurlings that constitute Filipino lives and bodies.

UTTERING ECCLESIAL POSSIBILITIES

Perhaps Queer people receive
A special sense of divine vocation or wanderlust
that makes of them un-institutionalised, restless nomads.

—Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*³⁶

Living in between, abjects who never quite reach home, Filipino migrants unfurl bodies queered by transnational displacement. For Marcella Althaus-Reid, queerness and wanderlust occupy two sides of the same coin, a “vocation” toward restlessness.³⁷ Diaspora and queerness speak of an estranged body that is both exile and host—self thrown *against* self. Bereft of stability, queer nomads articulate an ethic of coming out that grasps for unguaranteed openings toward futurity.

In one of the most poignant scenes in the documentary, the Paper Dolls gather in a circle before the pounding walls of a Tel Aviv gay club. Standing at the wings, seconds before their stage performance, they bow their heads and utter a prayer in Tagalog. Beneath billowing gowns and voluminous coifs, they hold their silence, oblivious to bacchanalia, beholden only to God. This imposition of sacred words on a highly erotic space articulates unspeakable abundance. Their supplication momentarily disrupts signifiers of estrangement that expel them

as odd, stateless caregivers. They pray in a language foreign to the place, well beyond appropriate time. For the Paper Dolls, prayers of home reconsolidate an elusive space. More than this, they rehabilitate the past into the present, praying dismembered selves into possibility.³⁸ Shared memory engenders empathy, a future forgiveness, even the possibility of forgetting.³⁹ And so, for these Dolls, prayers—like liturgical practices—reincarnate home.⁴⁰ By retrieving past into the present, they assuage the tug of displacement.

For Butler, memory compels an ethic that intersects citizenship and statelessness. The collective memory of “the ones who do not belong, who had to flee, or who fled into containment” secures the arbitrary boundaries of nation.⁴¹ Memory sustains conflicting narratives that threaten integrity of space. This conflict obligates one to lean into the words of the *stranger*, the “ones who had to flee.” In a sense, Butler echoes Schillebeeckx’s vision—and its attendant ethic—of an *ekklesia* that cannot but foster a promised *belonging*. To privilege the memory of those “who do not belong” comprises the very grounding of eschatological possibility.

Diaspora hedges self against self to unveil the porousness of time and space. More than a metaphor for church, diaspora complicates the eschatological promise for which ecclesial spaces exist. Scaffolded on binaries of past/future, in/out, stability/expulsion, diaspora points to moments “to come.” Thus diaspora breathes the same hope that invigorates the church. Always flirting with belonging, the church thrives in exile, a queer body doomed to negotiate in/out. Giorgio once said that as a Paper Doll, he cannot but stand in between truth and illusion. But it is this ability to muddle space that illuminates most intimately the kind of hope that enlivens diaspora. Whether on stage or immersed in the daily travails of migrant life, the Paper Dolls cull *pathos*, sympathy, and even love before and with whom they work. Never quite here or there, they utter an unending exile fueled by the promise of fulfillment. It is this relentless hope that urges them closer to home, to possibility, within a hair’s touch of transcendence. Holding strangeness and hospitality in tension, Filipino diasporic bodies unfurl toward openings.⁴² Specters of un/belonging, these nomads illuminate a collective hope, an *ekklesia*, a church grasping for an im/possible arrival.

NOTES

1. *Balikbayan* (Tagalog, n.; “to return home”)—Balikbayan is the nomenclature designated to overseas Filipinos who return to their homeland,

- either temporarily or permanently. Recognizing the significance of their remittances to the national coffers, the Philippine government has formulated incentives to simultaneously push Filipinos to leave home *and* encourage their return after earning much-needed dollars abroad. See Jason De Parle, "A Good Provider Is One Who Leaves," *New York Times*, April 22, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/22/magazine/22Workers.t.html?ei=5070&en=168444ffc43faa35&ex=1177905600&emc=etal&pagewanted=all>.
2. Yen Le Espiritu, *Home Bound: Filipino American Lives across Cultures, Communities, and Countries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 4.
 3. Allan Punzalan Isaac, *American Tropics: Articulating Filipino America*, Critical American Studies Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 10–11.
 4. Patrick S. Cheng, *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology* (New York: Seabury Books, 2011), 3.
 5. Martín Hugo Córdova Quero, "Friendship with Benefits: A Queer Reading of Aelred of Rievaulx and His Theology of Friendship," in *The Sexual Theologian: Essays on Sex, God and Politics*, ed. Marcella Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 28.
 6. In Tagalog, *baklâ* defines the hypereffeminate comportment of gay men. With the penetration of global narratives into Filipino urban spaces, *baklâ* evolved into a Filipino version of "gay," sexuality defined by desire. See J. Neil and C. García, *Philippine Gay Culture: The Last Thirty Years: Binabae to Baklâ, Silabis to MSM* (Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1996).
 7. Tomer Heymann, *Paper Dolls*, documentary (Heymann Brothers Film, 2006).
 8. These aliases are feminized versions of their names: Francisco, Salvador, Jacob, and Eduardo.
 9. Michael Sepidoza Campos, "The 'Baklâ': Gendered Religious Performance in Filipino Cultural Spaces," in *Queer Religion: Homosexuality in Modern Religious History*, ed. Donald L Boisvert and Jay Emerson Johnson (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2012).
 10. Gary Kramer, "Paper Dolls: Filipino Trannies in Israel," *San Francisco Bay Times*, April 5, 2007, http://www.sfbaytimes.com/?sec=article&article_id=6275.
 11. Manalansán asserts that "*baklâ* [symbolizes] Filipino queerness while *gay* [symbolizes] white queerness." See Martin F Manalansán, *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*, Perverse Modernities Series (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 24.
 12. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

13. Butler defines “iterability” as a “regularized and constrained repetition of norms.” *Ibid.*, 93.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Taxi driver, interview with Tomer Heymann. See Heymann, *Paper Dolls*.
16. Judith Butler, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 177.
17. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, *European Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.
18. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 11.
19. De Parle, “A Good Provider Is One Who Leaves.”
20. Elvira Mata, “Tips on How to Be a Successful Overseas Worker,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, January 14, 2007, http://globalnation.inquirer.net/news/news/view_article.php?article_id=43331.
21. OCW pertains to “overseas contract workers.” See Raquel Z. Ordoñez, “Mail-Order Brides,” in *Filipino Americans: Transformation and Identity*, ed. Maria P. P. Root (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997), 135–36.
22. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 85.
23. *Ibid.*, 146.
24. In her introduction to this volume, Susanna Snyder illuminates the original context of *ekklesia* as a “political assembly of citizens” in Greek city-states “called” to make decisions for the community. She traces a movement from being *called to assemble* and then *called to step out* once more.
25. Theologian and monk Leo Rudloff has often described the monastery in similar terms: a place in between the world and God’s Reign, an “embassy.” See John Hammond, *A Benedictine Legacy of Peace: The Life of Abbot Leo A. Rudloff* (Weston, VT: Benedictine Foundation of the State of Vermont, 2005), 109.
26. Elizabeth Stuart, *Gay and Lesbian Theologies: Repetitions with Critical Difference* (Aldershot, Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2003), 91.
27. Joanna Pierce, “Anamnesis,” in *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies*, ed. Orlando O. Espín and James B. Nickoloff (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007).
28. Butler, *Parting Ways*, 148–49.
29. Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 156.
30. Elizabeth Stuart, “Sacramental Flesh,” in *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body*, ed. Gerard Loughlin (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 65.
31. For further discussion of *pagladlad*, see J. Neil C. García and Danton Remoto, eds., *Ladlad: An Anthology of Philippine Gay Writing* (Pasig, Metro Manila, Philippines: Anvil, 1994).

32. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 158. Emphasis mine.
33. Catherine Keller, "The Cloud of the Impossible: Embodiment and Apophasis," in *Apophasic Bodies: Negative Theology, Incarnation, and Relationality*, 1st ed., ed. Chris Boesel and Catherine Keller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 31. Emphasis mine.
34. Mayra Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007).
35. Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 95.
36. Marcella Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God* (London: Routledge, 2003), 49.
37. Ibid.
38. Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 50–51.
39. Ibid., 193.
40. Andrea Bieler and David Plüss, "In This Moment of Utter Vulnerability: Tracing Gender in Presiding" (unpublished manuscript, Berkeley, CA, 2010), 9.
41. Butler, *Parting Ways*, 180.
42. Michael Sepidoza Campos, "Embracing the Stranger: Reflections on the Ambivalent Hospitality of LGBTIQ Catholics," in *More than a Monologue: Sexual Diversity and the Catholic Church*, 1st ed., Catholic Practice in North America, ed. Christine Firer Hinze, J. Patrick Hornbeck II, and Michael A. Norko (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 164–72.

PART III



NEW ECCLESIAL STRUCTURES

CHAPTER 12



CYBERCHURCH AND FILIPIN@ MIGRANTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST¹

Agnes M. Brazal and Randy Odchigue

Allan is a Methodist Christian who works in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. He used to go regularly to a Sunday Holy Communion service in the Philippines, but he can no longer do this because Christians are prohibited from worshiping publicly here. Those who do worship risk incarceration and deportation. He once participated in an “underground” church worship service that was held in the basement of a house. Congregants were fetched from their homes and brought inside the venue so that nobody would notice the big gathering taking place inside. Because it was risky, he stopped joining this underground gathering. For his spiritual nourishment, he now finds the Internet most helpful, including the sharing of quotations on Facebook and listening to worship concerts on YouTube—especially healing concerts. He also gets online spiritual direction from his father, a Methodist pastor. This is irregular, though, as it takes place only when he visits his sister’s home, where there is a laptop and Internet connection. One problem he finds with participating in an online Eucharist is the five-hour time difference. It would be better, he said, if the worship was videotaped and uploaded, so that migrant workers like him could access it in their time off.

Based on case studies of eight overseas Filipin@ contract workers undertaken in 2013, this chapter explores the experience of “cyberchurch” of migrants in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia and United

Arab Emirates) and the ways in which the Internet helps address their spiritual and religious needs.² By spiritual needs, we are referring to personal spiritual enrichment such as the possibility of reading the Bible or accessing spiritual guidance, while religious needs refer more to institutional religious obligations such as communal worship or private confession. This chapter examines how the traditional notion of church is challenged by these experiences of migrants to move from being simply geographically located to becoming more “liquid” in the form of a cyberchurch. Cyberchurch (or cyber-church) has been defined, from a ministry perspective, as enabling “worship and Christian education, evangelization and community on the World Wide Web.”³ It may or may not be linked to a concrete local church or denomination and need not be engaged in all these ministries. It is distinguished from the simple web pages of churches by its interactive nature and intent to form relationships among members.

The migrant respondents working in Saudi Arabia were Allan, a graphic artist; Brenda, a caregiver; Carlos, a mechanic; and Dante, an engineer. Those based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were Efren, an electrical maintenance engineer; Flor, a company-secretary-purchaser-officer; Gloria, a shadow teacher; and Henry, a machine operator.⁴ By 2013, they had worked in the Middle East for an average of ten years (ranging from three months to twenty years). Coming from divergent educational backgrounds, three of them were single, one married and without children, while the rest were married with one to three children. Among the eight respondents, only Allan was not a Catholic. Before migrating for work, three of them were active in church activities, three were regular in their Sunday Mass participation, and the remaining two occasionally went to Sunday Mass. In the migration context, however, all of them expressed their need to be nourished by prayer, Christian education, worship, devotions, and/or the sacraments.⁵

EXPERIENCE OF CHURCH IN SAUDI ARABIA

It is estimated that there are roughly one million foreign Christians in Saudi Arabia; however, religious practices are severely restricted by the Wahhabist-controlled state.⁶ Yet, while Christian migrants cannot bring a Bible, rosary, or other religious objects with them, religious websites are generally not blocked. Allan had to rely on the Our Daily Bread website for his Scripture readings, and he did Bible sharing with his girlfriend in the Philippines via Skype; together they read the Bible and shared their reflections with each other.⁷ Officially, the

state of Saudi Arabia prohibits public Christian gatherings but permits worship in private houses. The Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice and personnel from the Ministry of Interior are free to conduct raids of private religious gatherings of non-Muslims.⁸ In June 1998, 31 Christian migrants, the majority of whom were Filipin@s, were arrested for conducting worship in their residences. It is said that the royal family of Saudi Arabia is more tolerant of freedom of private worship, but Wahhabi fundamentalists had pressured the interior ministry and religious police to adopt a harder stance. Those arrested were released but deported.⁹

While Carlos could not go to Mass due to the ban on public worship for non-Muslims, his employer did not prohibit him from using the Internet. This he did prudently inside his room—a room that he shared with Filipino Muslims and one he referred to as a “born-again Christian,”¹⁰ whom he sometimes engaged in an informal conversation about God’s Word. He shared religious posts with his Facebook friends. This helped him to cope with loneliness and to remain steadfast in his faith in the midst of pressures to become a Muslim, having been invited no less than ten times to convert by his Muslim coworkers. Others succumbed to the pressure from employers and coworkers because they received privileges such as better protection, faster promotions, opportunities to marry more wives, and, for the undocumented, the chance to legalize their stay.¹¹

In contrast, Dante and Brenda were not able to access any church activity online. Dante explained that religious websites seemed to be blocked in his place in Riyadh, while Brenda, who was given only two hours off per week, was strictly prohibited by her employer from accessing the Internet. Brenda’s situation was not unlike the condition of other domestic workers in the Middle East, who work an average of more than one hundred hours weekly without overtime pay.¹²

EXPERIENCE OF CHURCH IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

In contrast to other Middle East countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran, where Christians are restricted from public worship, if not persecuted, the UAE, in the words of Jonathan Aitkin, is “an oasis of tolerance.” Up to 10 percent of its population today is Christian. Fostered by the government’s policy of tolerance toward migrants, Christian congregations in the UAE have doubled in the past years.¹³

All the respondents attended Mass in the UAE. Flor laughingly proclaimed that she was a Friday Christian. Friday was their day off

and thus the time Christians could celebrate the Eucharist. But even though a number of Christian churches existed, these were often far from migrants' residences.¹⁴ When unable to go to Mass, Flor worshipped through the medium of Sunday television¹⁵ or the Internet via YouTube.¹⁶ She got in touch with her local parish in the Philippines when there were solicitations for church repair and construction and for needs related to the town fiesta celebration including the provision of a sound system, food, and sustaining the annual procession of saints, to which their family has been devoted. Gloria likewise connected with her parish, which had its own Facebook account and was active in the Vincentian Popular Mission Facebook group.¹⁷

Among the UAE respondents, two used the Internet to find information on Mass schedules and reflections on the daily and other scriptural readings, while the other two employed it for more interactive activities (e.g., Eucharist online, participating in a Facebook group, counseling, popular devotions).

LIMITATIONS, DIFFICULTIES, AND HOPES

All the respondents based in Saudi Arabia affirmed that access to online Eucharist would be very helpful for them, having been deprived of this sacramental nourishment for a long time. For the UAE migrants who were freer to gather for public worship, Eucharist online was a supplement for the times when they were not able to go to Mass because their church was far from their residence. But Flor noted, "It still feels there is something lacking in my prayer." She cited the absence of a physical receiving and eating of bread in an online Eucharist as well as her preference for being blessed physically with water. Gloria added that cyberchurches are "downgraded . . . participation in the church." For her, being able to continue her ministry as lector in a concrete church in UAE is what she deemed to be full participation. In Heidi Campbell's study of online Christian communities, some members have likewise noted limitations related to the lack of concrete embodied expressions such as physical touch or hugs and nonverbal exchanges. This leads the interaction to feel like an "incomplete communication."¹⁸

Even when Eucharist was available online, there was still the problem of the five-hour time difference between the Philippines and the UAE (e.g., 9 a.m. in Manila is 4 a.m. in Dubai), making it difficult for them to join live online worship. Allan suggested that the worship service be videotaped and uploaded so that migrants could participate

at the time and day of their choosing. An additional problem raised by Efren was the limited or slow nature of the Internet connection.

Regarding e-confession, Gloria was optimistic that this would be of great help for those who live miles away from a confessor. Henry further pointed out that “this is necessary so the person will not stay long in a state of sin. I just hope that the confidentiality of the sacrament in the Internet will be protected.” Flor similarly held apprehensions about privacy if confession took place through the medium of the Internet.

Both Henry and Flor, however, saw no reason that churches could not provide spiritual guidance and counseling online in the way that some autochthonous religious groups in the Philippines have already been doing (e.g., *Iglesia ni Kristo*, MCGI).¹⁹ Henry proposed that devotional practices such as the Pabasa²⁰ should be accessible as well online.

BEYOND THE SOLID CHURCH

Though Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have different state policies toward non-Muslim religions, in both countries, migrant workers find helpful online resources that deepen their faith and allow them to virtually celebrate the Eucharist with the Christian community. Members of parishes that have a Facebook or email group are able to connect with activities back home in these “online communities.” Email lists or Facebook groups become communities only when members invest effort and emotion in the discussion resulting in a feeling of attachment among the members.²¹ One sees this in Gloria’s Facebook participation: “I’m a member and a frequent visitor of Vincentian Popular Mission account . . . Thanks to social media, I am updated and have communication with you and the rest of the missionaries.”

These foregoing experiences of being church in the virtual world indicate shifts in ecclesiological consciousness and are indicative of the changing landscape that Zygmunt Bauman refers to as liquid modernity—a “condition in which social forms (structures that limit individual choices, institutions that guard repetitions of routines, patterns of acceptable behavior) can no longer (and are not expected to) keep their shape for long.”²² In other words, the usual modes of organizing institutions are undergoing radical transformation. And the idea of the church being a social institution is not exempt from these changes. The experiences of the migrants cited earlier provide concrete examples of the solid institutional presence of the church

giving way to more fluid expressions of faith as found in cyberspace. One might even argue that the deterritorialized experience of Christian migrants in Muslim countries coincides with the tactics of faith they embrace in using cybertechnology to cross physical boundaries of nations that often are not supportive of their Christian faith option. The term “tactic” here is employed in the same sense as that of Michel de Certeau, who highlights what ordinary people do in their everyday practice to subvert the regulative strategies employed by those in the institutional locations of power. The deterritorialized migrant finds herself in the “strategic grids” of civil and religious rules imposed to regulate her actions in order for her to conform to specific social-religious-cultural-economic demands in her new context. Cyberspace is where the migrant tactically practices her faith and navigates through and beyond the regulative mechanisms.²³ These tactics—offering meaning and subverting “solid” boundaries—give way to a third space beyond the physical. This third space is nonetheless real for the practitioners of “cyberfaith.”²⁴

Framing the experience of faith from this perspective, one urgent task for the theologian is to rethink whether there might be other forms of being church beyond the solid institutional parameters around which “being church” is decidedly defined. UK-based Anglican author Pete Ward claims that with the coming of liquid modernity, the church as a sociological concept seems to experience dissolution in its institutional religiosity and, as such, is challenged to recognize and nurture de-institutionalized forms of Christian faith.²⁵ Ward’s invitation to Christians to discover and advance diverse and alternative practices of being church in contemporary culture squares with the experiences of the migrants who use Facebook and YouTube and/or organize themselves into online Christian communities in order to nourish their faith as they toil in a foreign land.²⁶ One sees here that while Ward is socially, culturally, and contextually situated differently, his framework resonates with the experience of Filipin@ Christians working in the Middle East.

TOWARD A (LIQUID) CYBERCHURCH OF MIGRANTS

This preceding point brings us to the challenges that Christian migrant experiences, particularly in the Middle East, pose to our solid churches—that is, those churches that have been historically and institutionally in existence with established canonical, theological positions and with entrenched governance structures. First and foremost is the

need for local churches to expand their ministries on the Internet to cater to international migrants and other peoples on the move. While many church institutions have developed websites, most of these are still of the Web 1.0 type, consisting solely of postings of homilies, speeches, and articles. Interactive sites that foster online communities of support will pave the way for cyberchurches that “enable basic fellowship and friendship to be maintained.”²⁷

In line with this, in January 2014, the members of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines participated in a conference and skills training on the use of social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter). Facilitated by Vatican Radio director and vice president of the Center for Research and Education in Communication Sean Patrick-Lovett, this seminar addressed to senior church leaders was the first initiative of its kind in the world.²⁸

Second, some of the respondents identified Eucharist and confession as the two sacraments they needed and wished to avail online. While there is not yet an official theological or canonical consensus for allowing sacraments to be ministered online, there is a need to reexamine how to address the sacramental needs of those who, for serious reasons, cannot participate personally in a concrete Eucharistic celebration for a considerable length of time. Can the role of Eucharist online in these cases be acknowledged? Archbishop John Foley, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, once argued in favor of airing the Catholic Mass in broadcast media, “defending the practice against critics who say the Mass by definition is a community event and therefore should not be available in the isolation of one’s living room.”²⁹ Similarly, in a situation when a priest is inaccessible, what is the best pastoral response to a migrant’s need for confession?³⁰

In this context, Campbell’s model of the online Christian community as an “altar of remembrance” seems apt. The cyberchurch as an “altar of remembrance” is a place or a site where, through various activities and rituals, one can relive the moments when one has personally experienced God’s presence and gracious goodness.³¹ She writes, “As an altar of remembrance the internet can be a place to reconnect with experiences of God by communicating to others with similar experiences and convictions.”³² This resonates with what Dante mused when noting the importance of the online Eucharist: “That is where I will remember our family going to church in the Philippines!”

An altar of remembrance further suggests the need for these memories to be nourished occasionally by communal face-to-face encounters when possible and even by prophetic acts of Christians who risk their

jobs and safety to gather together in person to celebrate the Eucharist, in the manner of the persecuted Christians in the first century. There is a danger in the tendency of the liquid church to decouple Christian signifiers from concrete, face-to-face, experiential engagements. But it appears that throughout history, the space where the subversive core of Christianity is best seen is in the empirical praxis.

Third, the question of ecclesiality—what constitutes being church—is an important consideration not only in ecumenical dialogues but also in discussions pertaining to liquid churches. While none among the respondents is a member of a cyberchurch that is not linked to an institutional church, the latter may increasingly become relevant as more migrants get to know and find nourishment in them.

It appears that the most comprehensive frameworks on the issue of ecclesiality from the Catholic perspective are laid down in the documents of the Second Vatican Council in general and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SSC), *Lumen Gentium*, and *Christus Dominus* in particular.³³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 41 draws from the ancient formula of ecclesiality laid down in the letter of Ignatius of Antioch to the Smyrnaeans.³⁴ This means that the theological integrity of church is manifested when the people of God are gathered in the Eucharist presided over by a bishop.³⁵ SSC 42 defends the ecclesiality of parishes as Eucharistic communities within the ambit of the diocesan life.³⁶ *Christus Dominus* 11 maintains that a diocese is a *portio* (not *pars*) that possesses the constitutive elements that make up the whole.³⁷ Joseph Komonchak points out that the texts in Vatican II, especially *Lumen Gentium* 23 and 26, offer a theological vision regarding the self-constitution of the church. The constitutive principles are the call of God, the grace of the Holy Spirit, the preaching of the Gospel, the celebration of the Eucharist, the fellowship of the community in love, and the apostolic ministry.³⁸ This understanding of ecclesiality, while still much debated among ecumenists, presents a major dilemma for liquid churches in cyberspace because obviously during the promulgation of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, fellowship of the community did not explicitly take into account cybercommunities. Furthermore, we have not even begun to scratch the surface of the debate on the issues of the matter and form of sacraments, how apostolic ministry is conceived in cyberspace, and so on.

It seems, however, that these “criteria” proclamations are complemented with powerful “open” statements such as those found in *Unitatis Redintegratio* 3: “Some, even very many, of the most important elements or goods by which, taken together, the Church is built up and given life can exist outside the visible boundaries of the

Catholic Church: the written word of God, the life of grace, faith, hope, and charity and other inner gifts of the Holy Spirit, and visible elements.” Together with *Lumen Gentium* 8—the text that places a buffer on the identification of the church of Christ with the Catholic Church³⁹—the statement in UR 3 provides some directions for reflection regarding the ecclesiality of the liquid churches in cyberspace. While it may be a tall order for cyberchurches to claim that the church of Christ “subsists” in them, it might be possible to contend that while only some elements or traces of sanctification may be found in them, that is all that is necessary given the liquid, fleeting, temporary, and pilgrim nature of their being church (as befitting the liquid, pilgrim, wobbly security and wounded lives of migrant workers).

CONCLUSION

The promise of cyberchurch lies in its capacity to reach out to those who are cut off from their physical faith communities. They are liquid and provisionary, but they respond to a lacuna where migrants look for a space to encounter the sacred in their deterritorialized lives often bereft of concrete communal religious solidarity. Even then, cyberchurches as “imagined communities”⁴⁰ of faith are churches that should not be so liquid as to preclude flesh and blood solidarity, especially in terms of forging collective prophetic praxis when and where it is called for. That being said, it is equally essential to make an appeal for conversation and negotiation surrounding the ways in which cyberchurches carry within them pathways and elements for sanctification. After all, the church is not identical to the Reign of God. The pilgrim church does not rest content on its claims and laurels because it possesses the fullness of salvific elements. Rather, it humbly submits itself as a docile sign and instrument at the service of God’s salvation wherever it needs to be given flesh—indeed, wherever it is needed most.

NOTES

1. The symbol @ is used instead of *o/a* for Filipin@ to avoid the latter’s gender-specific connotation.
2. The case studies were undertaken by Brazal’s students in her 2013 classes on “Migration: Theological and Ethical Perspectives.” The eight cases in this study were selected from a bigger pool of interviewees to illustrate different perspectives and experiences in two countries—Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The migrants who were on

- vacation in the Philippines were interviewed personally, but most were interviewed online via Skype and chat through Facebook, WeChat, or Yahoo Messenger. Their responses were written out verbatim including pauses, laughter, and so on. The respondents are students' friends or relatives who are working in these countries. The main interview questions focused on how people use the Internet to link with their parish/church in the Philippines and/or with a virtual church as well as to fulfill spiritual needs (i.e., personal prayer/meditation, group praise/worship, religious pilgrimage, spiritual direction, bible sharing) and the limitations/difficulties they encountered. They were also asked if they thought it would be helpful if sacraments were offered online, why or why not, and if so, to identify which sacrament. Finally, they were asked to narrate one or two most significant experiences of church participation online.
3. "Cyber-Church," <http://toledowiki.net/cyber-church>, accessed April 2014. The term "cyberchurch" (without a hyphen) was first used to refer to "an electronically linked group of believers aiming to reproduce in cyberspace aspects of conventional church life." It was also used to refer to "the body of all Christians who interact using global computer networks." Cyberchurches in this sense have no link to a concrete institutional structure. See Patrick Dixon, *Cyberchurch, Christianity and the Internet* (Eastbourne, UK: Kingsway Publications, 1997), 17.
 4. Pseudonyms are used to protect respondents' anonymity.
 5. The increased importance of religion for people in migration has been validated by various researches. Jacqueline Hagan, "Faith for the Journey: Religion as a Resource for Migrants," in *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*, ed. Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campese (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2008), 8; Amira Ahmed, "'I Need Work': The Multiple Roles of the Church, Ranking and Religious Piety among Domestic Workers in Egypt," *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 11, nos. 3–4 (September–December 2010): 373–74; Caroline Jeannerat, "Of Lizards, Misfortune and Deliverance: Pentecostal Soteriology in the Life of a Migrant," *African Studies* 68, no. 2 (August 2009): 251–71; Rosalina Mira and Lois Ann Lorentzen, "Women, Migration, and the Pentecostal Experience," *Peace Review* 14, no. 4 (2002): 421–25; Teresa Garcia-Muñoz and Shoshana Neuman, "Is Religiosity of Immigrants a Bridge or a Buffer in the Process of Integration? A Comparative Study of Europe and the United States" (IZA DP no. 6384, February 2012), <http://ftp.iza.org/dp6384.pdf>, accessed July 2012.
 6. Shane McGinley, "Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Refutes Reports It Plans to Build First Church in Saudi Arabia," <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/egypt-s-coptic-orthodox-refutes-reports-it-plans-build-first-church-in-saudi-arabia-540212.html>, accessed June 2014.
 7. Our Daily Bread Daily Devotional, <http://www.christ.com/devotional-ourdailybread.html>, accessed April 2014.

8. David Aikman, "The Worldwide Attack on Christians: From Egypt to North Korea, an Unlikely Minority Suffers a Plague of Persecution," *Commentary*, February 2012, 39.
9. David W. Hendon, Dwight Allman, and Donald E. Greco, "Notes on Church-State Affairs: Saudi Arabia," *Journal of Church & State* 40, no. 4 (Autumn 1998). In Yemen and Saudi Arabia, Christians from different denominations, composed of long-term residents and migrants mostly from Nigeria, the Philippines, Indonesia, Korea, India, or East Africa, gather in secret house-churches to worship. See David Pinault, "Hidden Prayer in Yemen Saudi: Islam and the Problem of Religious Intolerance," *America Press*, December 7, 2009, 12. A 2011 report from the US State Department of Religious Freedom indicates an al-Qaeda linked murder of non-Muslim personnel of a Western company. See Aikman, "The Worldwide Attack on Christians," 38.
10. In the Philippines, the term "born-again Christians" refers to those who have received Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior (thus "born again") and are now nondenominational Christians.
11. See also Santosh Digal, "Christian Filipino Migrants Forced to Convert to Islam," *AsiaNews.it*, January 28, 2010, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Christian-Filipino-migrants-forced-to-convert-to-Islam-17478.html>, accessed April 2014.
12. Moreno-Fontes Chammartin, "Women Migrant Workers' Protection in Arab League States," in *Gender and Migration in Arab States: The Case of Domestic Workers*, ed. Simel Esim and Monica Smith (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2004), 18n3. Around a third of those interviewed in one study said that they have had no contact at all with friends and relatives while they were living in the Gulf states. *Ibid.*, 20n3.
13. Jonathan Aitkin, "An Oasis of Tolerance," *American Spectator*, March 2013, 46.
14. There are nine churches in the UAE (<http://www.pinoyuae.com/pages/churches/>), six of them Catholic (two in Abu Dhabi and one each in Dubai, Jebel Ali, Sharjah, and Al Ain); http://www.thecatholicdirectory.com/directory.cfm?fuseaction=show_country&country=AE, accessed September 7, 2015.
15. This refers to the delayed telecast of the Sunday television Mass at the Philippine ABS-CBN TFC channel.
16. Examples are the "Sunday TV Mass with Father Fernando Suarez, MMMP (February 16, 2014)," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWYkqMqijI8>, and "Sunday TV Mass—May 25, 2014," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFGZoHbIGZk>, both accessed September 7, 2015. Note the comments from overseas Filipino workers thanking the Pauline sisters for uploading the Mass, expressing how helpful this is for them.

17. Vincentian Popular Mission, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/353686838044587>, accessed August 2015.
18. Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, 147.
19. The Iglesia ni Kristo, an indigenous Christian church, had in 2010 5,000 local congregations and more than 600 in 111 countries and 7 territories; <http://iglesianicristowebsite.com/>, accessed July 2014. The Members Church of God International (MCGI), through its radio/television program *Dating Daan* (Old Path), which was first webcast and video-streamed in 1999, now boasts as well a membership of 5,000 local congregations and more than 500 chapters in countries in various continents; <https://adherent.wordpress.com/2009/06/18/ang-dating-daan-members-cry-foul-to-gma-docu-against-bro-eli-soriano/>, accessed July 2014.
20. Pabasa is a Filipino Catholic Lenten ritual where the life and passion of Jesus Christ is read or sung. Several videos of Pabasa can be found on YouTube, but they do not invite participation as no text is provided.
21. Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1993), 5. Online Christian communities are created either by an institution (e.g., parish/ diocese) or by individuals as they search online for a group discussion on a particular theme. Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online: We Are One in the Network* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 68.
22. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 1.
23. See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
24. The opposite of the virtual is not the real but the concrete. While the virtual has often been identified with digital technologies, it refers more broadly to objects or activities that are not tangible such as a play or a digital file. Though not concrete material objects, the play and the e-file are nevertheless real. Rob Shields, *The Virtual* (London: Routledge, 2003), 2. In *Second Life*, a successful role-playing game online as it exemplifies real virtuality, one finds churches like the Metropolitan Community Church, which provides an ecumenical service each week. See Rev. Dr. BK Hipsher, <http://mccchurch.org/ministries/ecumenism-interreligious/our-team/>, accessed November 2014.
25. See Pete Ward, *Liquid Church* (Peabody, MA: Paternoster, 2002).
26. Kees de Groot, "The Church in Liquid Modernity: A Sociological and Theological Exploration of a Liquid Church," *International Journal for the Study of Christian Church* 6, no. 1 (2006): 91–103.
27. Dixon, *Cyberchurch, Christianity and the Internet*, 143.
28. "Filipino Bishops Step into Cyberspace," <http://www.tempo.com.ph/2014/02/filipino-bishops-step-into-cyberspace/#.U0HvAqiSyms>, accessed April 2014.

29. This is based on an article in NCR, April 17, 1998, cited in "Official Says Internet Cannot Offer Sacraments," *National Catholic Reporter*, June 15, 2001, 7.
30. Some overseas contract workers come home to the Philippines every year, others every two years, and still others every six years or more.
31. This particular emphasis on remembrance might provide a space of ecumenical convergence among Christian traditions that look to the Eucharist as a ritual of remembrance—for instance, the Reformed Tradition. See, for example, Martha L. Moore-Keish, *Do This in Remembrance of Me: A Ritual Approach to Reformed Eucharist Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008). Moreover, the emphasis on memory and hope has been taken up as an important theme by the World Council of Churches to buttress its position against violence. Here, Eucharist as memorial becomes a resource for hope amid continuing violence and suffering. On this point, see Harry Huebner, "The Politics of Memory and Hope," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 76, no. 1 (January 2002): 35–48.
32. Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, 163.
33. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church], Vatican Website, November 21, 1964, sec. 23 and 26, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation], *Christus Dominus* [Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church], in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, OP (Northport, NY: Costello, 1984), 350–440, 1–282, 564–610, respectively.
34. St. Ignatius of Antioch, "Epistle to the Smyrnaeans, Chapter 8," in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: Clark, 1996), 89–90.
35. Richard Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making* (Mahwah: Paulist, 2006), 62.
36. Emmanuel Lanne, "The Local Church: Its Catholicity and Apostolicity," *One in Christ* 6 (1970): 287–313, 298.
37. *Ibid.*, 301–2. In relation to the debate between *portio* and *pars*, see Joseph Komonchak, "The Church Universal as the Communion of Churches," in *Where Does the Church Stand?*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Concilium* 1981/6 (London: SCM Press, 1981), 30.
38. Joseph Komonchak, "Ministry and Local Church," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 36 (1981): 58.
39. See Joseph Komonchak, "The Significance of Vatican II Council for Ecclesiology," in *The Gift of the Church*, ed. Peter Phan (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 79.
40. Benedict Anderson first used the term "imagined communities" to speak of ethnicities as social constructions, which are neither fixed nor fully flexible. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 7th ed. (London: Verso, 1996), 7.

CHAPTER 13



VULNERABLE AND MISSIONAL CONGREGATIONS OF MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS IN LEBANON

Daniel Chetti

It was almost noon on a Sunday. I arrived early at the chapel of the Near East School of Theology in the busy district of Hamra in downtown Beirut. It was a little past the time for starting the service, but I wasn't particularly concerned as congregations of migrant domestic workers (MDWs) seldom start on time. Logistics of travel and demands of work never allow MDWs the luxury of planned lives. After a few minutes, Aina, pastor of the congregation, rushed in, adjusting her clothes and combing her hair, which was still wet. One of her jobs as a "maid" at a nearby Baptist Church on a Sunday was washing the cups and sweeping and cleaning the kitchen after the morning fellowship hour. She quickly took a shower, changed her clothes, and rushed into the Near East School of Theology chapel to lead her own congregation of MDWs in worship.

In this chapter, I invite readers into the narratives of Christian MDWs in Lebanon. These narratives seek to offer a window onto ecclesiological forms and practices that are emerging in the wake of extensive labor migration into the region of the Middle East. Following a discussion of the background and current experience of MDWs, I outline the study I undertook in order to learn about their ecclesiological life. Then I let the stories of four women—Aina, Habiba, Faith, and

Florence—speak for themselves. These MDWs have shaped ecclesial practice in their congregations, and I explore their understanding of church, ministry, congregational member care, and missional outreach. The chapter concludes with an attempt to draw out some similarities between the congregations. I ask, what common characteristics do MDW churches share? While much more research remains to be done in this area, I hope that this chapter will at least begin an important conversation that has long been neglected.

MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS: HISTORY AND CONTEMPORARY EXPERIENCE

Studies focusing on Lebanon are fraught with challenges. A small nation of 4,035 square miles with around 3 million citizens, 300,000 stateless Palestinians refugees, half a million Kurds, more than half a million long-term Syrian guest-workers, and now more than 1 million Syrian refugees, it is a cauldron sitting on explosive religious, political, and demographic fault lines. Lebanon is divided into 18 officially recognized confessional groups made up of Muslims, Christians, and Druze. Religion is an “ethnic marker,” and people’s identities and political rights are largely defined by their religious affiliation. No single group commands a majority, and as a result, Lebanon exists with deeply fractured societal structures and a barely workable democracy.¹ MDWs have entered into this volatile mix and find themselves occupying the lowest rung of Lebanese society’s consciousness and concern. In the words of a local pastor, many among the “Lebanese prize leisure, entertainment, prestige, wealth, and power,” and in order to enjoy these aspects of life, they need others “to tend to the menial tasks.”²

Until the 1960s, most MDWs working in Lebanon were socioeconomically deprived Arab women from Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. However, from the early 1960s, Lebanese recruitment agencies, with the approval of the Lebanese government, started bringing in contracted MDWs from Ethiopia—a trend that gradually extended to bringing in women from other less economically successful countries in Asia and Africa. By the end of the 15-year civil war in 1994, Lebanon was the residence of thousands of foreign MDWs. While official figures are notoriously unreliable, estimates suggest that there are currently around three hundred thousand MDWs in Lebanon. The largest numbers originate from Ethiopia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Madagascar, Nepal, and Nigeria with smaller numbers

coming from other Asian and African countries. MDWs constitute approximately 17 percent of the Lebanese population.³

According to the studies done by the UN Commission on Human Rights, International Labour Organization (ILO), CARITAS (Catholic Relief Organization), and other researchers and advocacy groups, the litany of wrongs committed against the MDWs is long, compelling, and overwhelming. On average, most maids work 15 hours a day and are paid irregularly, if at all. Many complain of being deprived of food; inadequate living conditions; psychological, physical, and sexual abuse; confiscation of passports and identification papers; and forcible confinement in homes with no days off from work. However, we would be wrong to stigmatize all Lebanese employers as offenders. Some are appalled by the treatment meted out to MDWs by their own countrymen and feel helpless to address this systemic sin. The recruiting agencies bring in MDWs under false promises; Lebanese political and legal authorities are aware of the plight of the MDWs but turn a blind eye; the police seldom investigate MDWs' complaints, and if they do, they invariably side with the Lebanese employers.⁴

A large number of MDWs are from Christian backgrounds, though numbers are hard to come by. Many of them join their host families and attend Maronite Catholic or Orthodox Churches. There is also a large Roman Catholic congregation that meets at St. Joseph's Church in Achrafie, where Fr. Martin McDermott, a Jesuit priest, runs a center for the Pastoral Care of Afro-Asian Migrants (PCAAM). Many Catholics from across the world, particularly from the Philippines and Sudan, attend. The center almost functions like a parish church where migrant workers receive spiritual and pastoral care, economic assistance, and, on occasion, legal assistance. Equally large is an Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Ain Aar, near Bikfaya, in the Metn region of Lebanon, which serves almost exclusively the spiritual needs of the Ethiopian and Eritrean women. During my visits to several churches, I found more than a smattering of "converts" from Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam attending these migrant congregations. Five of the churches I had visited as part of my research are located in the largely Armenian district of Dora, a haven for MDWs and a place that provides sanctuary and a sense of acceptance. There, amid narrow alleys and crowded surroundings, MDWs have established their own grocery and novelty stores, eateries, and restaurants, not to mention numerous cell phone stores and Western Union and MoneyGram centers to remit money to families back home. In that crossroads of cacophony and cramped surroundings are places of Christian worship where the MDWs find comfort and acceptance and joyously worship God.⁵

STUDYING MDW CONGREGATIONS

This study is a result of my visit to several churches in Dora and also in Karm El Zeitun, Sabtieh, Mansourieh, Hamra, Rabweh, and other parts of greater Beirut region. I worshipped with nine congregations in 2014, interviewing key members and pastors and occasionally acting as guest preacher. Most of the churches I attended were Protestant: Pentecostal, Baptist, Church of God, Christian Missionary Alliance, Presbyterian, and the Nigeria-based Redeemed Christian Church of God. On multiple occasions I visited three of the churches whose pastors served as main subjects in my research, and I interviewed them and, with their permission, used a tape recorder as well as made extensive handwritten notes. Three of the women pastors requested I use pseudonyms. Rev. Florence of Redeemed Church of God agreed that I could use her actual name. Most of the personal information about pastor Habiba was provided to me by Bertha (also a pseudonym)—an Australasian missionary educator—who is a regular worshipper at Pastor Habiba’s church. She received permission from Pastor Habiba to speak freely about her.

There are more than twenty MDW congregations in Greater Beirut, not counting other cities and regions of Lebanon. Most of these were “planted” less than 25 years ago. The congregations tend to multiply by “dividing” themselves from original mother congregations and splitting further, and each meets, worships, and functions as an independent entity. The Lebanese government considers churches to be “legal associations” as long as they come under the sponsorship of the legally recognized Lebanese Protestant Churches that are members of the Supreme Council of the Evangelical Churches in Syria and Lebanon. Only a few of these migrant churches can be counted as denominational.⁶ Most of them function as independent churches with little concern for denominational loyalty or affiliation. Incidentally, the largest Protestant congregation that meets for worship on a Sunday in Lebanon is neither Arabic speaking nor English speaking: it is the Amharic-speaking Ethiopian Pentecostal Church—an MDW church.⁷

In a society that looks down on MDWs with indifference, disdain, and egregious racism, their churches have become a last haven of refuge for many migrant laborers. With little assistance from other Lebanese churches and without ecclesial oversight or constraints, these congregations live almost in a parallel world: MDWs have spontaneously created for themselves sacred spaces where dignity, acceptance, and healing take place around Word and Worship.⁸

Many of the MDW churches are led by women with little or no formal theological training, living amid profound forces of privation. Migrant women are forming and leading churches and displaying remarkable qualities of organizational leadership and spiritual nurture. Sometimes, they mimic traditional models; at other times, they create and invent new ones.

THE NARRATIVES OF FOUR WOMEN

In this section, I narrate the stories of four women with leadership roles in MDW churches who shared their experiences with me. Their stories reveal something important about the origins and character of emerging—and indeed, now established—MDW churches in Lebanon. There is a striking irony here. The overwhelming majority of ordained Lebanese Protestant pastors are male and thus irrespective of denomination, all the Lebanese pastors who allow MDW congregations to meet in their premises or who allow them to form independent congregations in separate rented buildings are male. By contrast, most of the MDW pastors who receive Lebanese legal coverage are lay females. These women would never be even allowed to stand and pray publicly in a Lebanese Protestant Church.

Aina

Aina—a snippet of whose story began this chapter—is a slight woman in her early thirties from Madagascar, an island off the east coast of Kenya. She is fluent in her native Malagasy as well as French and speaks English well. She was ten years old when she started sewing buttons, fixing torn clothes, and doing alterations, and she gradually moved up to sewing curtains and making her own dresses. She also had a small store selling stationery and would travel to the Kenyan port city of Mombasa or the nearby island of Mauritius to purchase supplies in bulk. Aina was proud to be self-reliant, financially independent, and entrepreneurial. These skills would serve her well in later years when she organized churches and advocated for the rights of MDWs in Lebanon through media and human rights organizations.⁹

She has fond memories of growing up in a Christian home in Madagascar, attending church regularly with her siblings, and playing guitar there. Aina says, “I had a strong sense of calling by God to be a ‘missionary,’ though I had no knowledge where I would go or what would be my vocation.”¹⁰ She entered Lebanon in April 1998, and it was more than a year later that her family in Madagascar found out

she was working as a maid in Lebanon. During the first three years of her stay in Lebanon, Aina worked in the home of a medical doctor in the largely Christian district of Achrafie in Beirut. Physically, she was treated well and had her own living space, but she suffered psychologically. Her passport was confiscated, and she was never allowed to leave the house and socialize. Aina says, "I was totally depressed as I had no one to talk to, pray with, or share."¹¹ But the most painful experience for Aina, in her words, was her spiritual privation caused by her "madam" preventing her from attending a church, worshipping, or having fellowship with others on Sundays.¹²

One day, however, Aina met a patient who came to consult her employer. Aina gradually got to know her and found out that she attended an English-language Baptist Church. The patient and her daughter were Christian, while her husband was a Muslim and a deputy in the Lebanese Parliament. Aina prevailed upon the lady to help her, who in turn contacted a Lebanese Baptist pastor. One evening the pastor called and informed her that he would be coming to drop off some audio tapes of sermons that she could listen to. Aina flatly refused and with uncanny boldness told the pastor, "I want to worship with other believers on a Sunday and have fellowship with them, not stay at home and listen to tapes!" Aina's persistence paid off and her "madam" finally relented and allowed her to be picked up and dropped off by the wife and daughter of the Lebanese parliamentarian so that she could worship with them in an English-language Baptist church in Hamra.

Aina says another MDW working with a family in the same building as her was the first person she led to faith in Christ. Their meeting place was the garbage dumpster on the ground floor, where all the maids in her building came to dump their garbage. There she met Julie, sad and forlorn, who also used the same dumpster.¹³ Her mother was Filipina and her father Chinese. As a young child, Julie experienced abuse and rejection and, finally, her father abandoned the family. Aina reached out to Julie and began comforting and counseling her: "I taught her how to read the Bible and pray to Jesus. I would write Bible verse on pieces on paper give her to read." Through her interaction with Julie and others gathered at the garbage dump, Aina learned about the plight of the many MDWs in Lebanon. Years of experience as a worshipping member of her church in Madagascar and her ability to share faith and counsel others in grief and brokenness had given Aina a wealth of experience to allow her to dig deep into herself and help others. Aina stated, "I had personal experience; I know God's Word contained truths that can be applied to address and

provide answers to hurting lives of people. I instinctively felt I had a mission to do, and I must not shrink from it!”¹⁴ Without any encouragement from others, emotional and professional support, monetary and printed resources, or room where she could recede to counsel and share in confidence, Aina set about her mission to help other MDWs in distress. She was armed with just a Bible and pioneering spirit. Earlier in her life, Aina recalled being intensely moved by reading the call of the Prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 6. Years later, she felt it was really God calling her personally to respond to the challenges in Lebanon: “Here I am Lord, send me” (Isa. 6:8).

Habiba

Habiba’s personal story is harrowing. She came to Lebanon as a 16-year-old girl from Eritrea to work as a maid in a home in the Northern City of Tripoli, which is predominantly conservative and Islamic in character. In effect, she worked as an indentured slave for little pay. Yet meager food, long working hours, and sleeping on the hard cement floor in the kitchen at night were the least of her problems. Every night, the master of the house would harass her for sexual favors. After five harrowing years, unable to bear her abuse any longer, Habiba ran away from that home. Habiba speaks of an intense personal conversion and of how Jesus spoke to her in the midst of her suffering. She literally picked up her shoes, blew the dust off as Jesus directed his disciples (Matt. 10:14), and left the home of her tormentor for Beirut. She found work as a free agent cleaning a business office. Anonymity and relative freedom in a large cosmopolitan city gave Habiba a new lease in life.

Habiba is now 34 years old. With little formal education and no theological training, she has become a self-made charismatic leader. Her own sister always addresses her as “Pastor Habiba.” She largely taught herself to read and write and has an excellent knowledge of the Bible. She commands enormous respect from the members of her congregation.¹⁵ She ministers at one of the largest congregations of MDWs in Lebanon, a congregation composed mostly of Ethiopian and Eritrean women and largely Amharic speaking. Habiba is originally from a Coptic Orthodox background, but her present church is Pentecostal and almost 30 percent of her congregation are converts from another religion. The annual giving of her congregation is almost \$40,000—more than many Lebanese Protestant congregations.¹⁶

Pastor Habiba travels to other countries in the Middle East region on speaking tours and pastoral visits, and this enables her to build

networks to encourage other nascent congregations of Ethiopians and Eritreans, whose lives and conditions are more precarious and harsh.

Faith

Faith is from Kenya and she ministers in a church that is largely made up of Filipina women with a smattering of English- and French-speaking Africans. The congregation is largely English speaking, though many do not speak the language fluently. Faith is a high school graduate with a diploma in communication and ministry from a Bible school in Nairobi. She came to Lebanon to escape from a life of poverty. Like so many others, she says, “I came to Lebanon because I needed money,” and she also experienced harassment and humiliation in her workplace.¹⁷ Faith is an excellent communicator and preaches with great eloquence. Within a brief period of four years since her arrival in Lebanon, Faith appears to have found her calling and believes God has been preparing her to lead a congregation in Lebanon. Her work as a MDW offers a means for her to remain in Lebanon and to minister. She is legally sponsored by a pastor from the Church of God—an offshoot of the Methodist Holiness movement. However, Faith’s own style of ministry is Pentecostal, with greater emphasis on the practice of gifts of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. Sometimes she shares worship and the pulpit with the Lebanese pastor, while at other times, she takes sole responsibility for leading and preaching.

Florence

Pastor Florence is the senior pastor of the Redeemed Church of God, a branch of the Nigerian-based church that boasts approximately five thousand parishes in eighty countries.¹⁸ It has two branches in Beirut led by different pastors. Florence is perhaps the only fully theologically trained pastor among all the MDW church leaders and is pastor of the larger congregation in Dora. Most of the church members are women, but there are also far more male members in this church than in any other migrant church in Lebanon. Most of the church members are Nigerian, but there are also some from East African nations and a few from Francophone Africa. Pastor Florence is the wife of a Nigerian diplomat based in Lebanon. Of the four congregations, she is the only full-time pastor ministering among MDWs. In many ways, this church is significantly different from others and far more organized. She preaches in English with simultaneous translation into French.

MINISTRY, LEADERSHIP, AND MEMBER CARE IN MDWS

As I reflected on my visits to MDW congregations and the narratives of Aina, Habiba, Faith, and Florence, various characteristics of MDW churches seemed to become apparent. Sundays are vital times to gather together for spiritual nurture and, equally important, socializing. Sundays are often the only days when many find time to get out of homes and gather together. Worship services, therefore, are considered the most important spiritual event of the week, for both the pastors as well as members of the congregation. From the perspective of the pastor, preaching is often viewed as a significant pastoral task and a spiritual act. Pastors or leaders of congregations spend most of their time getting ready for Sunday services: preparing for preaching and coordinating various activities in readiness for Sunday gathering.

Most MDW churches have to rent the space in which they operate, and this affects the activities that are offered. Habiba's congregation gathers in a rented church building, meeting after the Arabic congregation, and the church also has a rented apartment that is used for many other activities. A unique feature of this church is intense discipleship courses that are run for their new members. With almost one-third of the congregation that are recent converts to faith, Pastor Habiba uses Saturdays to run, in the words of Bertha, "spiritual boot camps" for about 15 members at a time.¹⁹ Their members are taught basic Christian faith and doctrine. These discipleship classes also serve as training ground for the emerging leaders. By contrast—and unusually—the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) has its own building. This enables Pastor Florence greater flexibility and freedom to carry out her ministry. She has regular office hours: time set aside for personal counseling, individual prayer with members, and midweek Bible study. Besides Sunday worship, RCCG has three other weekly services.

Music plays a critical part during Sunday worship in all the churches. The higher the decibel level, the greater the appreciation of the congregation! Nowhere is this more evident than in the RCCG. It is equally pronounced among the Ethiopians and Eritreans, whose Sunday services last for more than three hours, a large proportion of which is spent in exuberant singing and dancing and spiritual worship accompanied by electric guitars, electronic synthesizers, and drums. Similarly, the practice of prayer plays a very important part in worship services. Members uphold and participate in each other's struggles and joys through open prayer. Pastor Faith encourages the women

not to worry if they don't know how to pray publicly because the Holy Spirit will understand their "incoherent words," leading the women to practice "speaking in tongues."

Leadership of MDWs tends to be female, lay, and minimally trained in theology and liturgy. They are assisted by MDWs who are "free agents" who live by themselves and have greater freedom of movement and control over their time.²⁰ They also play crucial leadership roles in churches. All four pastors are able to carry forward their ministries through sheer force of their personalities and gifts, and they employ contemporary technology to forward their mission. The congregations acknowledge the pastors as able and "spirit-filled leaders," a term often heard among the MDW churches. Leadership teams typically consist of about five to six people, and their briefs tend to be collecting money for special functions, buying food and organizing cooking, contacting absentees by phone, keeping an eye on those who are sick and distraught, and visiting women in prisons and detention centers. Large numbers of MDWs have smart phones, tablets, and other electronic devices, which allow them to communicate with each other with ease. All the pastors use WhatsApp and other messaging apps to send periodic notes of encouragement, exhortations, and devotional messages that the members can quickly read in the midst of their hectic daily lives. This is one creative activity the pastors are employing to keep in touch with their members and provide nurture and member care, albeit in a limited way.

A common theme found in the teaching of all the pastors is the exhortation to be exemplary in your relationship to your employers. Pastor Aina says, "I never preach against Lebanese." Citing 1 Peter 2:13, she says, "I always preach and counsel women to 'submit to your masters.' The Bible says love your enemies, and I say pray for your employers; God will show you favor." Pastor Florence, citing Paul's admonition to Timothy (1 Thess. 4:11-12), calls on her congregation to "be an example" to others. "Self-respect," "hard work," and "dignity" will be rewarded by God and will be acknowledged by their employers and build "confidence in a believer," which will eventually bring "success" to a believer. She often commends the congregation: "Make sure your hand is always on the top" because "those who receive will always have their hand at the bottom." She deftly combines inherent benefits of hard work with a "Gospel of successes."²¹

MDWs find in God their one constant companion: God is the one who will not let them down in the face of extreme situations. At one level, this can be interpreted as "resignation" or a faith that is

enslaving, leaving the MDWs hopelessly bound to their present conditions with no real desire to struggle for their genuine rights. With an absence of laws protecting them and social conventions stacked against them, their perceived “resignation” is hardly surprising. Justice as theologically right and biblically mandated—something that Jesus deeply cared about—is an issue one does not see expressed in any of the sermons or teachings in these churches. It may well be, as one writer put it, “servanthood has been uncritically mystified” by the MDWs.²²

Gemma Tulud Cruz’s insightful study about the plight of the Filipina MDWs in Hong Kong addresses the complex interplay between oppression experienced by the Filipina domestic helpers and their interpretation of certain biblical passages to justify their “passivity” and coping mechanisms. Where there is no visible help from others, God is their ultimate anchor and comfort.²³ There is no doubt religion plays an important role in the spiritual and emotional lives of many MDWs. However, Tulud Cruz’s observation about the Filipina MDWs in Hong Kong as a sign of resignation to oppression is an important assertion that requires further consideration. Is religion helping MDWs and offering comfort or is it encouraging them to stay trapped in oppressive contexts that inhibit their ability to live full and abundant lives? Trapped in a situation with no seeming way out, they appear to have been beaten into “submission.” Nevertheless, from the perspective of all the women pastors, they unflinchingly echo the sentiments of the New Testament teaching that their low social and economic status is an object not of derision but of extraordinary hidden strength, brimming with possibilities. They would boldly cite the words of Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:26–28: “Brothers and sisters . . . not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are.”

There may well be some hesitation on the part of those who understand and interpret ecclesiology from a traditional perspective—subscribing to an accepted standard of doctrine and theology, a defined role of clergy, administration of Sacraments, or the function of laity—to understand the dynamic nature of these emerging churches. It is the particular “context” and “function” that seem to be the determining factors in their understanding of a church,

relying on the primacy of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. It is less an institution and more a movement.²⁴

DARING TO BE MISSIONAL

One theme that struck me in all the interviews and visits that I conducted was the emphasis that the MDW churches placed on being courageous for the sake of mission. All churches speak about their missional call to witness to their employers. They openly pray for them and speak about sharing their faith. They feel that God has placed them strategically in non-Christian homes in order to witness to and pray for them. The time they spend with children in a home is seen as an opportunity to exercise Christian moral influence.

Pastor Florence has a ministry that extends beyond the MDWs to local Muslim and Christian Lebanese. Several individuals call her up or visit her church or home to share their concerns openly and seek counsel and prayer. RCCG is having a missional impact outside the fold of migrant domestic workers.²⁵ Perhaps the most amazing incident I witnessed was during my visit to an Ethiopian migrant congregation, almost as large as Pastor Habiba's church, where they commissioned an MDW and sent her as a missionary to a nearby Arab country.

Almost forty years ago, Catholic historian and missiologist Walbert Buhmann dared to observe a far greater movement in the horizon—an emerging “missionary awareness” without the earlier “triumphalist phase.” He contended that the “simple devoutness” of believers is a necessary practice that will transform the church and bring about new spiritual and missional awareness into the church of Jesus Christ. He followed that with his book, *Courage Church*, where he spoke about the emerging local church “brimming with its own life.”²⁶ Buhmann foresaw this new missionary movement, the “Third Church,” emerging in the so-called Third World. Little did he anticipate that children coming out of this “Third World,” now working as a new class of indentured laborers in the Middle East, would be harbingers of a new missional movement in the early decades of a new century.

CONCLUSION

While MDW churches encounter and grapple with many of the same challenges and problems all churches do—not least personal rivalries—and some may even characterize MDW pastors as “purveyors of palliative faith,” MDW churches are clearly transforming the ecclesial landscape in exciting and significant ways. These congregations of

maids, derided by many in the society in which they live, gather in faith and undertake mission with confidence. Indeed, they may well represent a vanguard of a movement that is missionally significant in an arid and neglected region of the world. Not only are these congregations and their pastors attempting to spiritually care for themselves, but they are also aware that they have a mission that is far wider than their own local constituency.

NOTES

1. Sally Nelson, "Is Lebanon's Confessional System Sustainable?," *Journal of Political and International Studies* 9 (Summer 2013); Nelson contends that "Lebanon is a Mosaic of minorities," a legacy of Turkish "Miller" system, who ruled Lebanon for more than two hundred years before the French came on the scene, p. 304; Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: A History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
2. Robert T. Hamd, "Migrant Domestic Workers, the Church, and Mission" (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2012).
3. Ray Jureidini, "Migrant Workers and Xenophobia in the Middle East" (Identities, Conflicts and Cohesion, programme paper number 2, December 2003).
4. Robert Hamd contends that the Protestant understanding of "sin" in Lebanon is still "individual and private, with no social implication. There is cultural blindness to 'injustice' perpetrated against the MDWs"; "Migrant Domestic Workers, The Church, and Mission." On the positive side, Lebanese media and Human Rights Organizations have launched sustained campaigns to safeguard the rights of the migrant domestic workers (MDWs) and mitigate their suffering. At the highest level of Lebanese government, officials are committed to providing legal protection for the "maids" and changing the labor laws and providing safeguards. Nevertheless, the life of an MDW is at worst precarious and at best living on the edge of human consciousness in desperate hope all the while being highly vulnerable to exploitation.
5. In comparison with other Arab countries, Lebanon affords great deal of religious freedom, sometimes sometimes verging on a laissez-faire attitude.
6. National Evangelical Church of Beirut has two congregations, one of which has used the English language and had Robert Hamd as pastor. This is perhaps the only established Protestant Church in Lebanon where people from all nations and all economic and professional background mingle and worship, including Lebanese. Church leadership includes members of MDWs.
7. There are about four large MDW congregations of Ethiopians that meet in Lebanon. Pastor Habiba's church is one of those.

8. MDWs particularly cited Lebanese pastors like Joseph Milan, Saeed Deeb, Michael Zorob, Shadi Awwad, and a few more as being sympathetic and helpful to them.
9. Aina, interview, May 10, 2014; Aina is well known among local human rights organizations and the media, such as KAFA: Enough Violence and Exploitation (<http://www.kafa.org.lb>), Anti-Racism Movement, and Lebanon Center for Human Rights (cldhpressreview.blogspot.com/lorient-le-jour-pas-de-rapatriement-en), both accessed September 7, 2015. She organizes May Day parades, calling for the rights of the migrant domestic workers. She also attempted to break into racially segregated swimming clubs in Lebanon, catching the attention of the media.
10. Aina, interview, June 12, 2014.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Gemma T. Cruz, in "One Bread, One Body, One People: The Challenges of Migration to Theological Reflection," *CTSA Proceedings* 62 (2007): 216, makes a compelling argument that MDWs gathering at a dumpster "is an act of sisters building their resistance" against unyielding employers and untenable working conditions.
14. Aina, interview, June 12, 2014.
15. Bertha (pseudonym), interview, May 20, 2014, is from Australasia and teaches at a school in Lebanon but has extensive ministry among the MDWs. She attends Pastor Habiba's church and was given permission to speak on her behalf.
16. Bertha, interview, June 9, 2014.
17. Faith, interview, April 30, 2014.
18. Jehu J. Hanciles, "Migration and Mission: Some Implications for 21st Century," in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 27, no. 4 (October 2003): 151.
19. Bertha, interview, April 30, 2014.
20. "Free agents" are those MDWs who are allowed by their Lebanese employers to live by themselves outside and work in multiple homes as long they give a specific time to work out their contractual agreements. This is a highly desired status by the MDWs but illegal under the law.
21. Rev. Florence, interview, June 15, 2014.
22. Mommie Jingco, "Lowly Yet Fulfilling," *Tinig Filipino* (October 1991), 24, cited by Cruz, "One Bread, One Body, One People," 213.
23. Cruz, "One Bread, One Body, One People," 212–16.
24. Eddie Gibbs, in his book *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), focuses on the emerging challenges faced by postmodern and postdenominational Western Christianity. Some characteristics he cites may well be applicable to emerging churches among the MDWs in Lebanon. These churches are bound less by denominational loyalties or correct theology. They are

emerging networks of congregations that are “functional” and “contextual” to local conditions. Gibbs terms them “Apostolic networks.” It is an emerging phenomenon among the Protestant churches elsewhere.

25. Pastor Florence has a ministry that extends beyond the MDWs to local Lebanese, both Muslims and Christians. She has several individuals who call her up or visit her church or home to share their concerns openly and seek counsel and prayer. RCCG is perhaps one church that is having a missional impact outside the fold of migrant domestic workers.
26. Walbert Bhulmann in his ground-breaking work, *The Coming of the Third Church: An Analysis of the Present and Future of the Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1977); Bhulmann, *Courage Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978), 101–12. More recently, Protestant historian Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

CHAPTER 14



INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY AND DISPLACED PEOPLE

DWELLING TOGETHER IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Jennifer Drago

Late one afternoon in 2009, I received a call from Bruce, pastor of the small, rural Vesta Baptist Church in the next county. He said, “About 15 people showed up at my church today in different clothes and not speaking much English. And they gave me your phone number. Who are these people? Where are they from?” I explained they were Karen people, a persecuted ethnic group from Burma that has come to the United States as refugees and who recently began moving out from urban areas to the rural environment they love. Pastor Bruce, now astounded, continued, “We have been praying for twenty years about doing mission work in another country and now God has brought them right to our doorstep. How can we help them?”

JUBILEE PARTNER’S REFUGEE MINISTRY

Befriending refugees was something new for this church, but it is the cornerstone of Jubilee Partners,¹ an intentional Christian community located in the rolling hills of northeast Georgia. My husband, three children, and I joined this community in 1996 out of a desire to combine our work, church, and involvement in social justice with similarly committed people. About thirty people, from infants to an elder in her nineties, share a common life of meals, worship, farming,

and work that all contributes to our primary ministry of providing hospitality to newly arrived refugees.

Two refugee resettlement agencies in Atlanta, Georgia, refer newly arrived families to live with us for two to three months in order to better assist their adjustment to life in the United States.² In the midst of piney woods, reminiscent of many refugee home villages, are a cluster of modest houses, a school for English classes and childcare, a clothing store, and a playground. We assist with medical care and weekly shopping trips—allowance provided. The refugees help us in our garden, and we provide goats and chickens for celebratory meals. After completing our two-month program, the families return to Atlanta where caseworkers assist with apartments, jobs, and schooling.

Since 1980, we have welcomed more than 3,500 people from 33 war-torn countries. During this time, we have performed weddings for people from El Salvador, helped birth babies from Somalia, and buried a woman from Burundi. We have sung songs in languages from Arabic to Swahili, roasted deer with Bosnians, and listened to many stories of war, trauma, torture, and loss. We have had henna hand-painting parties with Afghani women and danced with Congolese women. We have nursed many sick people back to health and watched illiterate Vietnamese women carefully write their names for the first time. We have resolved a few marital disputes and have drunk way too many cups of strong coffee while struggling to have a conversation without a common language. Our life with refugees is exciting, rich, and fulfilling.

It is also humbling. One of the pitfalls of living in intentional communities is the tendency to become insular and self-righteous. Many a community has fallen apart over “who misses clean-up time but is always there for ice cream.” Refugees are a good ministry for intentional communities because they help us look beyond ourselves. It can be easy to pat ourselves on the back for being such good disciples of Christ, but we have found that it is often refugees—the ones who have suffered from displacement, betrayals, and violence—who teach us about hospitality, community living, and forgiveness. Their presence keeps us focused on our greater vision: seeing the kingdom of God at work in each other and in the world.

WORSHIP IS THE HEART OF COMMUNITY LIFE

Every Sunday evening, we meet in our large community gathering space called the Koinonia House for worship and a meal. This gathering is an opportunity for us to connect with each other through

Christ, who strengthens and sustains our shared life. Refugees in our two-month program come from a variety of religious backgrounds. We have hosted Muslims, Buddhists, animists, Seventh-Day Adventists, denominational Christians, and those not belonging to any particular faith. Worship attendance is optional, though we encourage all to join us for the dinner.

Worship services at Jubilee are informal. We arrange the chairs in a semicircle. People wear whatever they happen to have on that day. Kids color or read books in an attempt to be still and quiet. But perhaps most different from what many North American church attendees experience on Sundays is that we do not have a pastor. Instead, a variety of lively, dedicated, and fairly competent people lead our worship service.

The refugees who join us often come with experiences of very different styles of worship. Their tradition may be to dress in their finest clothing and have a formal service that can last from two hours to the whole day with a seminary-trained male minister. Many of the African refugees have questioned our worship style, asking, "Why is your church so short? After one hour, we are just beginning to give our praises to God. We have all Sunday for that."

To bridge this gap in worship experiences, we strive to intentionally make refugees feel welcome and are continually looking at ways to improve. When we begin working with a group of refugees from a new country, we obtain a Bible in their language and keep it in our worship space so it is available for reading aloud. Sometimes we read scripture passages in three different languages. This works best with short passages so the flow of the service does not get bogged down with too much reading. We invite refugees to give opening and closing prayers in their own language and to share their faith story as the "message" part of the worship service. Participating at this level requires encouragement as people are often shy and uncomfortable about speaking in front of a large group. Sometimes they humbly refuse since they are neither trained nor ordained to be given such responsibility.

The easiest way for refugees to participate in our services is through music and what a gift that has been. Unlike many white American churches, some refugees come from a tradition where people are trained at an early age "to make a joyful noise to the Lord!" At every Jubilee service, we invite people to share special music. Drums and guitars are on hand. Some people sing in their own language. Some teach us repetitive songs that we do our best to learn. Sometimes we recognize the tune as a familiar hymn and sing along in English.

One of the joys of worshipping with refugees is the moments of grace when you are not quite sure what is happening but you know “the spirit is a-movin’.” Venance, a refugee from Burundi, would leap up in the service and, with his long arms in the air, lead us gustily in singing, “I know my *devention* for Jesus.” We exchanged puzzled glances as to what Venance was trying to say—devotion? Attention? We know something got lost in the translation, but his love for Jesus transcended all linguistic definitions.

We frequently attend the worship services that refugees hold for themselves. Anyone seriously considering a ministry with refugees needs to experience being in a worship service where everything is in another language and you are the foreigner, the outsider. If you find yourself confused, lost, unwelcomed, bored, or uninvolved, consider that that may be how they feel during your service. That alone can spur one to creatively think about how to engage with those from different cultures.

REFUGEE FAITH STORIES SHAPE THE CHURCH

Some refugees have witnessed so much tragedy and violence that their faith has gradually dissipated. I recall inviting one family to a Palm Sunday service and described what a “Blessing of the Palms” means. The father sharply countered, “I know all about blessings. In my country (former Yugoslavia), I saw the Muslim imam bless guns and the Orthodox pope bless guns, and the Catholic priest do the same and all these weapons have destroyed our cities and destroyed our lives. I don’t want any more blessings!” It is a reminder to seek forgiveness when religion has been a casualty of war while also inviting people to give church another chance.

Other refugees arrive with a strong faith in God that has sustained them through hardship and loss. Occasionally, a visiting guest asks if we convert refugees to Christianity. I eagerly respond, “They are always converting me. They witness to me that even through all their losses and suffering, God has been faithful to them. I am amazed by how their faith in God remains strong.” Usually, I share the following two stories as examples of how hearing refugee experiences have shaped my theology and understanding of scripture.

In 2000–2001, we welcomed about forty Sudanese “Lost Boys.” As children, they fled southern Sudan when war came to their villages and ended up wandering more than a thousand miles through barren lands to find safety.³ We are well familiar with the song “Be Not Afraid” and have heard Isaiah 43:2 many times. However, these

words took on a whole new meaning after hearing the Lost Boys' experiences. Ones who had literally "crossed the burning desert" and did "not die of thirst" were here incarnate in our midst. These ancient words of the Prophet Isaiah's faith had now become living, breathing, meaningful words that tell of God's promise to be with us during terrible hardships that happen in our day.

The second story is of a woman, Win Dee, from Burma who fled with her baby and young children when the army attacked her village. They hid in the steamy jungle, exposed to the elements and surviving on whatever roots and critters they could gather. The baby contracted malaria and, with no doctor or medicine available to treat the high fever, suffered permanent neurological damage. Today, twenty years later, the baby has grown up, but the impairment remains. This young woman can only function at the level of a three-year-old. It would be very understandable for the mother to feel anger at or abandoned by God. But Win Dee says that during the months hiding in the jungle, she kept reciting Psalm 94:18: "When I felt my feet slipping, you came with your love and kept me steady." With all the conviction she can muster in her petite eighty-pound body, Win Dee proclaims that in the midst of despair, God gave them comfort and hope. She believes her family was blessed by God because they survived.

Such stories of faith need to be heard in churches everywhere. We need to hear how people have endured unspeakable difficulties yet continue to praise God. We need to hear how these ancient scriptures become living words for those who feel abandoned and forgotten by the world but not by God. The need is not only for refugees to tell their story of hope but for us, the privileged, secure, and comfortable ones filling the pews. We need to hear how our refugee sisters and brothers depended on God and how God was faithful to them.

How does the church make itself available to hear faith stories? Rarely will someone share a painful story during coffee hour chitchat on a Sunday morning. A more realistic way is for us to try to enter into refugees' daily life in the United States and experience their resettlement with them—as much as that is possible.

Real sermons happen when I drive someone to Walmart so he or she can send money to relatives back in the refugee camp when he or she barely has enough money to make it through the month. Real sermons happen when I explain to my refugee passenger why a white North American man is standing by the roadside with a "Please Help" sign, and my passenger, recalling times in her own life without food, passes money to him. Real sermons happen when an exasperated young Togolese man tells me, "I saw an elderly man on the sidewalk

in front of his apartment with all his stuff. He had just been evicted. Tell me, how does this happen in a rich country with so many Christians?” Refugees see our daily lives through very different lenses and can help us examine our values. These are moments where they are teaching us another way to read and interpret the gospels.

BEING CHURCH: LOVE IN ACTION

Remember the pastor who called me for advice on how to help the Karen refugees who unexpectedly showed up in his church? Several years later at a Karen wedding that he officiated, Pastor Bruce reminded me, “You said, ‘Be their friends, that’s what they need.’ I was expecting some big theological answer, but it was simply, ‘Be their friend,’ and we have found that to be true.” Pastor Bruce then went on to introduce me to several Karen members whom he knew by name.

The Vesta Baptist Church started out by including their new neighbors in traditional ways. A Karen choir sang during the worship service and their children joined in Sunday school classes. After about a year, the church made some extraordinary decisions to put love for their new neighbors into action. When land was donated to the church for Karen families, church members helped them clear and bulldoze driveways, get wells drilled, and install septic systems. Church members also advocated with the local zoning council to get the required permits. Today, five families live in their own homes amid a pine forest. This feat could only have been achieved with the active involvement of the church. Karen refugees have a saying, “We have been called ‘displaced people,’ but now we are in the right place.” Vesta Baptist Church members found creative ways to incorporate these displaced people into the Body of Christ.

If you ask newly arrived refugees what they need most, the two likeliest answers are “English” and “friends.” Neither of these can be bought but only provided by others. Many refugees who have been in the United States for several years have commented that they have never been invited to an American’s home. What does that say about our hospitality? We need to make the effort to not just see them as a group of refugees. We need to know the names of the individuals worshipping with us and we need to know where they are from. If there are Karen families attending your church and they are still mistakenly being introduced as from Korea, then some important connections are not being made.

JUBILEE HOSPITALITY CHALLENGED

For 35 years, all the refugees that Jubilee hosted were resettled either a thousand miles away in Canada or a hundred miles away in Atlanta. Once one family completed our two-month program, another just-off-the-plane refugee family took their place. This two-month program is still going strong. However, in the past few years, we have witnessed a remarkable shift as refugees from Burma began a secondary migration from other cities to settle in Comer, Georgia, the same town where Jubilee Partners is located. We no longer had a buffer zone of two hours distance shielding us from the day-to-day minutia of resettlement. Our new neighbors no longer had a caseworker helping them with a multitude of needs.

There were bound to be some strains. People we did not recognize were driving down our long gravel driveway. Some were fishing or swimming in our ponds uninvited. Others visited our garden and helped themselves to whatever was growing. Some came to just hang out with us on Saturday afternoons—our “off time.” Sometimes it felt like we were living in a park that was always open to the public. Many of our refugee neighbors came bearing fistfuls of mail that needed attention to keep Medicaid and food stamps active. Some needed help in making an appointment for a sick child, or assistance in getting children registered for school, or . . . the list went on.

The sudden influx of people resettling nearby created demands that sometimes left us weary and overwhelmed. Tensions occurred among the staff at Jubilee. None of us was opposed to having refugees as neighbors; in fact, we were delighted that they were interested in living in a rural area, reconnecting with the land and with us. Our difficulty was not having a system in place for dealing with these sudden needs and requests. We did not know how to handle these changes that were affecting our personal lives, our shared communal life, and our ongoing two-month refugee ministry. Our established intentional community was feeling the need to accommodate our new neighbors, though we lacked clarity in exactly how to do that. As they transformed from displaced people to our neighbors, how could we be helpful without fostering dependency? How could we joyfully embrace these changes to our daily life and be church to our new neighbors?

We had meetings and talks among ourselves. We called in pastors and mentors. We prayed. We had more discussions. In keeping with Jubilee’s consensus style of decision making, we spent many hours

listening, talking, and discerning among ourselves. While the many meetings became tedious, they also produced some good fruit.

We set aside 12 acres of land and created small plots for our neighbors to raise their own food and animals. We invited neighbors to join our English classes. We formed the Neighbors' Committee so that issues could be handled by a smaller group of staff rather than with the whole community. We created a summer camp for our own and neighboring children. We put a locked gate on our pond deck and wrote rules for use of our pond and land in three different languages. In short, we found ways to be better neighbors.

What has been the result of all our efforts? Our Karen and Karen-ni friends have shared food grown in the "Neighbors' Field." A young Karen man joined us as a resident summer volunteer. Those who speak English well eagerly help us with translation. A small Karen grocery store opened up in downtown Comer. We are regularly invited to worship services and birthday blessings in their homes. Karen pastors have used our pond for baptisms. A Karen youth group occasionally joins us in our worship services. While not all problems have been solved, our relationships have become more balanced. Now our refugee neighbors are serving, working, playing, and learning alongside us.

Developing long-term relationships with refugee neighbors has led us to dwell deeper in the challenges of starting life anew. We have needed to advocate on behalf of our neighbors with landlords, employers, and medical clinics. Some refugees become entangled in situations because they are unfamiliar with North American customs. A few obtained driver's licenses through unlicensed agents. Those slaughtering animals in their own yard or hunting or fishing without a license received warnings from the local police. Another had an unscrupulous tax preparer inflate their tax return; others are charged excessive amounts for car repairs. Most refugees are handling money, credit, and debt for the first time and need trustworthy people to guide them in making good decisions.

Perhaps one of the best outcomes of refugees from Burma migrating to Comer has been the way our small town of a thousand mostly white, mostly conservative, working-class people has embraced this new ethnic group. Our local schools enjoy having Karen and Karen-ni students both in the classrooms and on the soccer field. The school board hired a former Jubilee volunteer to help in English classes. Bank employees have remarked on how easy it is to do business with them. Even our mayor is renting a house to a Karen-ni family.

REVERSE MISSION ROLES: BECOMING INTERTWINED AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

As we get to know our refugee neighbors better, we also have more opportunities to share with them our vulnerabilities and struggles. To many refugees, it appears as if we are all happy North Americans living trouble-free lives. After all, we always have a ready smile and respond, “I’m fine.” Many refugee parents now have to deal with problems they never had to encounter when living in refugee camps. Their kids want the latest expensive electronic devices. Some youth find school boring and are so far behind that they want to drop out. Teenagers want to play video games and watch movies all day. These are all issues North American parents have to grapple with, and we can share our frustrations, our fears, and our solutions with them.

While we often pray for refugees and their situations, when we open ourselves up to them and share our difficulties, then our refugee neighbors can pray for us too. It is at that intersection—praying for each other and knowing each other’s needs—where we become intertwined in the Body of Christ. Our intentional community has stretched and reshaped itself to become church to our neighbors from Burma.

Historically, missionaries left North America and went abroad to spread the good news of the gospel of Christ. It might seem preposterous to some North Americans that missionaries from other countries would come to us and do the same thing. The unspoken thought is something like, “We live in the most advanced country on earth. What could someone, especially from a poor country, have to teach us?”

We believe we are witnessing a reverse mission. We have heard Karen people say that just as the American missionary Adoniram Judson came to Burma two hundred years ago bearing a “special book” for the Karen people, so are these Karen descendants now coming to us. They do not only see themselves as refugees but as missionaries too. They have seen the divisions within our churches and believe their Christian unity can be an example to us. They have seen the wealth in our country and believe that it separates us from the full gospel message. Is the church open to listening to the messages that our foreign sisters and brothers are bringing us?

By the time refugees enter the United States, they have lost almost all sense of normal life. Consider the loss of country, language, culture, food, family members, home, money, animals, belongings, neighbors, school, church, identity, health, friends, professional status, livelihood,

and more. These are enormous losses, and it is precisely because of such losses that refugees are joining our churches. They want to be connected again with humanity. They want to belong with us in the shared Body of Christ.

One dark evening many years ago, we were sitting around a campfire roasting marshmallows and trying to sing simple songs. We were North Americans and newly arrived refugees from Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Bosnia. Nusip, a former police officer from Serbia who had seen many horrible things during the war, surveyed the scene of skin colors, languages, ages, and aptitudes. He leaned over to me and with a broad smile said, “This must be what heaven will look like.” This, too, I believe, is what our churches should look like.

NOTES

1. For more on Jubilee Partner’s intentional community and refugee ministry, see by Don Mosley, *With Our Own Eyes* (Huntington, IN: Herald Press, 1996); Mosley, *Faith Beyond Borders: Doing Justice in a Dangerous World* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010).
2. For more on the relationship between the US Department of State and nongovernment organizations, see Joshua Ralston, “Toward a Political Theology of Refugee Resettlement,” *Theological Studies* 73 (2012): 363–90; Stephanie J. Nawyn, “Faith, Ethnicity, and Culture in Refugee Resettlement,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 49 (2006): 1509–27.
3. Felicia R. McMahon, *Not Just Child’s Play: Emerging Tradition and the Lost Boys of Sudan* (Oxford: University of Mississippi, 2007).

CHAPTER 15



INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN A NOMADIC CHURCH¹

THE WITNESS OF JESUIT REFUGEE
SERVICE IN EASTERN AFRICA

Deogratias M. Rwezaura, SJ

On March 7, 2013, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) celebrated International Women's Day with the theme "The Gender Agenda: Gaining Momentum." I was privileged to attend the celebration as part of my visit to Ethiopia. The celebrations took place at the JRS Refugee Community Centre in Addis Ababa. The festivity was organized by JRS in collaboration with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and offered an opportunity for refugee women to display their artifacts for sale. The artifacts crafted by women from Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Yemen, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, and Djibouti not only revealed the gift that refugees bring to their host communities but also allowed viewers to enjoy an array of religious and cultural beauty. Through these artifacts, I witnessed the dialogue of action and celebration of talents. Toward the end of the festivity, refugee women from various countries, cultures, and religions proudly demonstrated beautiful African and religious dresses and ornaments by putting on a fashion show. This was a truly beautiful moment of religious, cultural, and gender sensitivity and also one of unity among women. It witnessed how the Gender Agenda had

truly gained momentum, and the event turned out to be actively ecumenical and interreligious.

Prior to this celebration, I had spent a week visiting Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) projects in Mai Aini refugee camp, which hosts approximately 13,500 Eritrean refugees in northern Ethiopia, and Melkadida refugee camp, which hosts approximately 42,000 Somali refugees in South Eastern Ethiopia. Whenever I visit JRS projects, I come back reenergized by the commitment of our field staff, a number of whom are refugees themselves. This time I was struck by the composition of our core staff from four religious traditions—Catholic, Ethiopian Orthodox, Lutheran, and Muslim—who live and work harmoniously together in service of Somali refugees (99 percent Muslim) in Melkadida refugee camp. Through their commitment, JRS bears witness to a practical faith that bridges religious beliefs and traditions.

JRS works in solidarity with the poorest of the poor, serving them and accompanying them indiscriminately. Interestingly, some camps for refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) are located among nomadic/pastoralist communities such as the Turkana in Kenya, the Somali Ethiopians in Ethiopia, and the Darfurians in North Darfur. In these places, one does not have to imagine the scene of the Holy Family on the way to Egypt in the first century: scenes where donkeys remain an indispensable means of transportation are commonplace. Just as a pastoralist moves with his or her herd of cattle or camels, so too the church journeys with people on the move. JRS is constantly shaping a model of the church on the move—one that ecumenically and interreligiously bears witness to our common humanity as a mirror of the unconditional love of God for all. Embedded in this witness is a *dialogue of life* and a *dialogue of action*, and in what follows, I will explore how in accompanying, serving, and promoting the rights of the forcibly displaced in Eastern Africa, JRS engages in a transformative ethical, ecumenical, and interreligious dialogue that is a constitutive part of being church.

EASTERN AFRICAN CONTEXT

Major refugee flows and internal displacements have largely been a result of armed conflict that took place between 1990 and 2000 in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Sadako Ogata, then high commissioner for refugees, called this period “a turbulent decade.”² JRS has been responding to the needs of Burundians, Rwandese, and Congolese refugees through its activities coordinated by the Nairobi-based

Eastern Africa office founded in 1990—ten years after the founding of JRS.³

Uganda witnessed an influx of Congolese, Rwandese, and Burundian refugees fleeing both armed conflicts and the Rwandese genocide of 1994. Some of these refugees from Africa's Great Lakes region also fled into Tanzania, Kenya, and as far as Ethiopia. The recent conflicts in eastern DRC have forced thousands more to flee into Uganda and Kenya while hundreds of thousands remain displaced within their home country.⁴ Within Uganda, thousands of Ugandans were internally displaced by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), whose heinous acts continue to displace people in DRC and the Central African Republic.

Uganda has been host to Sudanese refugees for many years, during the first civil war of 1955–1972 but especially during the second war of 1987–2005. The last three years have seen a repeat of massive movements of refugees within the Horn of Africa due to ongoing conflict in Somalia (a nation that has experienced more than twenty years of armed conflict). In June 2011, prompted by fighting and famine, Somalis started crossing the border in large numbers into Ethiopia and Kenya. It is estimated that more than one million Somalis have fled their country within the past three years, over 50 percent of whom are now living in Kenya.⁵ This is in addition to the large number of Somalis that had fled previously into Kenya's largest camps—Dadaab and Kakuma, established in early 1990s.

South Sudanese are now caught up between two wars. One waged by Sudan pushing an estimated 244,638 Sudanese refugees from South Kordofan and Blue Nile states into Upper Nile and Unity states and the other an outbreak of conflict in South Sudan in December 2013 causing an estimated 98,347 South Sudanese to flee to their country and seek refuge in Sudan.⁶ More than 1.5 million South Sudanese are internally displaced, while close to half a million have sought refuge in neighboring countries.⁷ The Horn of Africa has also witnessed massive flights of young Eritreans into Ethiopia and Sudan: most of these young people are under 25 years of age and are seeking to escape military conscription.

Across the region of Eastern Africa, there are an estimated 2,467,547 refugees and 8,966,205 IDPs.⁸ The majority of IDPs are found in Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and the DRC. The reasons for these massive displacements of people range from armed conflict and violence, erroneous economic policies, and dictatorial regimes, all of which prompt rebel movements, to climatic conditions, especially draught, landslides, and floods.⁹

A NOMADIC CHURCH SERVING PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

The mission of JRS is to accompany, serve, and defend the rights of the forcibly displaced. One of the strongest values of JRS—which is also the first goal of its strategic plan—is to show compassion for humanity living on the edge.¹⁰ Such compassion impels JRS members to keep eyes and hearts open to the needs of the church on the move—the church on the move being the forcibly displaced people of God. Guided by its criteria for choice of ministry drawn from Part VII of the Jesuit Constitutions, JRS responds “to situations of great need, to places where a more universal good can be achieved, and to needs that others are not attending to.”¹¹ In this way, JRS models a nomadic church that is constantly in search of and in service to the people on the move and in need. With the largest concentration of refugees in Kenya and Ethiopia, JRS Eastern Africa now operates most of its projects in these two countries, not forgetting IDPs in other areas such as Darfur in Sudan and Yambio in South Sudan.

Right from its inception, JRS, an international Catholic organization, set out to accompany, serve, and defend the rights of the forcibly displaced, regardless of their cultural, religious, age, economic, or gender differences. The mission of JRS springs from Jesus’s love and compassion for the widow, the orphan, and the stranger¹² and is rooted in the Society’s mission of faith that does justice in dialogue with other cultures and religions.¹³ Perhaps JRS collaborators do best what the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation (GC 34) urged all Jesuits to bear in mind—namely, “to move beyond prejudice and bias, be it historical, cultural, social, or theological, in order to cooperate wholeheartedly with all men and women of goodwill in promoting peace, justice, harmony, human rights, and respect for all of God’s creation.”¹⁴

In collaboration with religious men and women, lay people, refugees, and internally displaced people, JRS has responded to the plight of the forcibly displaced in Eastern Africa in many ways. Always starting from listening to the needs of the forcibly displaced, JRS has attended to the spiritual and pastoral needs of refugees and IDPs; built schools; offered scholarships; trained teachers; engaged refugees in sports, drama, and theater as healing and recreational mechanisms; offered counseling and pastoral care; initiated income-generating activities to help refugees and returnees become self-reliant; and provided emergency assistance in forms of food, shelter (i.e., house rent), and medical care to asylum seekers and refugees in urban settings. JRS

has also offered functional adult literacy and skills training (e.g., tailoring, weaving, embroidery, catering, mechanics, driving, and basic computer skills) and attended with special care to the needs of the most vulnerable and physically challenged children by sending them to specialized schools for the deaf and the blind. Most recently, JRS has attended to the educational needs of refugees in collaboration with Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins (JC:HEM) by introducing an online diploma in liberal arts accredited by Regis University in Denver, Colorado.¹⁵

All these initiatives that help refugees reintegrate into society and feel a sense of normalcy away from their homes can be described as forms of dialogue. People of different nationalities, tribes, genders, creeds, and ages come together to celebrate life and simultaneously learn from each other's rich traditions about how to live together. The bonding that ensues from such activities, where people are united by the common experience of fleeing one's home, witnesses to a life of active dialogue as the celebration of World Refugee Day in Ethiopia clearly demonstrates.

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE OF LIFE AND DIALOGUE OF ACTION

In serving the forcibly displaced regardless of their religious affiliation, JRS fosters a *dialogue of life* and a *dialogue of action*. By dialogue of life, I mean that JRS members promote a spirit of openness and love of neighbor that manifests in sharing in refugees' joys, sorrows, problems, and preoccupations. By dialogue of action, I mean that JRS members seek to foster the integral development and liberation of the forcibly displaced. These two forms of dialogue can best be captured by one of the three pillars of JRS—accompaniment. The church that accompanies people in distress walks with them and, in so doing, comes to know their anguish and joys, their problems and preoccupations. In Eastern Africa, JRS has done this work through a multifaceted effort to promote peace and reconciliation and to provide psychosocial support including counseling, healing of trauma, sports, drama, music, theater, and reflexology. While the *dialogue of life* remains critical to the restoration of human dignity, much more is usually at stake during flight from violence. Children's futures become bleak, young people lose a sense of direction, adults and parents abdicate their parental responsibilities, and property is lost. The *dialogue of action* is vital to create a sense of normalcy by providing scholarships to children (as JRS does in Kenya), to build schools aimed at

forming men and women for others (as JRS has done in South Sudan and Uganda), to form peace clubs and farmers' associations, to train teachers whose ethos is to impart knowledge for integral education, and to work for lasting peace and development—which is itself crucial for the establishing of long-term peace.¹⁶

Both of these dialogues are undertaken interreligiously—that is, JRS stands alongside, serves, and advocates for people regardless of their denominational or religious affiliation. In so doing, JRS attests to the fact that “to be religious today is to be inter-religious in the sense that a positive relationship with believers of other faiths is a requirement in a world of religious pluralism.”¹⁷ Correlatively, to be *church* today must also involve being interreligious. In serving people indiscriminately, both JRS members and those they serve encounter God in the deepest places in their hearts. This has been witnessed by one of the parents of Ali, a Somali refugee who had suffered trauma after the loss of property and a severe attack by insurgents back home.¹⁸ After several sessions of counseling and accompaniment to and from the hospital by JRS members, Ali recovered, and his parents had this to say: “We don’t know an organization whose members take you to the clinic and back home again and visit you at home. Now we have learnt anything can be possible. We believed our son was a disabled person but now he has changed to be a strong businessman, giving hope to our family.”¹⁹ In his own words, Ali referred to JRS as a “family of hope” because it restored his self-confidence and helped him regain his role as a head of his family.

The interreligious and cultural encounter in the course of accompaniment and service of forcibly displaced people is of mutual benefit to all. One JRS member acknowledged recently that the opportunity to serve others in a different context has changed his perception and perspectives on life. Having grappled with the reality of serving Somali refugees in a difficult administrative context, he came to realize that ultimately, it is the difference that his listening and service can make in the lives of refugees that matters. Human suffering has no religious tag to it. It is part of the essence of being human. This is what keeps him going despite the challenges.²⁰ In serving the poor who seek freedom and justice, JRS members are “enriched by the spiritual experiences and ethical values, theological perspectives, and symbolic expressions of other religions.”²¹

DIALOGUE AS TRANSFORMATIVE ECCLESIOLOGY

So how do these ethical, ecumenical, and interreligious dialogues of life and action transform what it means to be and practice church? The love and compassion of Jesus are paramount and form the well of inspiration from which JRS as a nomadic church draws. Jesus's compassion and love stem from his own experience of the love of God and the religious ethic of love of neighbor that is an inseparable dimension of this divine love. Compassion is exemplified in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37): the Good Samaritan treads the path of the wounded, moves toward him, cares for him, and thus proves to be a neighbor to him. In the context of JRS, the call to attend to the widow, the orphan, and the stranger (cf. Matt. 25)—all of whom are encountered in contexts of forced displacement—adds another dimension to this dialogue, a dimension rooted in remembrance. Remembering that no one chooses to be forcibly displaced and that anyone can be uprooted impels JRS to act from the perspective of the displaced. It makes JRS constantly bear witness to the experience of the forcibly displaced and remember that nobody becomes a refugee in order to receive material assistance. In addition, an ethic of accompaniment demands space is created to listen to the traumatic experiences of the forcibly displaced, understanding their ordeal and journeying with them in order to help them overcome their suffering and restore their dignity.²² Indeed, the three pillars of JRS—accompaniment, service, and advocacy—complement each other in fulfilling the call to the nomadic church to love the forcibly displaced. In accompanying refugees, we learn how best to serve them, and through service, we come to a deeper understanding of how to defend or advocate for their rights.

Our tripartite approach to mission not only helps transform the lives of those we serve; as I suggested earlier, it inevitably transforms the lives of JRS members as well. The nomadic church changes and grows as it engages in dialogues of life and action that are its reason for existing. What is more, this transformation does not only occur at a personal level. Struck by the fact that JRS is a Catholic organization, a senior government official asked me, “What makes you serve even people who are not of your faith?” I answered that compassion impels us to reach out to everybody in need regardless of their creed because, ultimately, love knows no bounds. Reflecting further on this question and on my answer a few weeks later, I realized the power of an inclusive ethic that is guided by indiscriminate love and service.²³ In the face of suffering humanity, our hearts move out to act in love

together—as witnessed by the event described at the beginning of this chapter put on by JRS, a Catholic organization, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOC-DICAC) to celebrate International Women’s Day in Addis Ababa. It brought together women from diverse creeds to celebrate the momentum gained by the Gender Agenda.²⁴ Our practice of church has become interreligious and inherently dialogical. Action on behalf of and with the marginalized in search of liberation becomes a rallying point for diverse religious traditions. Although at times religious traditions have been politicized and have become a source of conflict, their common adherence to the service and hospitality to the stranger remains a strong bond that inspires faith-based organizations to serve refugees without discrimination.²⁵ It is from a shared common goal of serving and sharing in the joy of the forcibly displaced women that JRS and EOC-DICAC can indeed begin to speak more profoundly about their faith in a loving and serving God. Here, then, religious experience is grounded in and translated into the daily witness of serving those in need without cultural, religious, political, or gender biases. Such a profound experience readily leads to an encounter with the God who can be seen in the face of those we serve.

This interreligious dialogue grounded in shared experiences and commitments creates avenues for concrete witness to values that all religions embrace in defense and protection of the forcibly displaced.²⁶ Such witness lies at the heart of the nomadic church. Certainly, three world religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—often referred to as Abrahamic religions—exemplify this ethic in advocating that respect and hospitality be shown to the stranger.²⁷ Through its work in urban settings, JRS frequently encounters Muslim women who seek education for their children in order that they might have a brighter future. When JRS attends to their quest by providing scholarships for their children, a human bond is created and religion becomes a true sanctuary that those in need can turn to with confidence. JRS is fully aware and respectful of the religious traditions of refugees, offers them space for worship, and respects their “freedom of conscience even in the difficulties of exile.”²⁸ In response to this respectful reaction to human need, Muslim and Christian women and men gather at Catholic parishes in Nairobi to be nourished and offered modest assistance toward rent and medical care. While interreligious theological *reflection* brings experts to discuss spiritual and religious treasures for mutual enrichment and understanding, *practicing* as a nourishing church in the ways that JRS does offers an even deeper understanding of what God actively does even in times of exile—that is, we come to know

intimately the God who is constantly re-creating the human family by loving indiscriminately. Interreligious dialogue of life, then, is also a form of rich religious experience and deep theological exchange that remakes and renews the Church.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The ecclesiology of JRS can be summed up as a transformative and missionary ethic that is simultaneously pastoral, pedagogical, ecumenical, and interreligious. Being at the service of refugees means accompanying them in camps, urban settings, IDP settlements, and their homeland upon return. It requires us to be a nomadic church—one on the move in search of those at the edge of society. Forced displacement puts people at the margins, and it is here—at the margins—that JRS seeks them out and works with them in defense and promotion of their rights. In the context of Eastern Africa, JRS actively and indiscriminately serves people from all walks of life and of diverse creeds, gender, and cultural backgrounds. Our practice of church bridges religious traditions and witnesses to the dialogue of life and action whose inspiration comes from the compassion and love of Jesus. It is through such practical witness that the church comes alive, not merely as a set of doctrines or a set of theological ideas offered by religious experts, but also as a people moved by compassion in response to the plight of the forced migrants.

NOTES

1. I use the term “nomadic church” to refer to two realities: the people of God who have been forced to migrate like nomads/pastoralists in search of safety and the members of Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) who accompany the forcibly displaced in such circumstances. The term was first coined by Fr. Amayo, a Ugandan priest, in reference to the South Sudanese refugees in exile. See Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *From Crisis to Kairos: The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV/AIDS, Refugees and Poverty* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005), 158.
2. See Sadako Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade: Confronting the Refugee Crises of the 1990s* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005).
3. Michael Evans, “Expansion of JRS East Africa between 1990 and 1996,” in *The Wound of the Border: 25 Years with the Refugees*, ed. Amaya Valcarcel (Rome: JRS International, 2005), 168–69.

4. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Eastern Africa: Displaced Populations Report*, no. 14 (September 13, 2012—March 31, 2013), 1.
5. *Ibid.*, 9.
6. United Nations Organization for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “Displacement Increased by 1.4 Million in the Region,” *Eastern Africa: Displaced Populations Report*, no.17 (April 1–September 30, 2014), 15,16.
7. OCHA, *South Sudan Crisis: Situation Report no. 70 (as of 22 January 2015)*, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/South_Sudan_Crisis_Situation_Report_No_71_as_of_23_January.pdf, accessed January 28, 2015.
8. OCHA, *Eastern Africa: Displaced Populations Report*, 1.
9. *Ibid.*, 1.
10. Jesuit Refugee Service, *Strategic Framework 2012–2015* (Rome: Jesuit Refugee Service), 9.
11. Jesuit Refugee Service, “The JRS Charter, no.14,” in *Everybody’s Challenge: Essential Documents of Jesuit Refugee Service 1980–2000*, ed. Danielle Vella (Rome: Jesuit Refugee Service), 15.
12. *Ibid.*, no. 15.
13. *Ibid.*, nos. 1 and 7.
14. The 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus: January 5, 1995–March 22, 1995, Decree 5, no. 2, “Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue,” in John W. Padberg, ed., *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: Decrees & Accompanying Documents of the 31st – 35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), 547. A General Congregation is the highest authority (ultimate governing body) in the Society of Jesus. Since the founding of the Society of Jesus in 1540, only 35 General Congregations have been held.
15. For more on the work of faith-based humanitarian agencies in contexts of forced displacement, see Elizabeth Ferris, “Faith-Based and Secular Humanitarian Organizations,” *International Review of the Red Cross* 87 (2005): 311–25; Alastair Ager and Joey Ager, *Faith, Secularism and Humanitarian Engagement: Finding the Place of Religion in Support of Displaced Communities* (New York: Palgrave Pivot, 2015); M. Barnetand J. Gross Stein, eds., *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, ed., “Faith-Based Humanitarianism in Contexts of Forced Displacement,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011); E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and A. Ager, eds., “Local Faith Communities and the Promotion of Resilience in Humanitarian Situations: A Scoping Study” (Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities and RSC Working Paper 90, Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre, 2013).

16. Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope Paul VI, *On the Development of Peoples (Populorum Progressio)*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1990), 36.
17. GC 34, Decree 5, "Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue," 548.
18. This is not his real name. All names have been changed to protect the interviewees.
19. Fikirte Tarekegn, "Ethiopia: It is Better to Live," http://www.jrsea.org/Voices_Detail?TN=DTN-20121112123948, accessed March 17, 2013.
20. W/Eyesus Mulugeta, "Ethiopia: How Context Shaped My Perspective," https://jrsea.org/Assignment_Detail?TN=DTN-20130225014224, accessed May 25, 2013.
21. GC 34, Decree 5, "Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue," 551.
22. Mark Raper, SJ, "Pastoral Accompaniment among Refugees: The Jesuit Refugee Service Experience," in *Danielle Vella, ed., Everybody's Challenge: Essential Documents of Jesuit Refugee Service 1980–2000* (Rome: Jesuit Refugee Service, 2000), 87.
23. Pontifical Council "Cor Unum" and Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, "Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity," no. 25, in International Round Table on the Question of Refugees, *Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity: Proceedings of the International Round Table on the Question of Refugees/ Sponsored by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations and the Path to Peace Foundation* (New York: United Nations, March 9 and 10, 1992), 337.
24. This ecumenical dialogue and collaboration was noticeably absent within Ethiopia when competition for converts between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church was the order of the day. See Festo Mkenda, *Mission for Everyone: A Story of Jesuits in Eastern Africa 1555–2012* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2013), 65–118.
25. UNHCR, "High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection and Challenges: Faith and Protection," opening remarks by Mr. Antonio Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Geneva: Palais des Nations, December 12, 2012), 4, <http://www.unhcr.org/50c84f5f9.html>, accessed June 18, 2013. See also his concluding remarks on the same theme, <http://www.unhcr.org/50cb39dc9.html>, accessed June 18, 2013.
26. UNHCR, "Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders," <http://www.unhcr.org/51b6de419.html>, accessed June 18, 2013.
27. Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See, "Faith and Protection: Key Elements in the Catholic Response to Refugees," <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opedocPDFViewer.html?docid=50af94399&query=faith%20and%20protection>, accessed June 17, 2013.
28. "Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity," no. 28.

CHAPTER 16



GHANAIAN PRESBYTERIANS IN AMERICA

WHY SOME JOIN AMERICAN DENOMINATIONS AND OTHERS DON'T

Moses Biney

INTRODUCTION

June 27, 2014, in Columbus, Ohio

The conference room of the Crown Plaza Columbus North Worthington Hotel was almost filled. Members from about 17 Ghanaian Presbyterian churches and fellowships in the United States and Canada were gathered for their first Asempatre conference.¹ The conference, which is the culmination of two years' planning, was themed "Partners in Sowing, Partners in Harvesting" based on Matthew 13:3–9, 18–23. Participants had arrived the previous day by air and on buses, trains, and cars from Chicago, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia in the United States and also from Calgary, Montreal, and Toronto in Canada.

Music began to play. The combined "praise team"—singers and instrumentalists from a number of the congregations—sang hymns and songs of praise to the accompaniment of organ and drums, guitars, cymbals, and other instruments. Soon the room was filled with loud music and clapping and dancing. Many danced in the open space between the seats and the dais. Several youth also got onto the "dancing floor." With vibrant strides and gyrations of

the body, they danced to the music. Some blew whistles while others shouted with joy.

A major highlight of this evening's program was a revival. The "revival evangelist," an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, had in the last five years visited a number of churches in the United States and Canada, "sharing his gifts in ministration and healing."²² Focusing on Psalm 105:4–5, he pointed to the Psalmist's awareness of God as a "God of miracles." His exhortation was a mixture of bible readings and interpretation, humorous illustrations, stern reprimands, and dire warnings. After about an hour, he invited persons needing prayers to come forward. Prayers were said for the sick and for those in need of jobs and general prosperity. Some fell as he touched them, others screamed or moaned. The healing and deliverance went on for about two hours. Much of what I was observing is typical of deliverance services in Ghanaian congregations.

Observing and participating in this exuberant service brought to mind a couple of questions, some of which will be addressed in this chapter. First, what is the nature of the partnership these congregations seek? Second, what are the possible hindrances to achieving that partnership? Third, will the Presbyterian Church (USA), or PC(USA), to which these congregations belong, wholly accept this form of worship as authentic and not peripheral or subordinate to its predominantly Calvinistic theology and Anglo-Saxon-flavored liturgical practices?

The chapter assesses the current relationships between the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the PC(USA) through a study of the Conference of Ghanaian Presbyterian Churches. Broadly, the chapter looks at some of the ecclesiological and ecumenical, social, and theological issues that are at the core of relationship building. It argues for a robust ecclesiological imagination and innovation on the part of both American denominations and African immigrants.

GHANAIAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES AND FAITH

Faith moves often through migration. Throughout generations, humans have moved from their homelands to lands far and near. In many cases, migrants' determination to travel and their persistence and fortitude in the face of challenges on their journey are largely attributable to their personal faith. Traveling out of one's "home"—from

among one's people and the familiar to a new land with its associated uncertainties—often causes many migrants to rely on divine guidance before, during, and after migration.

Since the 1970s, migration from Ghana to the United States has increased astronomically. This is part of the general increase in post-1965 African migration to North America. These Ghanaian immigrants, the majority of whom are Christians, have brought their own brands of Christianity to practice and also propagate. They have formed numerous congregations in cities and towns in North America.³ All forms of Ghanaian Christianity are present in the United States—mainline Protestant Churches; Roman Catholics; African Independent Churches such as Aladura, Cherubim, and Seraphim; and Pentecostals/Charismatics.

This development is connected to two important and interrelated shifts in global Christianity that have occurred since the last half of the twentieth century. First is the explosion of Christianity in the southern parts of the world—Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania—which has been well noted by a number of scholars.⁴ Second is the growing presence of Christians from the Global South in the North. In the United States, for instance, several Christians from Africa, Asia, and Latin America have formed congregations and ministries that aim at serving the spiritual and social needs of both their particular immigrant groups and other Americans. This is what some scholars have referred to as “reverse mission.” It is fair to say, then, that the minimal growth of Christianity in the United States and Canada is influenced by the increased migration of Christians from the Global South.

The growth in the United States of congregations with roots in Ghana and Africa in general, has very important ecclesiological implications. Among other things, it raises fundamental questions regarding the catholicity, identity, and mission of the church. Second, it calls for a critical examination of the ecumenical relationships and partnerships between recent migrant churches and the host Christian denominations and churches.

Ghanaian Presbyterians in North America are largely from the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), a mainline protestant denomination in Ghana. PCG began in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in 1828 and has roots in the missionary efforts of the Evangelical Mission of Basel (Basel Mission), the Monrovia Church of Jamaica, and the United Free Church of Scotland. Other Ghanaian Presbyterians are from the Evangelical Presbyterian of Church and the Global Evangelical Church. Both denominations have roots in the mission efforts of

the North German Mission Society (Norddeutsche Mission, Bremen) and the Basel Mission.

Most Ghanaian Presbyterians who migrate to the United States primarily, like migrants from other parts of the world, do so for reasons other than religious propagation. They leave their home countries hoping to find better economic, educational, and social opportunities for themselves and their families. Nonetheless, many also carry with them their faith commitments and religious participation. Often upon reaching the United States, many realize too soon that life there is far different from what they had envisioned it to be before migration. In the face of challenges such as racism, isolation, marginalization, and what they consider to be moral and spiritual decadence, some organize themselves into fellowships and congregations that provide them with communal and spiritual support.

In the early 1980s, a number of Ghanaian Presbyterians living in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut began organizing themselves into a prayer fellowship. Elsewhere, I have indicated how the formation of this fellowship was precipitated by the mysterious deaths of Ghanaian immigrants in the New York area.⁵ Other non-Presbyterians joined the fellowship. Eventually, this led to the formation, in 1985, of the Ghanaian Presbyterian Church in New York (now, Presbyterian Church of Ghana in New York). This congregation, which is directly under the ecclesiastical control and direction of the PCG, nurtured a number of leaders who subsequently formed other congregations in cities in the United States. In 1991, a group including three women left the congregation and began a fellowship in Brooklyn, which evolved into the Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church. In a similar way, another group from the Manhattan congregation established the Presbyterian Church of Ghana Mission in the Bronx. This served as the beginnings for the present-day Emmanuel Presbyterian Reformed Church in the Bronx. Thus, within a decade and a half, a number of Ghanaian Presbyterian congregations and fellowships were formed in Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey, Texas, Chicago, and New York.

CONFERENCE OF GHANAIAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES, NORTH AMERICA

A critical issue that has always bedeviled the formation and mission of Ghanaian Presbyterian congregations and fellowships is whether or not to be affiliated to the PC(USA) or to operate as satellites of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. The PC(USA) maintains partnerships with all Ghanaian Presbyterian denominations. Logically, one would

expect that all these newly formed Ghanaian congregations would seek some affiliation with the PC(USA). This is, however, not the case. While some are affiliates of PC(USA), others are not. The latter group is affiliated with either the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) or the PCG. Most of those affiliated with the PC(USA) have organized themselves together with Ghanaian Presbyterian churches affiliated with the Presbyterian Church of Canada under an umbrella association called the Conference of Ghanaian Presbyterian Church, North America (CGPC). In terms of polity and administration, these congregations operate under the direction of their respective American and Canadian denominations while maintaining many of their Ghanaian Presbyterian cultural, liturgical, and theological practices. In its 2010 report, the Conference of Ghanaian Presbyterian Church (CGPC) is described as “a gathering of Ghanaian inspired Presbyterian Churches and Fellowships which are chartered or recognized under the constitutions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Presbyterian Church in Canada.”⁶

CGPC must be distinguished from another group of Ghanaian Presbyterian churches, Overseas Mission Field (OMF), which are essentially satellites of the PCG. There were 17 member congregations and fellowships of CGPC as of June 2014. This shows an increase from the 13 members listed in a 2010 report. The formation of four more churches over the four-year period points to both the continual growth of Ghanaian churches and the desire of some to be affiliated to the mainline American protestant denominations.

MISSIONIZING AMERICA

The notion among some scholars that congregations formed by immigrants, particularly those from non-Western cultures, are nothing more than “ethnic” congregations must be put to rest. These new African churches are dynamic and highly proliferating congregations with a strong sense of mission—a mission to proclaim the Christian gospel to the ends of the world. They seek to reinvigorate Christian belief and practice in the United States and unashamedly do so through their exuberant worship styles; strong belief in and often strict interpretation of the Bible; focus on fasting, prayer, and personal righteousness; and other such spiritual disciplines. During conversations with me, leaders of some of these congregations articulated a mission that is directed toward rejuvenating American Christianity. Many saw American mainline Christianity as having lost its luster and edge in society and that it was therefore in need of “a shot

in the arm.” They pointed at the continuous loss of membership to the American mainline protestant denominations over the past half a century as a clear example of this.

Members of CGPC focus on ministry among Ghanaian immigrants and their families, and they consider the broader mission of reaching out to persons of different races and ethnicities as their ultimate goal. These congregations adopt a “bottom-up” approach to mission as opposed to the “top-down” approach employed by many Western missions in Africa and elsewhere in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These African congregations, in all cases, are formed by individuals who migrated to the United States for their own personal reasons—often to seek better economic opportunities. Few of these are trained clergy and missionaries. They receive little to no directives and no financial support from “home churches” or “mission boards,” as was the case of many Western missionaries to Africa. Thus the initial vision and mission of the congregations are set by the founders and leaders of these faith communities.

CHALLENGES OF PARTNERSHIP

CGPC and PCG

The theme for the *Asempatrew* conference, “Partners in Sowing, Partners in Harvesting,” reflects the CGPC’s yearning for a stronger relationship not only with the PC(USA) but, more important, with its home denomination, the PCG. Records I saw during my research reveal the existence of only a tenuous official relationship between CGPC and the PCG. To date, there is no official agreement between the PCG and its partner church, the PC(USA), regarding the status of these congregations within the two denominations. Many reasons account for this: the most prominent is that the PCG wants all Ghanaian Presbyterian congregations, such as those in the CGPC, to be directly under its ecclesiastical control. A “Proposed Policy Paper on Global Mission,” dated June 18, 2004, and sent by the then director of mission and evangelism of the PCG to all PCG ministers of overseas congregations, outlines four reasons PCG must organize its members abroad to form congregations despite the fact that they have partners in these places.

The memo states,⁷

1. Ghanaian Presbyterians want to be close to their cultural heritage even in foreign lands. They want to dance to the tune of drums,

- and they want to sing hymns in their own language. They also want to their children to have a taste of culture they so much cherish. The hunger has led to the springing up of PCG.
2. Our Ghanaian Presbyterians sometimes feel unwelcome in the host Presbyterian/Reformed churches.
 3. PCG members eager to find places of worship and communities of faith often join non-Presbyterian churches, especially when they find no PCG congregations in the immediate vicinities. Over time, when they are rooted in these congregations and some of them have become leaders, they are lost to the PCG forever even though their names might be in a PCG register somewhere in Ghana.
 4. Each Ghanaian denomination abroad tries to keep its own identity, hence the need to for the PCG members to come together to keep their identity.

As a follow-up to this document, copies of an unsigned and undated “Memorandum of Understanding”⁸ between the PCG and the PC(USA) were also sent to the congregations sometime in 2005. The document among other things proposes a common framework for PCG/PC (USA) regarding these congregations. It states,

- 1.1. Both the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Presbyterian Church (USA) share a deep commitment to sharing the gospel and building strong Presbyterian churches for the Ghanaian Immigrants in the USA. We welcome the initiative of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in mission in the USA and want the engagement to be done in *partnership with the Presbyterian Church of USA* [emphasis mine].
- 1.2. The model we want to promote going forward for new church development with Ghanaian immigrants is that those churches will have a *vital* relationship with Presbyterian congregations in both countries.
- 1.3. For existing Ghanaian congregations in the USA with membership in only one of our churches, we encourage them to develop active relationship with the local Presbyterian Church USA presbytery and maintain active support of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.⁹

The partnership envisioned in this framework and the “Memorandum of Understanding,” in general, by all accounts has not happened. The two denominations have yet to find a way of working together to allow these Ghanaian congregations to have a “vital relationship” with each of them. Considering the current relationships between the two

denominations, and more especially the fact that the PCG has established a presbytery in the United States, I do not see that happening soon.

CGPC and PC(USA)

The Presbyterian Church (USA) recognizes the fellowships and congregations in CGPC as bona fide congregations through their respective presbyteries. Even so, the Book of Order—the constitution of the PC(USA)—refers to them as “immigrant fellowships and congregations.”¹⁰ Such a designation suggests temporality and marginality even if unintended. In addition, nothing substantial is said in the Book of Order regarding the formation, ecclesiastical status, and ecumenical relationships of immigrant congregations and fellowships.

It must be noted, however, that through its Racial Ethnic and Women’s Ministries, the PC(USA) supports the development of these immigrant congregations and fellowships. The associate for African Emerging Ministries is charged specifically with providing congregational support to CGPC congregations and fellowships. This support, which includes providing resources for the growth of these congregations and also helping them resolve problems at midcouncil levels, according to the associate for African Emerging Ministries, is based on “the principle of sharing in mission.”¹¹ An important goal the office seeks to accomplish is to facilitate the learning of “best practices of our Christian worship from each other, and learn from the best forms of democratic practices in the Presbyterian Church (USA).”¹² To achieve this, the office plans to “connect African groups with each other.” This is a laudable yet limited objective. Though these African emerging ministries gain the space, resources, and access to networks needed to thrive, their interactions are more among and within their own African circles rather than with the other non-African congregations. This has both positive and negative effects. While it provides opportunities for these congregations to network with other African congregations and thereby retain elements of their African Christian identities, it has the potential of creating “ghetto” congregations that have limited interaction with non-African congregations and the denomination as a whole.

PRESBYOPIA

Literally, the word “presbyopia” translates from the Greek as “seeing like an old man.” It refers to the decline in the eye’s ability to focus

on near objects. Denotatively, then, it has nothing to do with being Presbyterian or even religious. However, it provides a very befitting image for our current discussion. I use it here, only metaphorically, to describe the shortcomings of the current partnership between PC(USA) and PCG, especially as it relates to the formation and mission of Ghanaian Presbyterian congregations and fellowships in the United States. Both denominations appear to have suffered a decline in their sense of doing mission through partnership. More so on the side of PCG, they seem to have lost sight of the great opportunities for collaboration in mission available. Though close to each other, physically and metaphorically, the two denominations see a blurred visage of the other. Privately, some PC(USA) members consider the Ghanaian Presbyterians too primitive in their beliefs and practices and as such lacking the theological sophistication needed for doing ministry in the United States. In response to my question about how he saw Ghanaian Presbyterians in the presbytery he belongs to, one of my interviewees, a member of a congregation in New Jersey, put it starkly: "I admire them for their religious fervor. Many of them exhibit a certainty of belief in God and God's power reminiscent of the early Christians. However, they seem oblivious of the many social and cultural changes that have taken place over time—between the time of Jesus and now." On the other hand, some Ghanaian Presbyterians consider the largely liberal theology and practices of the PC(USA) and many American mainline protestant denominations too watered down and "unspiritual." The following comment from one of the members of CGPC is revealing: "Though there are many churches and religious organizations in the US, Christianity in America especially viewed from the Presbyterian Church (USA), which is my denomination, has two features. On one level, members are too intellectual to be practical. And on the other, those at the base who are not very theologically intellectual are very zealous in social activities. Spirituality is often not very central to church life."¹³

There is a more serious concern, particularly for the PCG and many of the Ghanaian congregations under its ecclesiastical control. They disagree with PC(USA)'s stance on homosexuality, particularly the ordination of LGBTQ persons. This disagreement was made official at the Eleventh General Assembly meeting of PCG, where a decision was taken to sever relationship with any partner church that ordains homosexuals as ministers and allows for same sex marriages.

In a report issued by the ad hoc committee appointed to provide guidelines for the implementation of this decision (Decision 9), the committee explains,

The PCG at its General Assembly in 2011 felt strongly that homosexuality is unbiblical (Lev. 18:22); unnatural (Rom. 1:24) and un-African (since there is no word for homosexuality in most Ghanaian languages). The Christian community in Ghana totally condemns this abominable act which if left unchecked will bring the wrath of God upon our nation and the consequences will be unbearable. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana as a Bible-believing and practicing church therefore finds it unacceptable any act or decision taken by any ecumenical partnering church—whether home or abroad—that tends to suggest that homosexuality is not sinful.¹⁴

Though the PCG has not formally severed its relationship with the PC(USA), attitudes and comments from some of its top officials show a certain level of distance between the two partners.¹⁵ This has undoubtedly had a negative effect on the relationship between the congregations that are affiliated to the PC(USA) and those under PCG's control.

SEEING THE CHURCH THROUGH DIFFERENT LENSES

The identity and mission of the church is undergoing considerable change. This is due partly to the huge growth of Christianity in the Global South and its decline in the North. With many Christians coming from non-Western cultures and the growth of emerging Christianity, beliefs and practices of the Western church that were considered to be standard have now come under scrutiny and even objected to in some cases. Christian denominations and congregations need to reassess and re-envision what it means to be the church. Here, I suggest two lenses for the process.

The Church in an Ecology

One important way to see the church is as existing within an ecology. Seeing the church ecologically means seeing it in context. The concept of religious ecology can be traced back to the “Chicago School.”¹⁶ It refers to the “patterns of relations, status, and interaction among religious organizations within a locality.”¹⁷ Religious ecology as a frame for understanding congregations requires that we pay particular attention to the various other organizations that are present within the locality or context where the particular congregation or denomination undertakes ministry. The context also means being aware of

the various levels of relationships that may exist between and among the religious and nonreligious institutions within the ecology. Nancy Eiesland and Stephen Warner point out, “A congregation is linked to networks and events across geographic and temporal space . . . [Congregations] are also characterized by shared conversations, common practices, and structures that promote cooperation and exchange.”¹⁸

The ecological metaphor helps us to picture the church as an organism that is part of a whole ecosystem. Within that ecosystem exist diverse kinds of animals, plants, and other life forms that are linked together at different levels and for different purposes. These creatures compete and cooperate to maintain themselves and the entire ecosystem. In a similar way, the church or a congregation in an ecology is one among many interrelated parts. It is linked in terms of geographical location, culture, history, vision, and networks to other institutions—religious, social, political, economic, and so on. What each part does, or does not do, affects the others in the ecology.

The Church on the Move

A second way to see the church is as a church on the move. By movement, I mean both relocation, such as in the case of migration and transnationalization, and also agency or the capacity to act. The church has for centuries organized itself as a territorial entity. The history of the church’s involvement in the conquering of peoples and acquisitions of lands and territory since the days of Constantine the Great is well known. As a sociological fact, denominations and congregations are structured to occupy geographical space. They often originate and operate within the boundaries of particular nation-states. Their identities and mission are therefore shaped by their home nations. Denominations such as the Anglican Church (Church of England), Russian Orthodox Church, Ethiopian Orthodox Church, American Baptist, and so on are good examples.

While denominations have always found ways of doing “mission” outside their original homelands, it has become far more common in the last fifty years or so. This is attributable to globalization and its attendant huge migration and transnationalism that are unfolding in the world today. As Steven Vertovec defines it, transnationalism refers to the “sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning nation states.”¹⁹ These border crossings of persons, goods, and services have led to growing interconnectivity between peoples from different parts of the universe and have important implications for the church and its mission. First,

faith communities that were once local—only confined to particular nations and localities—are now global. They have crossed boundaries into other nations (mostly from the Global South to the Global North) to do mission. Second, Christians from the so-called former mission lands are now in the West to do mission. Third, these formerly missionized have “found their own voices” and consider the re-evangelization of the West as central to their mission. A clear evidence of these is the presence of Ghanaian Presbyterians in the United States and Canada. It is important that denominations’ congregations, and in our case the PC(USA) and PCG, seeking to work together realize these changes and their implications in terms of power dynamics and ecumenical relations in this postcolonial era.

ECCLESIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

Much of what I have said so far suggests that the two denominations have to do a lot more in order to work together as true partners. More particularly, the Ghanaian Presbyterian churches in the United States—both those affiliated with the PC(USA) and those under the control of PCG—must strive harder to work together as partners in mission. This will require a good deal of ecclesiological imagination. Drawing on C. Wright Mill’s well-known concept of “sociological imagination,”²⁰ I employ “ecclesiological imagination” loosely to convey the idea of thinking ourselves away from familiar and often outdated and unhelpful forms of ecclesiastical organization, beliefs, and practices. Churches have often seen themselves as institutions that are isolated and insulated from society—as being in, but not of this world. Overemphasis on denominational exceptionalism, particularisms, and exilic consciousness has often created wedges of exclusion and acrimony between churches. This seems to be partly the case in the partnership relationship PC(USA) and PCG and their affiliated congregations.

With ecclesiological imagination, the church must be seen as a communion of peoples in diverse societies and contexts connected by their belief in the triune God and as a communion of peoples who possess agency and constantly interact and wrestle with the social structures that seek to constrain them. In an age of globalization and migration, members of the communion impact and are impacted by not only local issues but also global ones. Denominations can no longer function like ossified institutions, each claiming to possess the canonized and ultimate norms for life. Since no one church can do God’s mission alone, no church must be an island unto itself. Both the

PC(USA) and PCG denominations must, therefore, reevaluate their “partnership in mission” within the context of a church that exists in an ecology and is highly transnational.

CONCLUSION: THAT THE ALL MAY BE ONE

This chapter has attempted to sketch the current relationship between the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and its impact on the formation, organization, and mission of Ghanaian Presbyterian churches in the United States since the 1980s. It does so within the broader context of examining the difficulties congregations formed by recent immigrants from Africa face in forging meaningful relationships with both their “host” and their “home” denominations. In an even broader way, it speaks to the challenges these African congregations face in their attempts at getting rooted in America. As the chapter indicates, a major cause of the failure to attain a *vital* relationship between the two denominations is the failure to recognize each other as different parts of the same Body of Christ as described by the Apostle Paul.²¹ Though distinct in identity and functions, like parts of the body, members of the church are all essential: they have been called into a collaborative mission of extending God’s kingdom on earth.

Over half a century ago, H. Richard Niebuhr, in his book *Social Sources of Denominationalism*, lamented what he considered to be an “ethical failure”—that is, “the failure of churches to transcend the social conditions which fashion them into caste-organizations, . . . to resist the temptations of making their own self-preservation and extension the primary object of their endeavor.”²² Though the somewhat frosty relationship between the PC(USA) and the PCG is nothing compared to the divisions and acrimonious relationships that existed between denominations during Niebuhr’s time, the focus of the two denominations on “self-preservation and extension” nonetheless hampers their work, particularly in the areas of church planting and growth, pastoral exchanges, and mutual support. It must be noted that the two denominations continue to maintain relations at various levels. The PC(USA), for instance, continues its mission works in Ghana through its partnership with the PCG. In addition, many PCG congregations maintain various levels of partnerships with PC(USA) congregations in about nine presbyteries. This is a clear indication of the desire by the denominations to work together, especially at the congregational level.

This desire for partnership in mission, outlined in the 2003 General Assembly Policy Statement of the PC(USA), proposes that partnership in mission “involves two or three organizations who agree to submit themselves to a common task or goal, mutually giving and receiving and surrounded with prayer so that God’s work will be faithfully accomplished.”²³ Doing mission in partnership, it says, must be guided by the following principles: (1) shared grace and thanksgiving, (2) mutuality and interdependence, (3) recognition and respect, (4) open dialogue and transparency, and (5) sharing of resources.

These are laudable principles for partnership. However, they remain ideals that are far from being achieved as far as the relationship between PC(USA) and PCG reveals. To realize them, both denominations need to look beyond theological and ethical ideals and consider more critically the historical and social conditions—such as colonialism, imperialism, uneven distribution of economic resources, perceptions of cultural superiority, and spiritual arrogance—that have and continue to define relationships between the two-thirds world and the Global North.

Jesus, in his priestly prayer recorded in John 17:11, seeks “that all may be one.” Incidentally, this is also the motto of the PCG. In the prayer, Jesus asks that his followers live and work in unity, especially since he was departing from this earth. Twice in the prayer (vv. 11 and 22), Jesus refers to the unity that exists within the triune God as the standard for the unity that must exist between and among his followers. *This must guide the two denominations.*

NOTES

1. Asempatre or Asempatrew is a Twi word that translates as “spreading of the gospel.” In this case, it refers to an evangelistic retreat. At this retreat, Ghanaian Presbyterian churches from various cities and towns in the United States and Canada gathered for fellowship and worship and to learn new ways of doing mission and outreach. This is common practice among churches in Ghana.
2. Conference of Ghanaian Presbyterian Churches, North America, *Ist Asempatrew*, 2014, 9.
3. See Moses O. Biney, *From Africa to America: Religion and Adaptation among Ghanaian Immigrants in New York* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).
4. Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996); Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Maryknoll, NY:

- Orbis, 1996). Christianity has grown enormously in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Asia-Pacific region, where there were relatively few Christians at the beginning of the twentieth century; the population that is Christian in Sub-Saharan Africa climbed from 9 percent in 1910 to 63 percent in 2010, while in the Asia-Pacific region it rose from 3 percent to 7 percent.
5. Moses Biney, "Singing the Lord's Song in a Foreign Land: Communal-ity and Identity in a Ghanaian Immigrant Church," in *African Immigrant Religions in America*, ed. Jacob Olupona and Regina Gemignani (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 259.
 6. Conference of Ghanaian Presbyterian Churches, *2010 Annual Report*.
 7. Godfried A. Bamfo, *Proposed Policy Paper on Global Mission*, Presbyterian Church of Ghana memo to Ministers of Overseas Congregations (M&E/GM06/04), June 18, 2004, 1.
 8. Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Memorandum of Understanding between the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) and the Presbyterian Church of USA (PCUSA) on Ghanaian Immigrant Congregations in the United States*.
 9. PCG, *Memorandum of Understanding*, 1.
 10. Presbyterian Church (USA), *Book of Order 2013–2015: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA)* (Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly, 2013), 32.
 11. Presbyterian Mission Agency, *African Emerging Ministries Directory 2014–2015*, https://www.presbyterianmission.org/site_media/media/uploads/african/african_emerging_directory_2014.pdf, accessed on August 27, 2015.
 12. *African Emerging Ministries Directory*, p. B.
 13. Interview notes, June 2013.
 14. Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Guidelines for the Implementation of 11th General Assembly Decision* (Accra: Presbyterian Press, 2013), 11.
 15. In a letter dated October 1, 2013, sent from the CGPC to the General Assembly Council of the PCG, for instance, the CGPC alleges that Rev. Prof. Martey (Moderator of the General Assembly of PCG) openly stated that the PC(USA) is not "Bible-based" and "without focus and vision" and that Ghanaian PC(USA) congregations should consider seceding.
 16. This refers to the sociology department of the University of Chicago.
 17. Nancy Eiesland, *A Particularly Place: Urban Restructuring and Religious Ecology in a Southern Exurb* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), xi.
 18. Nancy Eiesland and R. Stephen Warner, "Ecology: Seeing the Congregation in Context," in *Studying Congregations: A Handbook*, ed. Nancy Ammerman, Carl Dudley, and William McKinney (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 40–47.
 19. Steven Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (London: Routledge, 2009), 2.

20. C. W. Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).
21. See 1 Corinthians 12:14–27.
22. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Hamden, CT: Shoe Spring Press, 1954), 264.
23. Presbyterian Church (USA), “Presbyterian Do Mission in Partnership: 2003 General Assembly Policy Statement,” n.d., <https://www.pcusa.org/resource/presbyterians-do-mission-partnership>, accessed December 10, 2014.

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