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ARTICLES

REVIEWS

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Introduction

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This collection of articles on migration begins with a description of the work of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees by Esther Rowan Moodie, Co-ordinator of SFAR. In the second contribution I reflect on my experiences as chaplain of Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre. The third article's context is Australia. Don Browning reflects on ministry among the Karen refugee community.

The final two articles are more academic. Paul Wilson treats the New Testament example of Priscilla and Aquila. Glenn Butner, the author of *Jesus the Refugee*, deals with patristic teaching and its relevance for contemporary issues.

We are privileged that the Executive of the Scottish Refugee Council, Dr Sabir Zazai, himself a refugee from Afghanistan, has agreed to write a Foreword to this collection.

Back to list of ARTICLES

Foreword

Sabai Zazai, OBE, FRSE
Chief Executive, Scottish Refugee Council

No one ever expects to abandon life as they know it. Whether forced to leave their home in the middle of the night as war rages around them or make plans to escape a regime that suppresses their identity and faith, it is not a situation anyone wishes to find themselves in. For people seeking protection, it is not a choice between staying where they are or moving across the country – it is someone having to leave everything and everyone they have ever known behind and trust that an uncertain future is better than the one they face by staying in their homeland. While there are many complexities around global conflict, the plight of people forced to flee should be easy to understand: this is not something anyone would put themselves through if they had any other choice.

The story of displacement is a rapidly increasing one, with 122.6 million people forcibly displaced across the world as a result of persecution, conflict, violence and human rights violations. We end the year having witnessed some of the most horrifying atrocities in recent history. Gaza is currently the deadliest place for civilians in the world, with the death toll exceeding 44,300 people – with 70 per cent of victims being women and children. Sudan is in the throes of the world's most severe humanitarian crisis, with up to 12 million people forced to leave their homes. The conflict, which forced the closure of thousands of schools, has left 19 million children without education. Meanwhile, in Ukraine, intensifying attacks on civilians and infrastructure have left 14.6 million people in the country still in need of humanitarian assistance.

As the number of people forced into exile rises, so do the numbers of people seeking asylum and other protections. While new conflicts continue to erupt and wars fail to end, as long as people continue to be persecuted for being true to themselves, asylum will play an important role in helping vulnerable people reach safety. The Refugee Convention, the cornerstone of protection for people seeking asylum, has saved and protected the lives of millions of people around the world who have been forced to flee war, violence and persecution. There has been a long-standing tendency to politicise the issue of asylum, for bad actors to capitalise on hatred and fear, but most people recognise the importance of our international obligations and identify with the humanitarian desire to support people who need our help.

Having witnessed the worst of what the world has to offer – especially at a time when it seems as if our politicians are trying to make things worse,

not better, for people seeking safety – I have always taken tremendous comfort in communities who rise to the occasion to help. This help does not always make headlines and it does not change the devastating impact of what is going on in the world around us, but it has a profound effect on the people who need our help. My organisation works tirelessly to give people the support and hope that they need when they are forced to rebuild their lives. My own hope in humanity is always restored when I see just how many people make the time and effort to support us in this mission and warmly welcome people seeking safety with open hearts and minds.

Back to list of ARTICLES

Welcoming the Stranger: Reflecting on nine years of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees

Esther Rowan Moodie
Co-ordinator of SFAR

Introduction

What moves us to act? What does it take to transform thoughts and intentions into concrete actions that have a meaningful impact on the world around us? This is a question that gripped philosophers and theologians seeking to understand the process of human decision making. It has also been of keen interest to church leaders, though usually more concerned with the practical issue of how to direct their flock to a desired goal.

In the classical world it was thought that the rhetorician had three tools in their arsenal. The first, Ethos, an appeal to the authority and credibility of the speaker. The second, Pathos, an appeal to the emotions and empathy. Finally, Logos, an appeal to the hearer's logic and reason. For people of faith we might wish to add Theos to that list, an appeal to the will of God. Believers aspire to be shaped by God's calling on their life, to live in accordance with the values of our faith. In this task theology plays a central role, helping us to discern and articulate what those values are.

The reality however, is often very different from aspiration. We are all aware that our actions are shaped by many influences, with theology sometimes left to follow after experience. I don't mean this as a criticism or to devalue the work of theologians, but simply as a reflection on the forces which shape us.

In this article I hope to share with you some of the history and lessons learned from Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees (SFAR), Scotland's multi-faith partnership committed to welcoming and supporting refugees and people seeking asylum. As its name suggests, SFAR is a project focused on action, ensuring that faith communities across Scotland are actively involved in the work of integration and resettlement. I start with the reflection on what moves us to act because the primary impetus for this project, now nearly ten years old, was not a line of scripture or a theological treatise. The story of SFAR begins with a photograph.

The power of an image

On the 2nd September 2015 a photograph was taken of the two-year-old Alan Kurdi, lying face down on a Bodrum beach by the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Alan was from a Kurdish family from Kobanî Syria. His family had already been displaced several times by the Syrian Civil War.

They fled for a final time when ISIS besieged their home city. The family had applied for resettlement in Canada but were rejected. Feeling they lacked any other options, Alan's family paid $5,860 for a space on a small dinghy making its way to safety in Greece. The boat capsized just 5 minutes after departure. Alan drowned in the Mediterranean and his body was discovered by locals a few hour later.

The Turkish journalist, Nilüfer Demir, captured a series of now famous pictures of the young boy's lifeless body. Even now almost 10 years later they remain shocking images, unflinching in their record of one family's tragedy. The images quickly went viral and transformed the conversation on the crisis in the Mediterranean. Attention on huge numbers of people making perilous journeys across the sea had been growing for months. But now this crisis had a face, and it was the face of a dead child. This had a profound emotional impact felt across the world and drove home the human impact not only of the war that caused the Kurdi family to flee, but also on the European policies that were driving people to make such desperate journeys. Pressure began to grow on Western governments to respond and to offer safe and legal alternatives to these voyages.

In the week following the publication of the photograph of Alan Kurdi's body, the then First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, convened a summit to begin a conversation as to how Scotland could respond. The leaders of all of Scotland's political parties attended, as did representatives from civil society: organisations working with refugees, on humanitarian relief, and to promote human right. The Scottish Trade Union Council and the Church of Scotland also took part, and the event heard from refugees living in Scotland, ensuring their perspectives were listened to and respected at the start of, what was for many, a new moment in society and politics. The summit met on a Friday, and the weekend media coverage was full of debate and discussion about the responsibilities and obligations the United Kingdom could fulfil as a globally responsible nation.

It was in this context that the following Monday the then Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the UK would be offering to resettle up to 20,000 vulnerable Syrian refugees over the coming five years. While the move was criticised for its lack of ambition, it was still welcomed as a step in the right direction

Context of faith groups and refugees

While the world was becoming ever more aware of the situations facing migrants, faith groups in Scotland were also responding. Communities of faith have a long history of supporting refugees and people seeking sanctuary. A longer history could include the role of synagogues in organising the resettlement of Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in the

Russian Empire, the formation of an ecumenical Churches' Refugee Committee to response to Belgian civilians displaced during the First World War,[1] or the first Mosques and Islamic organisation founded by people displaced by the partition of India.

But a key moment in modern history came in 1999 when Glasgow was designed as a dispersal city for people seeking asylum. For the next 20 years Glasgow was home to a fluctuating population of around 2,000 – 6,500 people seeking asylum, around 10% of the total UK refugee population. Glasgow was for much of this time home to the largest population of asylum seekers of any local authority in the United Kingdom. The vast majority of people entering the UK to claim asylum arrived with next to no resources, and the decision by the Labour Government in 2000 to remove any ability to work meant that people seeking asylum would be trapped in destitution, forced to rely on meagre asylum support payments. As well as the challenges that came from not being able to work, people seeking asylum reported struggling with accessing learning English, experiences of racism, and a feeling of powerlessness as they waited on their cases.[2] This was the era of Dawn Raids and the protests against them; the setting up of the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees and the work of the Glasgow Girls.[3] In Glasgow a network of faith groups stepped in to support this population, offering services such English language classes, volunteering opportunities, and befriending schemes. However due to the dispersal policy this remained largely the concern of Glasgow-based communities.

Founding Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees

This was transformed in 2015, first by the growing awareness of the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean, symbolised by the images of Alan Kurdi, and by the announcement of the Syrian Resettlement Scheme. Initial conversations began within the individual denominations, but soon discussions began around the possibility of collaboration. Under the initiative of the Church of Scotland early conversations were held between the different churches in Scotland about an ecumenical response, however it was soon proposed that a multi-faith one be explored. This was motivated by the fact that Syria, the subject of the first resettlement scheme, is itself a

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[1] Jacqueline Jenkinson. "Refugees Welcome Here: Caring for Belgian refugees in Scotland during the First World." History Scotland - May/June 2018 https://www.storre.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/27202/1/Refugees%20Welcome%20Here.pdf

[2] Scottish Government (2014). New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities: 2014–2017 pp.29.

[3] https://education.gov.scot/resources/glasgow-girls-campaigning-for-the-rights-of-asylum-seekers-learner-participation/

religiously diverse country; majority Sunni Muslim, but with significant Shia, Alawite, Christian, and Druze minorities. To offer informed and appropriate support for such a religiously diverse community a broad range of perspectives was thought to be helpful.

This was a new venture, a co-ordinated national response to refugees across different faiths had never been attempted before in the UK. While Scotland's religious traditions are diverse, the basis of this partnership would be on values shared across our faiths.

The first is our shared commitment to hospitality. As religions that emerged in the Middle East, the three Abrahamic religions are rooted in a cultural heritage with rich traditions of hospitality. This in turn has imbued them with traditions and rituals around welcoming the other. Independently Christianity, Judaism and Islam have all developed the concept of hospitality from its interpersonal roots into a universal value that impacts how we view policies that might exclude or ostracise people on the basis of their background.

The second is the importance of sanctuary. Sacredness is a key component of all faiths. From the Hebrew Scripture emerges the concept of 'Cities of Refuge',[4] and the Kaaba is considered a place of sanctuary, but it is in Medieval Christianity that 'sanctuary' is developed into the right to claim protection. This concept has had a large impact on the modern refugee sector that emerged in the 20th and 21st century. This has manifested in the Sanctuary Cities and States in the USA, as well as the City of Sanctuary movement in the UK.[5] The concept has been seen as a homecoming as churches and faith groups once again invoke the right of peoples to claim sanctuary. This widespread use of an explicitly religious term shows the impact that theologies of refuge have had on wider society.

The third is our common humanitarian concern for people on the move. The Abrahamic Scriptures are filled with stories of migration: the Exodus from Egypt and the exile in Babylon, the Holy Family's flight to Egypt, and the Hijrah of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina. As well as these scriptural legacies, faith communities often have migrant stories within living memory. A large proportion of Jews living in Scotland today are descendants of people who at one time fled persecution, either the Shoah or earlier pogroms; Muslim Scots are often closely connected to stories of migration; and many Scottish Catholics are descendants of Irish migrants, or themselves migrants from Eastern Europe. These groups' experience of antisemitism, islamophobia, and sectarianism respectively can help them to empathise with the discrimination new migrants can experience. While the history of

[4] Numbers 35:11–24

[5] https://cityofsanctuary.org/

Protestant Christians is different, the legacy of displacement through the Scottish Clearances looms large in rural Scotland, and the Protestant churches have long histories of supporting persecuted Christian communities around the world.

These stories have the effect of evoking empathy in their hearers and motivate believers to respond with compassion (*rachamim* in Hebrew, *rahma* in Arabic). The Hebrew Bible states directly, "You shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."[6] This is a call not simply to charity, but to stand in solidarity with people on the move. It was upon these common values that on 2 November 2015 Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees (SFAR) was launched as a multi-faith partnership. The organisations which agreed to work together were:

- Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland
- Church of Scotland
- Interfaith Scotland
- Methodist Church in Scotland
- Muslim Council of Scotland
- Quakers in Scotland
- The Salvation Army – Scotland Office
- Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society
- Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
- Scottish Episcopal Church
- United Free Church of Scotland
- United Reformed Church (National Synod of Scotland)

The largest contribution would be made by the Church of Scotland who would host the project and employ a co-ordinator, while the other faith communities would make significant contributions towards the budget and resourcing of SFAR. The name highlights the centrality of action, SFAR would exist to co-ordinate and encourage the proactive action by faith groups to welcome and support New Scots[7]. SFAR was established in November 2015, initially for twelve months, and later extended to September 2020.

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[6] Leviticus 19:31

[7] *"the term 'New Scots' is used to refer to people living in Scotland who have been forcibly displaced or are making a claim that they have a well-founded fear of persecution. The term 'New Scots' includes people who have been granted refugee status or another form of humanitarian protection, and their dependents; people seeking asylum and people seeking protection as a result of displacement, exploitation or political persecution; as well as those whose application for asylum has been refused, but who remain in Scotland. It also includes people who are or may become stateless and in need of international protection.*

Phase 1: Supporting a nationwide response 2015 - 2020

One of the challenges in the early days of the Syrian Resettlement Scheme was that, unlike the policy of housing asylum seekers in a limited number of 'dispersal cities', Syrian families would be settled across the UK. In the initial stage Local Authorities were given the opportunity to 'opt-in' to the Scheme. Remarkably in Scotland all 32 local authorities did this. This would necessitate a large expansion of Scottish refugee support services from their traditional home in Glasgow across the country. In this faith communities were to play a crucial role, their national networks and presence in every community in Scotland meant that there was potential for support in areas that had no prior experience of welcoming refugees. SFAR played the leading role in equipping faith groups for this task, delivering awareness raising talks, providing training sessions, as well as ongoing advice and support to faith groups throughout Scotland.

The success of this work meant that when the opportunity came for the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) to apply for significant funding from the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, SFAR was invited to be a partner organisation in the bid, which was ultimately successful. This project was called New Scots Integration Programme, and the faith group elements of it consisted of two pieces of work. The first was an expanded awareness raising programme, collaborating with Scottish Refugee Council regional co-ordinators to speak to faith and community groups across Scotland.

The second was to run New Scots Holidays, a pioneering programme that would allow New Scot families the opportunity to spend time away in Scotland's scenic countryside. This would allow for respite and the opportunity to experience the natural beauty we enjoy in Scotland. SFAR's unique contribution as that we could liaise with faith communities in rural areas, ones which traditionally have not worked with refugees, and prepare them to act as hosts for the visiting New Scots. One of the regular questions asked by faith groups during this time was 'what can we do to help' and many wished to go beyond fundraising and advocacy. Rural church groups actively wanted to offer hospitality, as a witness and outworking of their mission and relationships with the world. These local groups would support the New Scots and ensure they had a safe and enjoyable time. In the pilot we assisted churches in the Isle of Skye, Humbie (East Lothian) and Forfar (Angus) to

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New Scots partners understand that there is not a universal consensus around the term New Scots but the consultation has shown that there was agreement on the fact that it conveys a helpful message of inclusion to all who need safety in Scotland for as long as they need it." Scottish Government (2024) New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy pp.11

host holidays. From these experiences we were able to create a toolkit for any faith groups looking to run future holiday breaks.[8]

To expand SFAR's experience in providing integration support we launched the Edinburgh Weekend Club, inspired by a successful model which had been running for some time in Glasgow, organised by Interfaith Glasgow. Each month, a multi faith volunteer team led by a staff member held a family-friendly event for refugees and asylum seekers in Edinburgh. Events included day trips, craft days and Burns Night celebrations, all enjoyed by New Scot families. Leading an integration project ourselves helped us to develop a good base of knowledge in the principles and practice of effective integration, information we were able to share with faith groups across Scotland. In 2020 we handed over responsibility for the Edinburgh Club to the Salaam Team at Edinburgh City Mission.

In addition to practical support we also helped with developing theological and worship resources for Christian groups. In 2018 SFAR worked with the Church of Scotland and Christian Aid to produce Becoming Human Together: A theological reflection on migration.[9] Rooted in the reformed tradition and reflecting specifically on the Scottish context, it nonetheless develops Christian theologies of displacement focused around lament, reconciliation, and reciprocal hospitality. Alongside this we created God With Us[10] with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, a worship resource containing Bible Studies, prayers, songs and liturgies. On its cover is 'The Exiles' by Edinburgh-based artist Lou Davis, a striking image of the Madonna and child wearing yellow lifejackets, an unmistakable reminder of the families that have made the perilous journeys across the Mediterranean.

Finally, we quickly saw the need for political advocacy to accompany our practical support. The wave of popular support following the publication of the Kurdi images was sadly short lived, and the climate among migration returned to being overwhelming hostile. A media monitoring exercise conducted by SFAR in 2017 revealed consistently negative reporting on people seeking sanctuary, with little effort to humanise the individuals in question.[11] Meanwhile the UK Government's Hostile Environment policy remained in place, intentionally placing mental strain and pressure on people seeking sanctuary. Through SFAR's co-ordination of faith groups in

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[8] https://www.sfar.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SRC_Holiday_v3a_24Jan_pages_lr.pdf

[9] https://www.sfar.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Becoming-Human-Together.pdf

[10] https://www.sfar.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/God-With-Us-Booklet_Final-compressed.pdf

[11] https://www.wacceurope.org/projects/refugees-reporting/

Scotland began to develop a collective and consistent voice advocating for refugees and people seeking sanctuary. This included successfully lobbying the UK Government to extend their vulnerable persons resettlement programme to include Community Resettlement, supporting campaigns around asylum and detention, and acting as the UK centre for a Europe-wide research into media portrayals of migrants and refugees.

Phase 2: Resilience in the face of crisis 2020 – present

With SFAR's original remit due to end in 2020, discussions began as to the future of the project. It was decided by the contributing denominations that in order to build on the progress made over the past 5 years that SFAR should continue. The next phase of SFAR would be shaped by the rapidly shifting refugee landscape of Scotland. It would begin in the throes of the Covid-19 pandemic. Amid all the disruption to society one overlooked effect was the impact on people in the asylum system. Many of their support networks were unable to meet and isolation further increased, causing a negative impact on people's mental health.

Then the sector was hit by a series of shocks. First the Taliban victory in Afghanistan and the frantic evacuation of Kabul. In response to this the British Government launched Operation Warm Welcome and promised to honour the commitment and sacrifice made by Afghans who had supported the British forces during the war. As with the Syrian resettlement families were relocated across Scotland, however the speed of the evacuation meant this process was rushed, and so limited support was in place. Promises to resettle large numbers of Afghans from neighbouring states were not forthcoming and Afghans began increasingly relying on travel to the UK themselves to claim asylum. In 2023 Afghans were the largest nationality among those arriving by small boat, and of those whose asylum claim was heard 99% were accepted.[12] SFAR played an active role in aiding faith communities to support Afghans, taking many lessons from our experiences of the Syrian settlement.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 precipitated a further challenge for refugee settlement. The war saw one of the largest displacements of refugees in history. The UK government chose to response with two schemes: the Ukraine Family Scheme which allowed applicants to join family members who were already in the UK, and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme which allowed people in the UK to host Ukrainians in their homes or vacant properties. This was the first time since the UN Refugee Convention was passed that private individuals were able to host refugees in their

[12] https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/afghan-asylum-seekers-and-refugees-in-the-uk/

homes and the result was a truly decentralised resettlement with Ukrainians being hosted in communities across Scotland. This approach allowed for a rapid response and capitalised on the huge outpouring of public support. However, it also brought significant challenges around safeguarding and hosts feeling they had committed to more than they realised. SFAR worked closely with faith groups to connect with hosts and ensure they were well networked and able to access support.

As an additional offer under the wider Homes for Ukraine scheme, the Scottish government launched the Super Sponsorship Scheme. Under this the Scottish Government would act as sponsor, guaranteeing that people will be put up in temporary accommodation until longer term accommodation can be found or they are matched to a Scottish host. The scheme was open for a few months in 2022 and over 38,000 visas were issued. This proved to be more than the Government had expected and placed an enormous strain on housing stock. The Government began to use hotels for initial accommodation, and also two former cruise ships: MS Victoria moored in Leith and MS Ambition in Glasgow, housing around 2500 people between them. Over 216,000 Ukrainians have arrived in the UK, of which Scotland received over 28,000, over 12% of the national total.[13]

In response to the crisis in Ukraine SFAR received funding from an Action of Churches Together in Scotland legacy fund, to employ a churches development officer to lead our response, offering support and training to faith groups, many of whom were new to supporting refugees. Similar to our work with asylum hotels we provided networking opportunities for faith groups located near to the hotel accommodation, as well as the two ships.

While these dramatic events were dominating the news, another crisis was slowly brewing. The UK's backlog of asylum applications had been steadily increasing from a record low of 6,000 in 2010 to 51,000 in 2020, before soaring to 132,000 in 2022.[14] This was not primarily driven by a rise in applications, but in a collapse in the Home Office's capacity to make decisions. This resulted in an accommodation crisis, prompting the then Home Secretary to abandon the dispersal city model and allow the commissioning of asylum accommodation across the UK. In Scotland this saw the rapid commissioning of hotels in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth, Falkirk, Paisley, Erskine, Greenock, Dumfries, Elgin and Bathgate.

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[13] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-visa-data-by-country-upper-and-lower-tier-local-authority

[14] https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/the-uks-asylum-backlog/

To increase our capacity to support people seeking asylum in 2021 we partnered with Faith in Community Scotland to launch the Faithful Welcome project. This would see our two organisations map, engage and support faith groups supporting New Scots. The partnership brings together SFAR's history supporting New Scots with Faith in Community Scotland's experience in asset-based community development and supporting people experiencing poverty. Together we lead a mapping exercise, ran an extensive awareness raising programme, and established a small grants fund for faith groups. It was through this partnership that we organised responses to the rapid expansion of asylum accommodation. We were able to ensure that when hotels opened that local faith groups were informed and supported to offer essential services that would directly impact the lives of vulnerable people.

Sadly, instead of grappling with the crisis through repairing the broken asylum system, the Conservative Government instead embarked on a wave of anti-migrant policies, proposing in quick succession the Nationality and Borders Act, the Illegal Migration Act, and most infamously the Rwanda Scheme, which would have seen people seeking sanctuary deported to the nation of Rwanda, a nation which had been criticised by international organisations for its inability to uphold human rights. These measures were a threat not only to refugees in this country, but to the entire system of humanitarian protection. SFAR worked with partners to ensure faith groups were vocal in their opposition to these measures, and in an era of increasingly hostile and dehumanising rhetoric faith groups have persisted in championing the language of welcome and friendship.

Closer to home SFAR has co-ordinated faith groups to support the campaign for free bus travel for all people seeking asylum in Scotland. People seeking asylum are prohibited from working and asylum support rates are pitifully low: £49.18 for those in standard accommodation and for those living in hotels just £8.86 per week.[15] When just one day ticket in Glasgow costs £5.60 this makes public transport all but inaccessible. Free travel would allow people to attend important appointments, visit places of worship, stay connected with friends, and more. This would have a transformational impact on people's mental health and help make Scotland a more welcoming place for those seeking sanctuary.

In the summer of 2023 SFAR organised for the Scottish Religious Leaders Forum to sign a statement supporting the policy and SFAR members joined the campaign. When the policy was debated in the Scottish Parliament multiple MSPs referenced the statement as evidence of the widespread support for the policy across Scottish society. Despite promises from the

[15] https://www.gov.uk/asylum-support/what-youll-get

Scottish Government to deliver this change, at the time of writing free bus travel remains undelivered. Until it is we will continue to call for this life changing measure.

Lessons learned

During the nine years of SFAR's existence we have gathered a series of important lessons that have shaped the project going forward. The first was undoubtedly the value of working across faiths. This was a bold decision that had never been attempted before in the UK. This came with risks but also significant advantages. Learning from the different traditions would prove to be invaluable, especially when developing training resources on cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Working in partnership across faiths also helped the faith groups grant trust and credibility with Government and third sector organisations. Faith groups seeking to support refugees can sometimes be met by suspicion by those who assume that they would only provide support to their co-religionists, or that aid is a front for a proselyting agenda. Partnership across faiths helped us to demonstrate that faith groups are genuinely committed to integration without ulterior motive.

Additionally, being a multi-faith partnership greatly amplified our campaigning voice. When a single faith group, or even a group of co-religionists raise an issue it can sometimes be overlooked or dismissed as a parochial concern. However, when diverse religious bodies can speak together with one voice it carries a greatly increased weight and urgency. We have seen the effect of this in campaigns where faiths could speak with one voice, such as the Bus Pass campaign.

There have also been challenges with working across faiths. In one difficult incident we worked with a faith group to welcome a group of refugees, only for the refugees themselves to refuse that support. This was motivated by sectarian attitudes carried over from their home country. This was a painful experience for all involved, but the community handled it with grace, and would later host a joyful gathering with a group of Kurdish refugees. The strong relationships built through SFAR has helped us to maintain our shared voice, something that has proven invaluable as international events place ever greater pressure on interfaith relations. Our example of working across faiths has also helped to feed into the development of A World of Neighbours, a Europe-wide network of migration practitioners from diverse religious backgrounds.[16]

Finally, a key lesson we are always relearning is that 'being welcoming' is not enough. Throughout SFAR's existence we have seen a number of 'crisis'

[16] https://aworldofneighbours.org/

moments, such as the Syrian resettlement, Afghan evacuation and invasion of Ukraine. We have observed that as these events dominate the news there is a burst of interest. This is often followed by enthusiastic offers of donations and a rush to host welcoming events. However, as time passes interest can fade. As the news agenda moves on and attentions fade, New Scots can often feel dropped or forgotten.

Integration is not a 'one and done' event but a long-term, two-way process that had relationship building at its heart. Crucially to be successful integration also requires host communities to change along with the New Scots. We have always appreciated that the Scottish Government's New Scots Strategies define integration as a two-way process. For faith communities which are often defined by their traditions this can be a challenge, yet in the nine years we have existed we have witnessed the vibrancy and life that can come to faith communities willing to open themselves to change.

Conclusion

I chose to begin this reflection with the image of Alan Kurdi, the boy on the beach. During the first phase of SFAR's existence almost all of the talks delivered by the team referenced that image. Often, we would not show the actual picture because we did not need to, it was an image so pervasive that it could be referred to in shorthand and everyone would know what we were talking about.

I have some reticence about continuing to rely on that image. For one, Alan was a single victim of a crisis that had claimed thousands of lives, including that of his brother, Galib, and their mother, Rehana. Over 30,000 souls have been lost in the Mediterranean since 2014, and 2024 is set to be the deadliest year in the English Channel on record. I am also wary because I do not want to present the refugee story as one of unmitigated tragedy. I have had the privilege of witnessing new beginnings, friendships made, art created and stories written. Displacement can be both a story of sorrow and of persistent hope.

Yet I cannot help but return to the image of Alan with all of its horror and brutality. This year Alan should have turned 12 years old. He should be a boy on the cusp of his teenage year, free to grow, learn and play. Instead he is buried in his home town of Kobanî, immortalised by the image of him mere hours after his death. That image moved millions to act. It directly resulted in state run resettlement schemes, community lead project and responses from communities of faith. It is incredible that one image could have such immense power.

Yet that truth also shames us. Why did it take seeing the broken body of a child to move us to action? How many other children suffered Alan's fate

only to be forgotten by all but those who loved them most? The words of Tima Kurdi, Alan's aunt, are piercing, *"Too many innocent people have died in the war, but we all were silent. Thousands of children were starving from hunger, but we all were silent. It took only one picture, the picture of that little boy on the beach to move us to be human."* Why did it take a tragedy such as this to move us to act with human decency? Questions like this haunt us, as does the future that Alan was not able to enjoy.

Tima Kurdi has since dedicated her life to trying to spare families from the devastation her family went through. She has also said, *"The world we choose has to be reflected in the actions that we take"*. These words stand as a timeless challenge to all of us. We may say we believe in welcoming the stranger, in showing compassion to those in need, building God's Kingdom here on earth, but the important question is what will we do? What actions will we take to make that a reality? Or to use the language of the scripture: *"be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves"*[17]

In the nearly 10 years of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees existence the number of displaced people worldwide has risen from 65 million to over 117 million. While that number continues to rise we will continue to call Scotland's faith communities to action, to ensure that Scotland is a nation of welcome for all those seeking sanctuary.

Back to list of ARTICLES

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[17] James 2:22

Hope in Detention
Reflections on an Encounter in Dungavel

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> "… we have been hearing more insistently about migration and migrants as a theological space. In other words, migration is recognized not only as one-off or temporary transit from one space to another, but as a place from where it is possible to speak with God, to do theology."[1]

In this theological reflection I bring together an encounter I had in Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre, while I ministered there as a chaplain, with scripture and theology. Colossians 1:15-18 particularly as interpreted by Walsh and Keesmaat seems pertinent to my experience as well as other theological explorations some of which are based on the migrant experience. My reflection begins with a setting of the context. I then give a "thick"[2] description of the experience in Dungavel that captures my discomfort at my own collusion with the situation. I reflect on this experience focussing on two aspects of it. First, I reflect on complicity and guilt and secondly on vulnerability and insecurity. What emerges is a complex and rich tapestry of theological resonances.

Context

Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre is one of the Home-Office detention centres where migrants who the government wants to deport are locked up indefinitely. The centre is run by a large facilities management company called Mitie. When I was chaplain at the centre[3] there were between fifty and

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[1] Elisabeth M. Cook, "Speaking of God in exile: towards a migrant theological education" in Stephen Spencer and Wallace Gois (eds), *Theological Education for a Migrant Century* (London: Hymns Ancient and Modern, 2023), pp.27-37, p.27. https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/511327/CTEAC book Theological Education for a Migrant Century EN.pdf [accessed 16 October 2024]

[2] Christopher N. Poulos, *Essentials of Autoethnography* (American Psychological Association, 2021), p.9. https://www.apa.org/pubs/books/essentials-autoethnography-sample-chapter.pdf [accessed 16 October 2024)

[3] I was paid for chaplaincy work at Dungavel between March and November 2023.

eighty[4] innocents there, mostly men.[5] They had then twelve spaces for women, but as there was a women's only detention centre in England at the time, they generally stayed for less than 24 hours unless accompanied by a spouse or relative.

The reason the government wants to deport people is different in each case. In Dungavel at the time I was ministering there between 50% to 70% of detainees were ex-offenders. If you have 'leave-to-remain' in the UK but get on the wrong side of the law, you can lose your leave to remain. These people have served their sentence in prison and are now further detained because the government wants to deport them. The reason for their detention is not their crime, that is why I keep referring to them as innocents. This means that many of the innocents in Dungavel were not recent arrival asylum seekers with failed claims but people who had already lived in the UK for many years, some since childhood. Some of the innocents have families and children here and homes to go back to. Other reasons to want to deport people include student (or other) visa overstays, or a lack of visa at entry. When I was ministering there the rules for Brazil had just changed and some innocent Brazilians not knowing of the change were brought straight from the airport to Dungavel. The diversity of people sharing rooms is therefore not only ethnic, linguistic, cultural, national and religious as might have been assumed. There is also a diversity of class, status, education and wealth. Each innocent's story is different from another.

Dungavel is a prison with much outside space. In the daytime when there is no role-call or lock-down (both of which are relatively frequent) the innocents can go to the learning centre and use computers (social media strictly forbidden) or to the gym. They have an art room, a cultural kitchen and a state-of-the-art mosque. The fabulous chapel is a relic of Dungavel's former existence as the Duke of Hamilton's hunting lodge. Each innocent gets a phone, that does not connect to the internet, on arrival, they can keep this phone after they leave. The phone calls they make are not supervised. For people who are a danger to others there is the isolation unit and for

[4] That number has since dramatically increased and there are now between 125-150 people there. As is clear from Kate Alexander's blog. https://sdv.org.uk/latest-news/reflections-on-a-week-of-disappointing-detention-news [accessed 16 October 2024].

[5] There is always a question about how you call the people you serve. "Service users" is sometimes used but would be very misplaced in this case. "Detainees" or "residents" are other options. The first implies some kind of guilt; the second is so neutral as to lose meaning altogether: residents where? I know that the people detained for deportation are often less than innocent but the reason for their loss of freedom is not a sentence by a judge in a court of law but the pen stroke of a minor civil servant. Calling them innocents when I refer to them reminds us that their incarceration has no link to the criminal justice system.

people who are a danger to themselves there is a "Supported Living Unit". The women at Dungavel and some of the men are constantly watched to make sure that they are safe.

At Dungavel innocents do not count *down* the days of their sentence as in a normal prison; they count *up* the days of their detention never knowing when they might be free and where they will go. Even those who have signed the paperwork that they agree to return to their country of origin, sometimes get stuck for weeks or months because of administrative difficulties. This uncertainty is deeply traumatising, that is why indefinite detention is "incompatible with Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights".[6] Of the people kept in the detention estate in 2023 about 66% were not deported but returned into UK communities, now traumatised by their own government.[7] From the government's own research tracking people in the community before deportation is not only more humane and cheaper it is also more effective in delivering compliance.[8]

This reflection will in no way argue the case for or against deportation or other governmental asylum policies. It does have as its premise that locking people up indefinitely just to get the administration done before you deport them, is inefficient, very expensive, counterproductive, and cruel.[9] Moreover, for this to be done by a private company, which means that there is now a financial gain to be had from the misery of others, unnecessarily complicates matters. In my experience that was most noteworthy in the communication between the Home Office, Mitie and the innocents.

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[6] Alfred de Zayas, "Human rights and indefinite detention", *International Review of the Red Cross vol. 87 nr. 857* (2006), p.15. https://international-review.icrc.org/sites/default/files/irrc_857_2.pdf [accessed 25 April 2024] See the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights: https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights [accessed 25 April 2024]

[7] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2023 helpfully unpacked by Kate Alexander from Scottish Detainee Visitors in a blogpost "What do the latest figures tell us about detention". https://sdv.org.uk/latest-news/what-do-the-latest-figures-tell-us-about-detention [accessed 23 April 2024] and updated with the latest figures in the blogpost "Reflections on a week of disappointing detention news". https://sdv.org.uk/latest-news/reflections-on-a-week-of-disappointing-detention-news [accessed 16 October 2024]

[8] https://atdnetwork.org/news/a-holistic-and-cost-effective-alternative-to-detention/ and Evaluation of the Refugee and Migrant Advice Service's Alternative to detention pilot | UNHCR

[9] As is clear from part three of the *Atlas of Migration in Europe. Atlas of Migration in Europe. A critical geography of migration policies* (Oxford: New Internationalist Publications Ltd, 2012), pp.80-119.

Experiencing encounter in Dungavel

It is five o'clock, time to go home. For the last hour or so the windowless chaplaincy office has been a safe place from the trauma just outside my door. The Arabic texts that my Islamic colleague has hung on the wall give a sense of protection even in their unfamiliarity. My exploration of the disorder of half-opened boxes and hoarded junk of another colleague has given me a sense of the desire to care for the detainees but also of the failure to engage. Self-protection writ large.

Uneasy, I get my things together. I faff around with my coat: putting it on makes the earpiece of my dreaded radio fall out and closing the coat covers up my body camera. As I fumble with the keys on my keychain, trying to lock the office without my bag sliding, I silently curse the radio, the camera, and the keys. They are symbols - and present realities - of my complicity.

Turning around I have my first encounter, while still trying to get those keys back in their pouch. I smile, mustering energy from my toes, I try to put warmth in my greeting. I want to be emotionally available but with a coat and a bag that is difficult. I feel an escapee. The Chinese man does not even meet my eyes, but I see the desperation in his shoulders.

Just at the end of the corridor a group of Albanians have congregated. They are chatting, unintelligible to me, waiting by another locked door for the curfew of the rollcall to end. I don't want to acknowledge how intimidated I feel. I hesitate to go past and unlock and relock the very door they are waiting by. Again, I muster energy, this time coming from a discomfort in my stomach. I smile, I try to catch people's eyes, I greet them, and I walk deliberately confidently to the door.

"Hi, miss, are you going home? Please, open the door, yes?" I respond: "Yes, I am going home. No, I am not allowed to open the door for you, sorry." Disappointed looks accompanied by: "When will you come back?" "I will be back on Thursday, we can have a chat then, if you want." I unlock the door, go outside, and re-lock the door again. I take a deep breath of fresh air, such a relief.

My heart lifts. I delight in the sun on the trees behind the barbed wire, the empty courtyard is a heavenly haven after the encounters and the airless office. I am going home. Just seven locked doors between me and the car and then I have survived my first proper day as Dungavel's new chaplain. I have already been coming in for weeks, training, shadowing, and learning to work the keys, the radio, the routine. But today I was for the first time on my own.

As I lock the next door and I am inside again: there is Eryck (not his real name). I know him, he was at the prayer meeting earlier today. He asked for a Lithuanian New Testament. He smiles at me. "Are you going home?" Before I can answer he continues: "You can leave. I cannot. Enjoy." There is anger and despair in his voice, I see a sparkle in his eyes. He is challenging

me with the unspoken question: "how can you enjoy freedom, while the injustice of our incarceration continues?"

Eryck knows where the button is that undoes me totally and he enjoys it. With two sentences he has pointed out precisely my privilege and the pain of my complicity. I don't know what to say. I feel the loathing for the system I am colluding with physically, my hand holding my tummy involuntary. My relief and delight, my satisfaction with my first day, my looking forward to home. It all evaporates, I feel utterly powerless, at the same time compelled and unable to stay or to unlock the door for Eryck.

I am utterly compromised, and I don't know how to respond. How can I be authentically and emotionally available here and now for Eryck, while I am going home? Going home suddenly feels insincere, like a betrayal. But there are no choices. I find the courage somewhere: I smile, I make a bit of small talk, and then I walk away, wondering what had just happened.

While I unlock and lock the numerous doors and deal with my camera (back in a stand in a cupboard) and my keys (another closet opened by my fingerprint) and the radio (that goes back to the gatehouse staff), it dawns on me that Eryck is just messing with me, he is pulling my leg, making a joke. While I say goodbye to the gatehouse staff and use my finger for another two doors his gallows humour cuts twice, it makes me feel guilty and insecure.

When I finally get to the car and can access my phone for the first time since early morning, I realise that it has taken me almost half an hour from my office to my car. I will now be home very late. This small discomfort feels negligible in the face of Eryck's predicament. The sun has disappeared, and I drive home in a dreary drizzle.

Reflection

I would like to reflect on two aspects of this encounter. The first is my sense of guilt and complicity and the second is my sense of insecurity. This encounter at the end of my first proper working day at Dungavel became idiomatic of my experience there. It showed my discomfort at being coopted into the detention dynamic as a prerequisite for access to ministry in this place. I had a strong inner resistance to all the protocol I had to adhere to; just to be allowed inside. I felt my integrity as a minister was at stake, in the sense that my privileged status prevented me from coming genuinely alongside the innocents. I was not only minister but also to some extent guard.

I wrestled with that tension raised by the compromises I had to make in my conscience to be able to serve in this place. I felt guilty of cooperating with the injustice of indefinite detention. My aversion to the rules of the place, which I kept anyway to keep open the opportunity to minister to these amazing people never grew less. I could not get used to it. No amount of

interior rationalisation assuaged this sense of being part of an evil system. Hopelessness and cynicism were bred by the feeling of being stuck in a situation in which I could not wash my hands of blood. Reading Colossians challenges this hopelessness and cynicism.

> For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Col. 1, 16-17

Brian Walsh and Sylvia Keesmaat have written a powerful targum on Colossians 1, 15-20. Targum is the word that is used for the extended paraphrases of the text of the Hebrew Bible that rabbis gave their non-Hebrew-speaking congregations in the Diaspora. Walsh and Keesmaat do something similar with Colossians, they reword it for our time, verse 16 they paraphrase thus:

> [Christ] is the source of a liberated imagination
> a subversion of the empire
> because it all starts with him
> and it all ends with him
> everything
> all things
> whatever you can imagine
> visible and invisible
> mountains and atoms
> outer space, urban space and cyberspace
> whether it be the Pentagon, Disneyland, Microsoft or AT&T
> whether it be the institutionalized power structures
> of the state, the academy or the market
> all things have been created in him and through him
> he is their source, their purpose, their goal
> even in their rebellion
> even in their idolatry
> he is the sovereign one
> their power and authority is derived at best
> parasitic at worst[10]

[10] Brian J. Walsh and Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Colossians Remixed. Subverting the empire,* Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005, p.86.

Extending Walsh and Keesmaat's reading for my specific context would mean that the "*thrones or dominions or rulers or powers"* include Mitie, the Home Office and all the dreaded paraphernalia of detention: the keys, the radio, the camera, and the power that they convey. To think of Dungavel as "created in Christ" is indeed hard to imagine. Walsh and Keesmaat speak of "powerful myths" and "captured imagination" and alternatives that then create "contested imagination". [11] This resonates strongly as the incarceration of the innocents in Dungavel indeed captures my imagination and it is hard to not feel bound. Bound by protocol and my own lack of ability to think other than in black and white, in compromise and commitment.

How would my perception of the encounter with Eryck change if I could imagine us being brought together by Christ? What would happen if I really thought that the authority that is displayed by the government in Dungavel was authority derived from Christ? Is it possible to imagine Dungavel being held together by Christ? Would reading Colossians 1 as having immediate bearing on Dungavel make compliance easier or would the invitation to not conform become louder? Both Eryck's trauma and my shame held together in the eternal love of Christ is liberating and comforting at the same time. It opens up hope, Dungavel is redeemable, all of life is redeemable. Something beautiful may flourish and it may even start with an uncomfortable encounter in a corridor. My discomfort is also my solidarity and I wonder whether Eryck knew. The sparkle in his eye suggests that. My discomfort was also my gift.

Another interpretation of both Colossians 1 and my encounter with Eryck is inspired by Tomáš Halík who writes that "God can also be present in our world *sub contrario,* in God's opposite". Halík explains that he is borrowing from Luther's theology of the cross. "At certain moments, it is the experience of God's absence, the incomprehensibility of the world and the tragedy of human destiny that become the motif of waiting for God and thirsting for God."[12] In Colossians it is through the cross that "all things" are "reconciled" (v.20). Through Christ's waiting for God on the cross Dungavel becomes a place where we can also recognise the presence of God in our thirst for justice, in our trauma and in our shame.

These reflections do not take the profound discomfort and tension away in the encounter with Eryck. It does make that discomfort fruitful and takes away the hopelessness. The darkest place becomes a seedbed of possibility and grace. Mercy and beauty opening up from their opposites. If Christ remains the purpose and goal even in Dungavel my judgement both

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[11] Idem, pp.61-63, 79-95.

[12] Tomáš Halík, *The Afternoon of Christianity: The Courage to Change* (trans. Gerald Turner; Notre Dame IN: University of Noter Dame Press, 2024), p.28.

of my own complicity and of colleagues in Mitie and the Home Office gets a different texture and colour. This judgement becomes both deeper and more compassionate, both stronger and less monochrome. My personal discernment, choice and lack of choice is like all the nuance of the hundreds of greens in a springtime open forest.

A different aspect of the experience of the encounter with Eryck is the sense of vulnerability and insecurity. In my description I write about "a safe place from the trauma just outside my door" about "how intimidated I feel" and about "emotional availability". Being confronted continuously with trauma that is so preventable was disheartening and emotionally exhausting. I had an inner aversion to the physical safety measures that were offered but, on another level, needed some psychological safety that I then also felt guilty about. I was judgemental about my own and others "failure to engage" and "self-protection".

Reflecting on vulnerability and insecurity in the context of an Immigration Removal Centre is ironic to say the least. Especially as "security" and "secure borders" are words used a lot in the rhetoric around migration and deportation. This institute where I was working is ultimately part of the government's supposed efforts to keep us all safe. An effort that I experience as being utterly counterproductive. As I observe and use the barbed wire, the locked doors, the cameras, as I visit the isolation unit and talk with innocents and officers on "constant watch", I wonder again and again: who is afraid? what are they afraid of? If we are secure, vulnerability is not a problem. The Immigration Removal Centre might be secure in the sense of impossible to escape from. It is psychologically and physically far from secure for innocents, officers and clearly even the chaplain.

The obvious ambivalence in my attitude to vulnerability and insecurity might be traced to one of the paradoxes of the Christian narrative in which God becomes unconditionally vulnerable in incarnation and crucifixion to "save" or "bring to safety". This is a vulnerability that has security as its ultimate goal. Groody in his article on theology and migration notes that God "crosses borders in order to forge new relationships".[13] Wallace de Góis Silva calls God "the migrant".[14] In my experience I am clearly aware of the necessity of vulnerability to forge relationships with the innocents, but I also come face to face with my own and others inability to endure the ensuing insecurity. Healthy boundaries and impenetrable

[13] Daniel G. Groody C.S.C., "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees" *Theological Studies 70* (2009), pp.638-667, p.666.

[14] Wallace de Góis Silva, "'And the Word was made migrant': the place and potential of theological education within migration" in Stephen Spencer and Wallace Gois (eds), *Theological Education for a Migrant Century* (London: Hymns Ancient and Modern, 2023), pp.39-59, p.50.

borders blur and I wonder whether the moment of encounter on the margin (of both my working day and physically by the door) divides or connects.

In the literature on migration the term "borderscape" indicates that "borders are complex epistemic spaces and mobile realities that carry significant ontological weight and go beyond the standardised coordinates of maps".[15] Borders are seen as "mobile, perspectivist and relational".[16] That is to say that human borders include and exclude and change. Complex thinking, knowing and relating happens at these boundaries whether we let our defences down and allow the border to become permeable or not. The fruitfulness and "salvation" in the encounters, I think depends on the vulnerability that is allowed.

Barrett and Harley speak of the place where two habitats meet as an "ecotone", that is a boundary in nature.[17] This is a place of great diversity, change and fecundity. Very different to the 'no-mans-land' of human borders. In the exchange of creatures of different habitats new things emerge whether this is between woodland and meadowland or between meadow and the river or at any other habitat border. I wonder whether the same fecundity and abundance would happen if human borders were more open. I wonder how my feelings of vulnerability and insecurity would transform if the borderscape in which the encounter took place was configured differently. Reflecting on "border security" makes me aware that my insecurity and vulnerability were actually created by the "security" measures of Dungavel. Had the centre been open, had I been allowed in without keys, radio and camera I would have felt less vulnerable, more secure and more able to be "emotionally available". The vulnerability is created by the control that is exercised.

I wonder whether it would be possible to minister in a place like Dungavel eschatologically as if the "not yet" of the Realm of God is present "already". See Eryck as the free man that he really is, see our encounter as the fertile coming together of the "habitat of the Church" with the "habitat of world". Not in the sense that I would represent one and he the other, but in the sense that in our encounter we equally open up in each other each habitat. His mockery of my complicity becomes an opening to freedom as we

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[15] David Ulloa Chavez, "Finding borders, finding shelter: the role of Theological Education in a context of global mobility" in Stephen Spencer and Wallace Gois (eds), *Theological Education for a Migrant Century* (London: Hymns Ancient and Modern, 2023), pp.71-82, p.74.

[16] Nezvat Soguk, in Prem Kumar Rajaram and Carl Grundy-Warr (eds.) *Borderscapes: Hidden Geographies and Politics at Territory's Edge* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p.283

[17] Al Barrett and Ruth Harley, *Being Interrupted. Reimagining the Church's mission from the outside, in* (London: SCM Press, 2020)

both acknowledge our equality in not belonging to the habitat we inhabit. Just as he is no detainee, so I am not a detainer either. Recognising the falsehood of the reality of the security paraphernalia, laughing away the insecurity they create, to create the safe vulnerability of an encounter in God. An encounter in which Eryck is as much agent and actor as I am.[18]

Conclusion

These reflections on working with the complex and ambivalent structures we are all part of and on our uncomfortable and unequal encounters can extend to other situations. Whether it is the structures of health care and education that frustrate and compromise. Or it may be the impact of consumer choices in the global market and the tension between the need for a product and the footprint that it leaves both in CO2 and in injustice. It could just be the decisions of our government that in so many ways feel contrary to seeking the common good. In all those circumstances imagining the situation as being "held together in Christ" could transform perspective and opportunity.

Whether we encounter others in our home, our church or on the streets the question that this reflection raises is, whether we see the face of Jesus. "Jesus of Nazareth, Christ himself, was a pilgrim, a migrant"[19] So that the borderscape of our encounters becomes eschatologically fertile as a place where the Realm of God opens out into our own habitat. So that we may detain hope even in the most traumatic and darkest places.

Thoughts on the edge[20]

> Sometimes I experience myself in the middle,
> strong and open, connected with everything.

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[18] "An interesting contribution [to the diversity of approaches to the migration phenomenon] is the "autonomy of migration", according to which migration is regarded as a social movement, i.e., that migrants are actors that exercise power, negotiate, demand their rights, and present themselves as "a creative force" within social, economic and cultural structures. In other words, the actions of migrants become visible." Elisabeth M. Cook, "Speaking of God in exile: towards a migrant theological education" in Stephen Spencer and Wallace Gois (eds), *Theological Education for a Migrant Century* (London: Anglican Consultative Council, 2023), pp.27-37, p.30. Elisabeth Cook quotes S. Mezzadra, "Capitalismo, migraciones y luchas sociales. La mirada de la autonomía". *Nueva Sociedad* 237 (2012), p.160.

[19] Wallace de Góis Silva, "'And the Word was made migrant': the place and potential of theological education within migration" in Stephen Spencer and Wallace Gois (eds), *Theological Education for a Migrant Century* (London: Hymns Ancient and Modern, 2023), pp.39-59, p.58.

[20] Translation of part of a meditation by Willemien van Veen-de Graeff

Sometimes I am an onlooker: what can really touch me?
Another time I stand at the edge where there is collision,
where there is doubting, suffering and fighting.
Sometimes I know: “my cup overflows”
- the brim is no boundary anymore, it just contains the fulness
Often I am Moses: I am not allowed in,
in the land of promise, across the border.

You, O God, you know of the middle and the edge,
of being allowed in and being pushed out?
You boundless One, out of love you have bounded yourself,
to be able to go out to us,
to touch us and move us with your Spirit?
When we experience you in our core, you drive us to the edges
when we find you at our boundaries, you guide us to our heart.

Back to list of ARTICLES

Life and Liturgy in the Karen Refugee Community

Fr Ron Browning
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In this article, the Australian priest in the diocese of Melbourne Ron Browning recounts his journey with Karen Anglican refugees. Describing the recent history of their predicament as a persecuted ethnic group within Myanmar, he writes about their plight as refugees and their worshipping life.

Encounters with the Karen Anglican refugees on the Thai Myanmar border from the late 1990s have led me into a continual engagement with these faithful people, visiting the border area regularly. Their state – Karen State - is in East Burma. Burma is the traditional name of the country that is now officially called Myanmar.

Karen villages fled to newly established refugee camps in Thailand in the mid 1980s due to military oppression by the Burmese government. The camps have been there since and recently there has been a resurgence of Karen families arriving, as they escape from further militarisation with the Burmese army again seizing power in February 2021.

Karen Christians constitute a minority of the Karen ethnic group within Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist country. They carry the massive burden of their oppression with extraordinary perseverance and faith.

Ethnic Background

Along with other ethnic groups in Myanmar, such as the Shan, the Kachin and the Chin, the Karen people have maintained a distinctive identity and culture within Burmese society for centuries. With the coming of the British in the mid 19th century, the Karen developed a special friendship with their colonisers. In the 1920s Dr San Po, a Karen writer, wrote a book in which he relayed colourful aspects of the character of his people and culture to English speaking readers:

> "The Karen people of the plane are highly civilised, intelligent and well educated. It is sometimes stated that hill Karens make the best soldiers although they are reserved and suspicious... The wild Karens run from strangers especially from the Burmans from whom they retain an old hereditary fear."[1]

[1] San C. Po, *Burma and the Karens* (Bangkok, White Lotus, 1928), p.23.

The last two years of the Second World War, however, saw these so called "wild Karen" as extraordinarily brave soldiers along with the "hill Karens," fighting against the Japanese occupation in the hilly jungle of Karen State, as members of the "Burma Rifles." Hundreds died for the British in what was one of the significant fronts of victory (largely unacknowledged) for the latter part of the war. British military command had promised Karen leaders state independence after victory had been achieved, but this was not to be so with all that Britain had to face in the immediate post-war period, with poverty at home and with the partition of India.

The British missionaries of the late 19th century had grown a small presence of Anglican churches. By the middle of the last century six Anglican dioceses were established to constitute the Province of Myanmar, with two being Karen dioceses. Leading British missionaries of the past have been held in high honour as a firm tradition of church life was established.

The circumstances of oppression of the people, as is presently the case with a militarisation of the country, has been poignantly written about by Christina Fink in *Living Silence*:

> "It is not without irony that I have selected *Living Silence* as the title of this book. Burma is such a vibrant and lively place yet so many subjects are off-limits, or only talked about in whispers behind close doors. People in Burma are reluctant to speak up because they are living under the seemingly omnipresent surveillance of military personnel and informers. Those who act against the regime risk torture, long-term imprisonment and being treated as outcasts for life.''[2]

Ethnic groups, especially the Karen people, suffer and endure these circumstances in a *double* sense. Fink is describing the general afflictions throughout Burma but there is a further level of persecution directed at the ethnic armed groups, as the Karen are, in their resistance to the violent onslaught on villages and the taking possession of land.

"Apocalyptic" Refugees

Given this predicament presently, numbers continue to flee to the refugee camps in Thailand.

The phrase "warehousing" had begun to be used in the 1990s in relation to prolonged refugee situations – human beings were stacked like items in a warehouse. This image has been applied to the Palestinian

[2] C. Fink, *Living Silence* (Bangkok, Lotus, 2001) p. 5.

refugees in Gaza and has also been applied to the Karen people, in terms of the non-planned-for longevity of the camps.

Around 20 years ago, with refugee numbers in the camps reaching over 100,000, resettlement programs to western countries began, especially to the United States and also to my own country of Australia, where I have assisted since then in one of the resettled Karen Anglican congregations.

For any visitor to Karen congregations in their refugee camp setting, liturgical life is quickly recognised as a central focus of survival. It is accompanied by hospitality in a form that they are able to offer – the regular diet of rice and fish paste. Picture one of the churches, situated on a hill: worshippers quietly meander up to the entrance, shedding their shoes, to be seated on the bamboo floor, men on one side and women on the other. The liturgy, now revised, stems from the *Prayer Book of India, Ceylon and Burma* (1960), a work of catholic Anglican perspectives, most notably in the eucharistic liturgy.

In my second visit to one of the camps and at a reception of a congregation for our group, a surprising incident took place. Whilst a speech was being given, an elderly Karen man from the back of the church, cried out in a very loud voice, "listen to me, Jesus is coming soon." He did so in his own language, but I received a ready translation. The sense of the moment was that of someone who had *not* lost their mind nor as a manic fundamentalist. The speaker, as I found out, was a man of deep faith - clearly not crazy, only "crazy" for God's purposes.

The "apocalyptic" character of the situation in terms of being imprisoned as "birds in the cage" or "up against the wall" with nowhere to go, was certainly the situation then during my visits and has been perpetuated with the national military takeover of early 2021. The Church's worship and witness endures within that context.

After a few more visits, I decided to seek an interpretation of the Book of Revelation in relation to the kind of circumstances endured by the refugees. John, the writer of the last book of the Bible, describes himself as a prophet. I planned to use my accompaniment with the Karen people to reflect on his text. A book emerged from the endeavour.

My writing became connected to an interpretation of Revelation as related to politico-cultural oppressed situations. The Chilean theologian Pablo Richard writes in his people's commentary on the book, ''Christian apocalyptic thought un-conceals the world of the poor and legitimises their struggle for the reign of God, which is life and liberation.'' [3] The "un-concealing" is about John's vision speaking powerfully to the poor and

[3] Pablo Richard, *Apocalyse, a People's Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipff & Stock, 1995) p. 4.

oppressed as those who are "up against the wall;" the vision then exposes their reality, which then affirms and renews their struggle.

At one point in the book that I wrote, entitled *The Apocalyptic Heart*, the singing of the Sanctus in Karen eucharistic worship is described. The musical context of their liturgy is one of solemn singing, holding a sense of prayerfulness, quietly expressed. It occurred to me that the singing of the Sanctus, consciously or unconsciously, for Karen worshippers, upholds a vision in the present of the Heavenly Court of the Twelve Tribes and the Apostles with the throng of angels around the throne, that John describes in his vision. Eucharistic worshippers are caught up in the vision to join in the angelic song of "holy, holy, holy" (Revelation 4).

A spirit of freedom of being caught up into the heavenly places is expressed in Karen Anglican worship. Imprisoned in the guarded camps, their faith is not about escaping from this world with all its horrors of injustice, but rather, it is about working and praying to overcome injustice as they are sustained by their Kingdom-oriented worship.

As I wrote in the book: "To witness large numbers of Karen Anglicans on Sunday singing "holy holy holy, Lord" after the altar has been made ready with the gifts of bread and wine, and the Thanksgiving is prayed by the priest – wondrously expresses the threshold of the Kingdom that is at hand in eucharistic worship, the mystical entry into the Kingdom through praise."[4]

In the 1970s, coming from Australia, I valued my years residing at the Theological College in Edinburgh, with the chapel worship and especially being exposed to the richness of the Scottish Liturgy. I returned to Australia to be ordained. Years later, there came a deep realisation, through witnessing Karen worship, of the strongly eschatological nature of the Eucharist that I had never come across before.

Does it take the cry of the oppressed to uncover deeper truths at times for those of us who live more comfortable lives in the West? My assisting in ministry among the Karen now is eucharistically hope-centred, as it is for many of the Karen Anglicans themselves.

As an ethnic group, or rather as they prefer to call themselves, an "ethic nationality," the spirit of hope among the Karen people continues, especially as it is expressed in Anglican worship. Many are now living in diaspora around the world. In the Australian Karen Anglican network, links are maintained with congregations in Myanmar and in the camps. To date a few young priests have been ordained in Australia. With the resettled congregations in which they serve, forms of witness are evolving in relation to the surrounding, secularised culture.

Back to list of ARTICLES

[4] R. Browning, *The Apocalyptic Heart: The Book of Revelation in an unjust world* (Eugene, OR: Wipff & Stock, 2015) p. 59.

Precarious Migrants: Priscilla, Aquila, and the Subversion of Expectations

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Introduction: Acts and precarious migration

When Priscilla [1] and Aquila appear on the scene in Corinth, they are described as doubly displaced people (Acts 18:1-3). They are Judean refugees who have been expelled from Rome, but before that, the audience is told that they came to Rome from Pontus. [2] Luke [3] describes their occupation as tentmakers. Like many migrant labourers today, they may have been attracted to the urban centre of Rome by its economic opportunities. Unfortunately for them, they became refugees due to Emperor Claudius' collective punishment of ethnic Judeans for rioting in Rome.[4] Priscilla and Aquila temporarily settled in Corinth, where they met Paul and joined his bi-vocational ministry of tentmaking and showing people

[1] Luke's 'Priscilla' is the diminutive form of 'Prisca', preferred by Paul (Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19); Luke uses diminutives elsewhere, such as Silas (Acts 15:22, 27, 32) instead of Silvanus (2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). As with the 'we' sections, this may be Luke's attempt to show a closer relationship with the characters; given the priority given to Priscilla's name, the diminutive does not work as an infantilising or insulting moniker.

[2] Although 'Judean' and 'a native of Pontus' is a description of Aquila, the absence of an ethnic description of Priscilla suggests that she shares this identity; this is suggested by Daniel Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres* (13–28), CNT 5B (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2015), p. 171, Carl R. Holladay, *Acts: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), p. 350 and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, c2008), Part 3, ebook; cf. Matthijs den Dulk, 'Aquila and Apollos: Acts 18 in Light of Ancient Ethnic Stereotypes,' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 139, no. 1 (2020): p. 178 fn.4 and Patrick Schreiner, *Acts* (Brentwood, TN: Holman, 2021), p. 493, who argue there is not enough information to come to a firm conclusion.

[3] Although Acts is technically anonymous, for convenience, 'Luke' refers to the author of the Luke-Acts.

[4] Margaret H. Williams convincingly argues that the 'Chrestus' of the *impulsore Chresto* described by Suetonius in *Claud.* 25.4 was not an expulsion of Christians, but of ethnic Judeans; see: *Early Classical Authors on Jesus*, (London: T&T Clark, 2022), pp. 98–122. Williams remains agnostic as to the identity of Chrestus: 'Whoever Chrestus was, he must have been someone other than Christ – both his Claudian date and his Roman location, not to mention the standard meaning of impulsor and Suetonius's proven track-record as an onomastics expert, all combine to render the matter beyond doubt' (Ibid. p. 119)

'The Way.'[5] They are later described as coordinating the ministry in Ephesus in lieu of Paul's presence (Acts 18:19). Although this is where their story ends in Acts, at some point they relocate to Rome, as Paul addresses them in his letter to the church in that city (Romans 16:3). Their story is one characterised by migrancy, both in their movements around the Mediterranean and for the many reasons for their travels: as refugees, migrant labourers, and missionaries.[6]

Like many migrants today, Priscilla and Aquila defy easy categorisation. In Corinth, their missionary work and manual labour overlap. Their forced and ad hoc migrations confound reading the text with a 'sedentarist lens'[7] that sees migration as a binary movement from one place to another. This is a significant shift in contemporary migration studies, as summarised by Amal Miri:

> As the experience of migration can no longer be understood as a simple journey from one place or country to another… today it instead often consists of complex and non-linear mobilities in which migrants move across borders and between social locations and residency statuses in unanticipated and unplanned ways.[8]

Although Miri's study describes the situation of contemporary Moroccan female 'marriage migrants' in Flanders, her general description of non-linear migration could just as easily describe the movements of Priscilla and Aquila as they are portrayed in Acts. To be clear, Luke does not attempt to theorise migration for a modern audience; however, the text reflects a world shaped by migration. His description of the early Jesus movement is characterised by high levels of migrancy (Acts 1:8, 8:4, 11:19). Their status as ethnic minorities joining a fringe movement within their ethno-religious network

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[5] As Christian belief is described in Acts 9:2; 18:25–26; 19:9, 23; for a fuller treatment of this phrase, see: James M. Morgan, *Encountering Images of Spiritual Transformation: The Thoroughfare Motif within the Plot of Luke-Acts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013).

[6] The idea of missionaries is discussed in Leo Lucassen and Aniek X. Smit, 'The Repugnant Other: Soldiers, Missionaries, and Aid Workers as Organizational Migrants,' *Journal of World History* (2015): 1-39. On religious migration more generally, see: Magdalena Nordin and Jonas Otterbeck, *Migration and Religion: IMISCOE Short Reader* (Springer Nature, 2023).

[7] To borrow a phrase from Mieke Schrooten, Noel B. Salazar, and Gustavo Dias, 'Living in Mobility: Trajectories of Brazilians in Belgium and the UK,' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42, no. 7 (2016): pp. 1023.

[8] Amal Miri, ''I Am Still Waiting for My Papers but ʾinna Allāha Maʿa al-Ṣābirīn': On Religious Temporality and Agency in Female Marriage Migrants' Precarious Migration Experiences,' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2023): p. 1.

places them in the category of 'precarious migrants'; that is, people who have little cultural capital and are particularly vulnerable to the caprices of the state.[9]

Focusing on Priscilla and Aquila, this article will argue that the book of Acts challenges sedentarist biases through this migrant couple who subvert expectations. It will be shown that Priscilla and Aquila are not unique in this regard, but demonstrate Luke's predilection for migrant figures in the early Jesus movement. A summary of attitudes to gendered migration in the Roman context will be discussed at the outset. This will be contrasted with Luke's portrayal of Priscilla and Aquila, which departs from many Graeco-Roman norms. Although gender dynamics and ethnicity are often discussed in relation to the encounter with Apollos, it will be argued that migration is an important (and sometimes neglected) feature of the narrative. In relation to contemporary Christian ethical and theological discussions of migration, it will be shown that Acts challenges sedentarist biases about migration and upholds the dignity of precarious migrants, both in Luke's original context and our world today.

The Age of Migration and Roman responses

Migration was commonplace in the Roman world. It was accelerated and coerced by the mechanisms of the empire. Although we often associate our contemporary world with the 'age of migration', migration has always been a feature of human experience.[10] As with contemporary migration, Roman attitudes to migration were diverse and often contradictory. The issue is not migration itself, but *who* migrates, often reflecting the social location and prejudices of the author. Aelius Aristides, himself a migrant, praised Rome's diversity as evidence of its greatness. For him, the empire spanned the world and Rome was perceived as its centre.[11] Seneca the Younger provides a paradoxical perspective, writing from exile. He describes the suffering of an émigré: 'the first question that I wish to consider is what unpleasantness the mere changing of place brings with it,'[12] but then catalogues the constancy

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[9] This definition is adapted from Mihaela Nedelcu and Ibrahim Soysüren, 'Precarious Migrants, Migration Regimes and Digital Technologies: The Empowerment-Control Nexus,' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48, no. 8 (2022): pp. 1821–1837.

[10] As deftly argued in Hein de Haas, *How Migration Really Works: A Factful Guide to the Most Divisive Issue in Politics* (London: Viking, 2023).

[11] Aelius Aristides *Or.* 26.61-2

[12] Trans. John W. Basore, in Seneca, *Moral Essays, Volume II*: *De Consolatione ad Marciam. De Vita Beata. De Otio. De Tranquillitate Animi. De Brevitate Vitae. De Consolatione ad Polybium. De Consolatione ad Helviam*, trans. John W. Basore, Loeb Classical Library 254 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), accessed 29 April 2023, URL:

of human movement as a normal state of affairs. Even Rome, according to Seneca, 'looks back to an exile as its founder—a refugee from his captured city.'[13] He eventually finds consolation in a Stoic dogma, 'Inside the world there can be found no place of exile; for nothing that is inside the world is foreign to mankind.'[14] Cicero, on the other hand, views migration as an abnormal situation where he feels like a foreigner in his own city due to immigration.[15]

For many elite Roman men, the migration of women was something of an anathema. A well-known example is found in Tacitus' *Annals* (3.33), where he reports a Senate debate on restricting the mobility of women. Caecina Severus argues that the presence of women abroad upsets the accepted order of things. When women travel with magistrates, he argues, the Romans look as if they have adopted foreign customs. Moreover, the women develop ambitions beyond their station, disrupting the proper domestic order:

> In the course of the debate, Caecina Severus moved that *no magistrate, who had been allotted a province, should be accompanied by his wife*… There was point in the old regulation which prohibited the dragging of women to the provinces or foreign countries: in a retinue of ladies there were elements apt, by luxury or by timidity, to retard the business of peace or war and to *transmute a Roman march into something resembling an Eastern procession*. Weakness and a lack of endurance were not the only failings of the sex: *give them scope, and they turned hard, intriguing, ambitious*. They paraded among the soldiers; they had the centurions at beck and call. Recently a woman had presided at the exercises of the cohorts and the manoeuvres of the legions. Let his audience reflect that, whenever a magistrate was on his trial for malversation, the majority of the charges were levelled against his wife. It was to the wife that the basest of the provincials at once attached themselves; it was the wife who took in hand and transacted business. There were two potentates to salute in the

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https://www-loebclassics-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/view/seneca_younger-de_consolatione_ad_helviam/1932/pb_LCL254.429.xml

[13] Trans. Basore, Sen. *Helv.* 7.6.

[14] Trans. Basore, Sen. *Helv.* 8.5.

[15] Cicero *Acad.* 1.9; perhaps providing an ancient precedent for contemporary tabloid headlines, e.g. Tracey, Kandohla, ''I Feel like a Foreigner in My Own Country': Inside the 'British GHETTOS' Where 21-Year-Old Says He Barely Sees a White Face and Muslim Taxi Driver Blames Eastern Europeans for 'Ruining' His Home,'*Mail Online*, 5 December 2016, accessed 29 April 2023, URL: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/~/article-4002300/index.html.

> streets; two government-houses; and *the more headstrong and autocratic orders came from the women, who, once held in curb by the Oppian and other laws, had now cast their chains and ruled supreme in the home, the courts, and by now the army itself*.[16]

Valerius Messalinus and Drusus oppose Severus' motion, arguing that it would be better for the men to have their wives present; in the end, the motion fails.[17] As Margherita Carucci notes, the issue 'is discussed from a restricted male perspective that takes into account only what is more advantageous for men.'[18] Even if Severus' extreme 'slippery-slope' approach to the ethics of women's mobility is rejected, for the Senate women remain relegated to the domestic sphere and supervised by men. Concern is also expressed about Roman women and how they might be corrupted by un-Roman customs during travel.[19] Despite these concerns, the perspectives of women remain underrepresented in Roman literature, and foreign women even more so.

In contrast to the literature written by elite Roman men, the epigraphic record is replete with evidence of migrant women. They took pride in their places of origin and had their geographic displacement memorialised in funerary inscriptions, their enduring message to the world after death.[20] According to Emily A. Hemelrijk, 'the extent to which female travel was considered unremarkable in the epigraphic evidence suggests that, in the Roman Empire, it was a widespread and accepted practice' [21] and 'they maintained close social and emotional ties with their regions of birth or regarded their ethnic background as an *essential element* of their

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[16] Tac. *Ann.* 3.33; Tacitus, *Histories: Books 4-5. Annals: Books 1-3*, trans. Clifford H. Moore, John Jackson. Loeb Classical Library 249 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), Accessed 28 April 2023 URL: https://www-loebclassics-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/view/tacitus-annals/1931/pb_LCL249.575.xml; emphasis added.

[17] Tac. *Ann.* 3.34; ibid.

[18] Margherita Carucci , 'The Dangers of Female Mobility in Roman Imperial Times,' in *The Impact of Mobility and Migration in the Roman Empire*, eds. Elio Lo Cascio, Laurens E. Tacoma, with the Assistance of Miriam J. Groen-Vallinga (Leiden: BRILL, 2016), p. 175.

[19] Lein Foubert, 'The Lure of an Exotic Destination: The Politics of Women's Travels in the Early Roman Empire,' *Hermes (Wiesbaden)* 144, no. 4 (2016): pp. 462–487.

[20] Maureen Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead: Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 23-6.

[21] Emily A. Hemelrijk, 'Social Relations, Travel and Migration,' in *Women and Society in the Roman World: A Sourcebook of Inscriptions from the Roman West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 209.

identity.'[22] Of course, such openness about foreign identities may not have been universal. There may have been women who concealed their migrant status, in which case, the search for migrants in the epigraphic record must rely on speculation based on *cognomena*.[23] In Roman Spain, around 20% of all confidently identified *migrant* epigraphs were left by women.[24] This is a significant percentage in itself, and there were probably many more migrant women who do not appear in epigraphy. To further support this claim, recent studies using strontium isotope analysis on skeletal remains have shown that migrant women were certainly present, even if they are omitted from surviving literary and epigraphic sources.[25]

Priscilla, Aquila, and subverted expectations

As is the case today, responses to migration were varied. Acts presents a portrait of migrant women that shares some similarities with contemporaneous texts, but differs significantly from other Graeco-Roman norms. Priscilla is introduced as a forced migrant woman who is also a labourer (18:2). She has the means to finance her travel (18:18), and the intellect to 'explain the way of God to [Apollos] more accurately' (Acts 18:26). None of this is an attempt to construe Acts anachronistically as a 'feminist text' by contemporary standards; given that she has no dialogue, Acts would fail the Bechdel Test.[26] When the couple are introduced in Acts 18:2, Luke follows the convention of putting the husband's name first.

Despite some conventionalism in Acts, giving attention to the details in the descriptions of Priscilla and Acquila shows subversion of other conventions. There are elements of Priscilla's description that are atypical. In such naming couplets, Luke gives prominence to the character who is named first.[27] This literary device has precedent in the pairing of Paul and Barnabas. Although Paul becomes more prominent than Barnabas after the

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[22] Ibid., p. 215.

[23] These were often nicknames, but were later associated with heredity. On migration and epigraphy in Rome, see the masterful work by David Noy, *Foreigners at Rome: Citizens and Strangers* (London: Duckworth, 2000).

[24] Ibid., p. 209.

[25] Tracy L. Prowse, 'Isotopes and Mobility in the Ancient Roman World,' in *Migration and Mobility in the Early Roman Empire,* eds Li 23:205–233. United States: Brill, 2016.

[26] This is a 'a set of criteria used as a test to evaluate a work of fiction (such as a film) on the basis of its inclusion and representation of female characters. NOTE: The usual criteria of the Bechdel Test are (1) that at least two women are featured, (2) that these women talk to each other, and (3) that they discuss something other than a man' (*Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. 'Bechdel Test,' accessed 29 Feb. 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Bechdel%20Test.)

[27] Keener, *Acts*, p. 2:2809.

conversion of Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:12), the intentionality of the order of names is clear during the crisis in Lystra (Acts 14:14) and at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:12). In these instances, Barnabas takes the role of chief mediator because of his social standing.[28] The scandal of Priscilla taking the lead in theological instruction of the learned Apollos is probably what led to Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis [29] leaving Aquila's name in the prominent position, [30] given its documented 'anti-feminist tendency.' [31] Ann Graham Brock describes this reversal in 18:26 as 'Perhaps the most compelling indication of a diminished role for women in D.'[32] D also omits the phrase ἦσαν γὰρ σκηνοποιοὶ τῇ τέχνῃ ('for by trade they were tentmakers') from 18:3, which reflects D's discomfort with Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila as migrant workers. As H. Szesnat argues, 'I would suggest that this omission is most probably not "an oversight" but a conscious change. It is likely that this was an attempt to downplay the manual work of Paul, which embarrassed the status-conscious scribes of later centuries.' [33] The reception of Acts preserved in Codex Bezae is referred to here to highlight the ways in which Luke's emphases on gender and labour were so provocative that they were literally written out of history.

The portrayal of Priscilla follows some Roman conventions (for example, she is always shown travelling in the company of a man), but Luke also challenges these conventions in other ways. When the couple are introduced in Acts 18:2, Aquila's name is mentioned first. This could be

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[28] In the latter example, he has clout with the Jerusalem church because of his standing as a Levite (Acts 4:36).

[29] Also referred to as the 'D text', this is a 5th century Greco-Roman diglot that contains most of the four gospels, Acts, as well as a small portion of III John.

[30] David C. Parker, *Codex Bezae: An Early Christian Manuscript and Its Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 131.

[31] For a discussion of this textual tradition, see: Witherington, Ben. 'The Anti-Feminist Tendencies of the 'Western' Text in Acts,' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103, no. 1 (1984): 82-84 and the thorough discussion in Michael W. Holmes, 'Women and the 'Western' Text of Acts,' in Tobias Nicklas, Michael Tilly, and Hermann Lichtenberger, *The Book of Acts as Church History / Apostelgeschichte Als Kirchengeschichte* (Berkub: De Gruyter, 2003), pp. 183-204.

[32] Anne Graham Brock, 'Appeasement, Authority, and the Role of Women in the D-Text of Acts,' in Tobias Nicklas, Michael Tilly, and Hermann Lichtenberger, in *The Book of Acts as Church History / Apostelgeschichte Als Kirchengeschichte* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), p. 218, cf. Michael W. Holmes, "Women and the 'Western' Text of Acts," in *The Book of Acts as Church History / Apostelgeschichte als Kirchengeschichte: Text, Textual Traditions and Ancient Interpretations / Text, Texttraditionen und antike Auslegungen*, edited by Tobias Nicklas and Michael Tilly, pp. 183-204.

[33] H. Szesnat, 'What Did the "∑KHNOIIOIO∑" Paul Produce?,' Neotestamentica 27, no. 2 (1993): pp. 392-3.

Luke's attempt to play with the audience's expectations. He introduces the couple according to convention, but then surprises the audience in Acts 18:18 by giving prominence to Priscilla instead. Further subversion of stereotypes culminates in the couple's encounter with Apollos in Acts 18:24-28. Here Luke subverts stereotypes based on gender, ethnicity, and labour.

Apollos is introduced as eloquent and learned, as befits a man from Alexandria. As Keener notes, 'Alexandria was known for its learning opportunities… Alexandria's university was more prestigious than the ancient schools of Athens.'[34] The unexpected reversal of names in Acts 18:18, now *Priscilla* and Aquila, continues in Acts 18:26 when Apollos is taken aside and given a more accurate description of The Way. By implication of the priority given to her name, Priscilla is the prominent teacher in this episode,[35] undermining the expected gender dynamics in a patriarchal society. There is little evidence of female teachers in ancient Rome. Where they are attested, they taught children, not grown men.[36]

Luke does not stop there. Further subversion of expectations comes from the manner in which Luke overturns ethnic stereotypes. If Apollos is played to type as a learned Alexandrian, Priscilla and Aquila defy ethnic stereotypes of Pontians. All the characters are introduced by reference to their place of origin. In Acts 18:2, the tentmaking couple come from Pontus. In his survey of the stereotypes attached to Pontians, Matthijs den Dulk found that 'From Herodotus onward, the people of Pontus were frequently regarded as uneducated and ignorant,'[37] and were often the butt of jokes in comedies.[38] We are given no information about Apollos' occupation, unless 'eloquent man' (Acts 18:24) is taken to mean a professional rhetorician.[39] Luke tells his audience in no uncertain terms that Priscilla and Aquila are migrant workers (Acts 18:3).

Elite Roman authors often scorned manual labour. Koenraad Verboven and Christian Laes observe that "the elitist bias of ancient literary sources is so pronounced that we can only dimly hear the voices or visualise the practices of the vast majority of the population who had to work for their

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[34] Keener, *Acts*, 2:802, cf. Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p.20.

[35] As with Barnabas taking over from Paul at the Jerusalem Council, Acts 15:2,12.

[36] Lisa Maurice, *The Teacher in Ancient Rome: The Magister and His World*, (Blue Ridge Summit: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2013), p. 18.

[37] Matthijs den Dulk, 'Aquila and Apollos: Acts 18 in Light of Ancient Ethnic Stereotypes,' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 139, no. 1 (2020): 181.

[38] Ibid., 184-5.

[39] J. B. Lightfoot, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Newly Discovered Commentary* (United Kingdom: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 245.

daily bread."[40] This negative opinion was not universal; the presence of inscriptions describing guild associations, which celebrate labour, shows that people had pride in their trades.[41] In Jewish theology, manual labour was seen as a complimentary task to the study and teaching of the Torah.[42] The dignity evident in occupational inscriptions left by working people is found in Luke's narrative, affirming the self-respect of an audience that likely included migrants, women, and manual labourers. In the case of Priscilla, all these categories also overlap.

There is a satirical aspect in that the migrant workers, Priscilla and Aquila, were better able to explain 'The Way' than Apollos. The eloquent and learned orator from Alexandria is expected to be the one who can explain things accurately. Instead, it is a refugee couple, migrant workers, and led by a woman no less, who have the incisive insight about Jesus the messiah. In Acts, Luke often shows that the prophecies of the first volume of his work come to fruition in the second. Given the social dynamics and the subversion of expectations, the reader can hear the echoes of Luke 1:52, 14:11, and 18:14: the arrogant will be humbled, but the humble will be exalted.

Priscilla and Aquila demonstrate The Way

Another aspect of Priscilla and Aquila's instruction to Apollos that is often overlooked is the presentation of Christianity as inherently diasporic. Although Apollos was 'powerful in the scriptures' (Acts 18:24b), he needed further instruction from Paul's refugee associates. At this stage of the story, Paul is not in Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila. He left them to coordinate the ministry in the city in lieu of his presence, when he travelled to Jerusalem, Antioch, Galatia, and Phrygia (Acts 18:22b-23). As the narrative returns to events in Ephesus, we are informed of characters who are *in* Ephesus but not *from* Ephesus.

This continues Luke's penchant for geographically displaced characters. Luke often introduces characters by describing their place of origin; in most cases, these characters are not from the place where they are introduced. An example of this is the description of the church leaders at Antioch in Acts 13:1: 'Now there were prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (a companion of Herod the tetrarch from childhood) and Saul.' There is no

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[40] Koenraad Verboven and Christian Laes, "Work, Labour, Professions. What's in a Name?" in *Work, Labour, and Professions in the Roman World*, ed. Koenraad Verboven and Christian Laes (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 1.

[41] For examples of this, see: Koenraad Verboven, 'The Associative Order: Status and Ethos among Roman Businessmen in Late Republic and Early Empire,' *Athenaeum-studi Periodici Di Letteratura E Storia Dell'antichità* 95, no. 2 (2007): pp. 861-893.

[42] Gamaliel III, *Pirqe Avot* 2.2, 4.7.

mention of Barnabas and Saul/Paul's place of origin, but the audience was informed in 9:11 that Saul/Paul was from Tarsus and Barnabas was from Cyprus (Acts 4:36). Although scholars often refer to the church as the 'Antiochene community'[43] and comment on the diversity of the church leadership,[44] another important feature of this community is that none of them are from Antioch. The church is not only diverse, but each key figure is a geographically displaced person. It is a community of migrants. The list of Paul's co-labourers in Achaia[45] (Acts 20:4) describes characters who all come from somewhere other than the place where they are introduced. Other characters who *are* from the place where they are introduced, such as Silas (15:22) and Timothy (Acts 16:1), become migrants when they join Paul's mission. Timothy is described as a Judean and a Greek, he has what would now be called a 'hyphenated identity.'[46] Similarly, Silas is no longer depicted in Jerusalem again. Luke deliberately emphasises the geographical displacement of characters in the early Jesus movement. This is consistent with his use of 'the scattered ones' as a collective term for Christians in Acts 8:4 and 11:19.

In many ways, Priscilla and Aquila represent and enact the geographically unbounded faith described in Stephen's speech in Acts 7. The outcome of Apollos' instruction by Priscilla and Aquila propels the character to further migration to Achaia (Acts 18:27), accompanied by a letter introducing him to Christian associations in the region. Apollos is praised for his rhetorical ability: 'for he refuted the Jews vehemently in public debate, showing from the scriptures that the messiah was Jesus' (Acts 18:28). 'The Way' of the gospel is via migration; in this case, something of Luke's theological message is embedded in the manner in which the word spreads. For Luke, migration is an opportunity for the expansion and growth of the church.

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[43] e.g. Gerd Theissen, *A Theory of Primitive Christian Religion* (London: SCM, 1999), p. 94 and Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (London: SCM Press, 1997), p. 286; for a helpful assessment of Paul's place in the Antioch church, see: Nicholas Hugh Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), pp. 88-95.

[44] As descried by Patrick Schreiner, 'Luke emphasizes this point with details not usually provided… Geographic diversity is prominent' (Schreiner, *Acts*, p. 374); Beverly Gaventa makes a similar point in *The Acts of the Apostles* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), p. 190.

[45] If this the best way to interpret ἦλθεν είς τὴν Ελλάδα (s.v. Ελλάς, *BDAG*, p. 318).

[46] Hein de Haas, Stephen Castles, and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, Sixth edition (London: Macmillan International Higher Education, 2020), p. 25.

Conclusion

As noted above, Luke does not theorise migration in Acts. The book, however, offers a perspective that is not defined by contemporary Western a sedentarist lens. The precarious migrants Priscilla and Aquila subvert audience expectations about gender, ethnicity, and migrant labour. In all three areas, Luke describes them in a way that shows their dignity and value to the early Jesus movement. It is not the learned Apollos who becomes Paul's companion and trusted deputies in Ephesus, but a couple of migrant workers who were at risk of Roman political reprisals. By describing this couple with such dignity, the story of Priscilla and Aquila can also challenge contemporary Christians. A privileged sedentary position within a wealthy state experiencing immigration does not imply a superior location. Luke writes from the perspective of migration. The failure to include, show solidarity with, and to welcome migrants in precarious situations is to close ourselves off from the gifts and challenges of the often-overlooked Priscillas and Aquilas in our midst.

Back to list of ARTICLES

Institutions of Hospitality: Patristic Immigration Ethics in Historical and Contemporary Context

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While Christians have written extensively on the connections between Scripture and immigration ethics, resources from the tradition, and particularly from the patristic era, are more difficult to find.[1] This article aims to expand available resources on immigration ethics in Christian tradition by drawing on early Christian responses to migration, with a particular emphasis on early Christian institutions like *xenodochia,* the unique Christian houses for the sick, poor, and migrant that eventually evolved into hospitals. Though moral reasoning is quite important in Christian ethics, at a basic level I take ethics to focus on actions and character, recognizing that character is deduced from actions and also partly shaped by actions.[2] Therefore, a survey of early Christian institutions for migrants can provide an important perspective on early Christian immigration ethics for two reasons. First, Christians performed actions through institutions, practicing hospitality, serving the sick and poor, and challenging various social norms typical of hospitality in the Roman and Byzantine Empires. Second, because institutions facilitate enduring patterns of behavior, analysis of institutions can highlight ethical actions that must have been considered especially important in the patristic era.

In this article, I will examine patristic practices of hospitality in their context. I will focus on practices evident in institutions as found in the second through sixth centuries, primarily but not exclusively in the Roman and Byzantine Empires. I will conclude by exploring the areas in which patristic institutions and practices challenge modern Christians toward new perspectives in immigration practice, while briefly noting several limitations that would prevent a mere repetition of patristic hospitality. To anticipate

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[1] For examples of biblical treatments of immigration ethics, see: M. Daniel Carroll R., *The Bible and Borders: Hearing God's Word on Immigration* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2020); Mark R. Glanville and Luke Glanville, *Refuge Reimagined: Biblical Kinship in Global Politics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021); Mark W. Hamilton, *Jesus, King of Strangers: What the Bible* Really *Says About Immigration* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019); James K. Hoffmeier, *The Immigration Crisis: Immigrants, Aliens, and the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009); Markus Zehnder, *The Bible and Immigration: A Critical and Empirical Reassessment* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2021).

[2] Of course, character also shapes our patterns of action, but it is easier to analyze action than character, as only God fully knows the heart and character of humans.

the argument of this article: in context, patristic hospitality emerged partly from a concern for moral purity that was manifest in a culturally distinctive emphasis on displaying hospitality to the sick and poor, facts that stand in stark contrast to many contemporary immigration emphases in modern nation states, a contrast that pressures contemporary Christian immigration ethics to reevaluate moral priorities in immigration institutions and policies.

Patristic Hospitality in Roman and Byzantine Context

The distinctives of the patristic approach to migration are most evident when compared to the background context of migration and hospitality in the Roman Empire and in Greco-Roman culture. For this reason, I will begin by considering several features and institutions of immigration in the early church in the context of Greco-Roman society. Given the constraints of this article, the survey will neither be as exhaustive in subject matter nor as intensive in analysis as is possible. Content has been selected that provides helpful context for patristic views and practices or that stands in clear contrast to patristic practices. This summary is thus cursory, provisional, and with the intended purpose of raising ethical questions for immigration policy today. With these limitations in mind, I turn to consider the institutions of migration in patristic and Roman context and how these institutions fit in the context of public health and the economy.[3]

The Institutions of Migration

Migrants within the Roman Empire or immigrants entering from the outside needing lodging would have a variety of options available. Besides establishing an extensive network of roads, Romans established a wide range of places of lodging for travellers. Despite this, Christians established their own institutions of hospitality for many reasons, but certainly one reason was that such places of lodging did not align with their moral values.[4] Even the most respectable inns, the *hospitium* and *deverorium*,[5] generally also functioned as brothels.[6] In fact, prostitution was so common in secular places of lodging even into the era of Christian empire that the *Codex*

[3] I recognize that terms like "public health" could be taken in a quite modern sense that would result in them being anachronistically applied to the patristic era. I am using these concepts more loosely.

[4] This point is well made in Peter C. Phan, 'Migration in the Patristic Era: History and Theology', in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration,* ed. by Daniel G. Groody and Giaocchino Campese (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 35–62 (p. 51).

[5] Literally 'place for hospitality' and 'place for turning aside', respectively.

[6] Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 204.

Justinian decreed that tavern (*tavernae*) barmaids could not be prosecuted for adultery since it was assumed they were prostitutes.[7] The *caupona*, another variety of lodging, is described by Lionel Casson as 'distinctly low class: it catered to sailors and carters and slaves; its dining-room had more the atmosphere of a saloon than a restaurant'.[8] However, even restaurants also offered prostitution in back rooms.[9] Given that many early converts to Christianity were from lower classes (see 1 Cor. 1:26–29),[10] the concern to provide alternative lodging would be more pressing.

Though much hospitality was extended to migrants through provision of lodging in personal homes or directly by bishops and priests,[11] Christians also began to establish institutions for migrants. These institutions included the *xenon* (hostels), the *xenotophia* (burial sites for strangers), and, most famously, the *xenodochia* (houses for strangers/travelers). As time progressed, such institutions were eventually incorporated into canon law. In the Greek-speaking East, canon law included many institutional classifications for places of ministry, including *orphanotrophia* (orphanages), *ptochotrophia* (houses for the poor), *nosocomial* (houses for the sick), and *xenodochia* (houses for travelers). In the Latin West, the term xenodochia tended to cover a wider range of services inclusive of all of the distinct Eastern institutions.[12] Xenodochia could be permanent institutions, such as the facility established by King Childebert which a Council of Orléans (AD 549) stipulated must be preserved financially and institutionally for 'the responsibility of the sick and the number and reception of pilgrims'.[13] Other xenodochia were temporary, like the one established by Ephraim the Syrian in Edessa as a response to an influx of refugees fleeing famine in the fourth century.[14]

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[7] Claudine Dauphin, 'Brothers, Baths and Babes: Prostitution in the Byzantine Holy Land', *Classics Ireland*, 3 (1996), 47–72 (p. 51).
[8] Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World,* p. 204.
[9] Ibid., p. 218.
[10] Note, however, the emphasis on elite early Christians in Rodney Stark, *The Triumph of Christianity: How the Jesus Movement Became the World's Largest Religion* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), pp. 87–104.
[11] Helen Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich: Wealth, Poverty, and Early Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), pp. 113–14.
[12] Sethina Watson, *On Hospitals: Welfare, Law, and Christianity in Western Europe, 400–1320* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 5.
[13] Ibid., p. 65.
[14] Nigel Allan, 'Hospice to Hospital in the Near East: An Instance of Continuity and Change in Late Antiquity', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 64.3 (Fall 1990), 446–62 (p. 452).

Migration and Public Health

Perhaps the most famous Christian institution of hospitality is the Basilias, named after Basil of Caesarea, its founder. Basil describes the Basilias as 'a place of entertainment for strangers, both for those who are on a journey and for those who require medical treatment on account of sickness'.[15] A recent argument by Daniel Caner argues that the Basilias was primarily a dual monastery and leprosarium.[16] Traditionally, the Basilias was believed to have much more expansive services. For example, Helen Rhee says it 'housed strangers, the poor, the sick, and the elderly as well as lepers and the mutilated,' caring for these groups with nurses, doctors, and monastic aids, while providing job training skills and employment.[17] Whatever interpretation of the evidence is true, the institution clearly linked the religious functions of a monastic context with the objectives of meeting medical needs and providing hospitality. This combination of care for migrants and the sick is found across the patristic Christian world.

It is important to situate the Basilias in the context of Roman hospitality and healthcare. Rome briefly had hospitals named *valetudinaria* for soldiers and slaves but not facilities open to the general population.[18] Free medical services for the poor were not legislated within the Empire until the Christian Emperor Theodosius I.[19] Pagan society often did not have a systematic means of addressing medical needs, a fact that became painfully obvious whenever there were outbreaks of various plagues and diseases. Against this backdrop, Christian responses to medical crises were

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[15] Basil of Caesarea, 'Letter 94', in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.* Second Series. Volume 8. *St. Basil: Letters and Select Works,* ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), 179–80.

[16] See Daniel Caner, 'Not a Hospital but a Leprosarium: Basil's Basilias and an Early Byzantine Concept of the Deserving Poor', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 72 (2018), 24–48. Caner argues that when Basil names "attenders of the divine" as residents of the Basilias, he likely means monks. Broadly, Caner's work is based on lexical study, on the limited direct statements that Basil makes about the Basilias, and on the widespread and growing practice of monks serving lepers (anchoritic and cenobitic).

[17] Helen Rhee, *Illness, Pain, and Healthcare in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022), pp. 240–41. Rhee still admits that the 'most notable patients in the Basileios were lepers'. Ibid., p. 247.

[18] Louise Cilliers, 'Public Health in Roman Legislation', *Acta Classica*, 36 (1993), 1–10 (p. 5). Rhee, *Healthcare in Early Christianity*, p. 212. Rhee notes that when poor tennent farmers replaced slaves as the primary source of labor in AD 80, valetudinaria were no longer seen. Military facilities lasted longer.

[19] Cilliers, 'Public Health', p. 4. Rhee argues that the obligation to care for the poor actually begins with Constantine's financial privileges granted to the church. Perhaps it is best to suggest there was a socio-political expectation before a legal obligation. See Rhee, *Healthcare in Early Christianity,* pp. 239–40.

noteworthy.[20] Famously, the Emperor Julian 'the Apostate' instructed the pagan high priest of Galatia in AD 362 to establish three pagan xenodochia in 'every city' to compete with 'the impious [Christians who] support not only their own poor but ours as well'.[21] Against this backdrop, the extent to which Christian institutions of hospitality emphasized medical needs is noteworthy. Though many lepers in the Basilias were probably from the surrounding region, Basil is clear that hospitality is to be extended to sick migrants, too.

The Basilias is only one bright light in a larger constellation of similar patristic institutions. Basil's ministry is only known to directly inspire one replica monastic complex founded by Theodosius the Cenobiarch (d. ~AD 529) near Jerusalem. [22] Indirectly, there were comparable Christian institutions across the Roman Empire. Antioch boasted three xenodochia by the mid fourth century.[23] Edessa eventually was home to xenodochia for the poor, for refugees, and for those with medical needs.[24] Epiphanius of Salamis describes facilities in Pontus called *ptochotropheia* that provided long term lodging for the maimed, likely predominantly lepers.[25] Similar institutions were founded outside of the formal territory of Rome. I have already noted the Frankish example of the xenodochium for migrants and the sick named at the Council of Orléans (AD 549). Christian physicians in the Persian empire also successfully advocated for the establishment of a xenodochium in Persia in the 500s, a major innovation in that context.[26]

We ought not to overstate the novelty of the Christian combination of hospitality and the concern for medical needs.[27] Yes, Christians were more thorough in their institutional response to sickness than the surrounding pagan world. The fact that texts like the *Apostolic Tradition* advocates that all catechumens must learn to practice care for the sick before baptism also shows a countercultural concern for the sick that is striking in magnitude.[28] However, there was a longstanding pattern of travel in the ancient

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[20] Rhee, *Loving the Poor,* pp. 128–29; Rhee, *Healthcare in Early Christianity,* pp. 226–29. To prove the point, Rhee points to the systematic approaches to dealing with plagues in the 250s under Cyprian of Carthage in comparison with pagan and government-led initiatives.

[21] *Ep.* 22.430c–d as quoted in Rhee, *Healthcare in Early Christianity,* p. 243.

[22] Caner, 'Not a Hospital', p. 25 n. 3.

[23] Rhee, *Healthcare in Early Christianity,* p. 241.

[24] Allan, 'Hospice to Hospital', p. 453.

[25] Caner, 'Not a Hospital', p. 29.

[26] Allan, 'Hospice to Hospital', p. 460.

[27] One feature I will not highlight here is the fact that many Christian medical practices and symbols were in continuity with earlier pagan practices. See Allan, 'Hospice to Hospital', pp. 449–51.

[28] Rhee, *Loving the Poor,* p. 128.

mediterranean world to pilgrimage sites for the purposes of healing. The most notable example was travel to temples for healing. Many deities were thought to provide healing,[29] but the most famous healing deity was Asclepius. In Asclepian shrines, devotees who travelled from around the known world would enter and sleep in an incubation chamber of the temple to seek healing, often from seemingly incurable disease.[30] Travel to different climates was also thought to be beneficial for some ailments like tuberculosis.[31] Christian facilities like the *parthenoma* ('house of virgins') that was founded in Seleucia in the 300s at the shrine to the martyr Thekla as a 'healing center for hospitality and prayer' would have broadly followed a familiar social paradigm.[32] Once the emperor Theodosius shut down Asclepian shrines of healing, Christian xenodochia would have been primed to fill the resulting void.[33] While it is not true that Christians were the first to combine hospitality with care for the sick, it is certainly striking that this feature of hospitality was so central to early Christian practice in comparison with the surrounding culture. Further, where pilgrimages to Asclepian shrines were apparently for quick healings, Christian xenodochia were prepared to offer long term care.

Migration and Economics

Much migration in the Roman Empire occurred for trade. This is true of migration within the Empire and across its borders. Because of the economic nature of much migration, Romans designed institutions in service of the financial and commercial reasons for migration and travel. Migrant associations that covered costs for burial and communal feasts while seeking privileges from the state were common in the city of Rome and in other regions of the Empire.[34] As Lionel Casson explains, 'some cities maintained offices in the major commercial centres to help any of their citizens doing business on visits there'.[35] In such contexts, there was often a slight preference for the wealthy. Some of the commercial associations in Rome were restricted to free men and excluded slaves, and while trading centres

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[29] Helen Rhee, *Healthcare in Early Christianity*, pp. 194–95. Rhee names Amphiareus, Artemis/Diana, Asclepius, Hercules, Isis, Juno, Mars, Mercury, Serapis, and Zeus/Jupiter as gods with known healing shrines, though she admits the list could be expanded since any deity in principle could heal.

[30] Ibid., pp. 195–99.

[31] Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World,* p. 130.

[32] The description is from V. K. McCarty, *From Their Lips: Voices of Early Christian Women* (Piscataway, NJ: Georgias Press, 2021), p. 58.

[33] Allan, 'Hospice to Hospital', p. 447.

[34] Laurens E. Tacoma, *Moving Romans: Migration to Rome in the Principate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 232–33.

[35] Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World,* p. 129.

(*stationes*) could serve migrants generally, they mostly catered to 'businessmen and traders'.[36] While travelling, the wealthy also had access to the public post (*cursus publicus*), which was required to host imperial messengers but remained financially viable by providing space to those who could afford the necessary bribes.[37] Looking specifically at the city of Rome, David Noy argues that 'voluntary migration to Rome (as opposed to the enforced migration of the enslaved) was probably not a viable option for the really destitute'.[38]

In this context, the Christian emphasis on hospitality to the poor is striking. This is evident in patristic institutions – as we have seen, various houses of hospitality were typically linked with provisions for the sick and poor. Beyond this, though, Christian teaching emphasized the need for hospitality to impoverished strangers. For example, Lactantius, John Chrysostom, and Jerome all challenged the tendency of wealthy Christians to welcome or host other wealthy and influential people instead of the poor. Such pushback against the patron/client system emphasized extending hospitality to those in need.[39] In the context of itinerant teachers, early Christian works like the *Didache* emphasized the need for apostolic poverty (citing such passages as Matt. 10:9; Mark 6:8; Lk. 9:3 and 10:4). Migrant religious teachers were to only be provided a day's basic necessities and not given an opportunity for accumulating wealth on the basis of religious service or charisma.[40] Following this trajectory to its terminal point, we see that by the Middle Ages, '*tenere hospitalitatem'* (to keep hospitality) referred not only to welcoming the stranger, but also more broadly to caring for the poor.[41]

Ancient and Modern Immigration: Ethical Questions and Preliminary Answers

As we turn now to consider the contemporary implications of patristic attitudes and actions toward migrants, it is important to name two cultural differences between the patristic context and the modern context with respect to immigration (and there are certainly more than two differences!). First, borders functioned differently during the patristic era. Roman borders evolved during the imperial phase (31 BC – AD 476) but allowed for immigration and travel from outside of Roman territory. In the early

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[36] Tacoma, *Moving Romans*, pp. 233, 235–37.
[37] Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World,* pp. 182–90.
[38] David Noy, *Foreigners at Rome: Citizens and Strangers* (London: Duckworth, 2000), p. 57.
[39] Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 18–19.
[40] Rhee, *Loving the Poor,* pp. 114–15.
[41] Pohl, *Making Room*, p. 49.

imperial period, the Empire operated with frontiers, perimeter spaces the empire could penetrate with its military power and economic influence. During this phase, military forces had been located in the interior, and there were not necessarily clearly delineated borders. During the mid-second century, military forces were moved to the perimeter to establish something like strict border limits. By the fourth century, a weakened outer border defense was coupled with interior layers of defense with the expectation of regular foreign military incursion.[42] During this phase especially, Rome would establish a series of garrisoned border forts called *burgi.*[43] Though modern technologies and transborder agreements are transforming modern borders into something closer to a frontier, it is certainly the case that Roman borders would have been more permeable than those of many modern nation states.[44] The militarization and strict regulation of modern borders sets modern immigration policy in a quite different context than the one in which early Christians found themselves.

A second difference pertains to the racialized context of modern immigration in comparison with ancient immigration. Certainly, there was prejudice in ancient Rome, and we even see early racist theories of the inferiority of African peoples among the Greek and Roman intelligentsia.[45] Nevertheless, to my knowledge Rome does not implement exclusionary policies on the basis of race of the sort seen in much modern immigration policy.[46] One can contrast, for example, Australia's 'White Australia' policy or the United States' 'Chinese Exclusion Act' with J. P. V. D. Balsdon's assessment of Rome: 'Republican history, therefore, shows no evidence of hostility to foreigners as such or any wish to prevent them from living in

[42] Matthew Longo, *The Politics of Borders: Sovereignty, Security, and the Citizen after 9/11* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 30–34.
[43] Roger S. Bagnall, 'Army and Police in Roman Upper Egypt', *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, 14 (1977), 67–86 (pp. 71–73).
[44] See Longo, *Politics of Borders*; David Scott Fitzgerald, *Refuge Beyond Reach: How Rich Democracies Repel Asylum Seekers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
[45] For a brief summary, see Dwight N. Hopkins, *Being Human: Race, Culture, and Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), pp. 132–35. Hopkins summarizes, 'Though ambiguity persists here and though male white supremacy of European modernity does not obtain, still ancient Romans maintained an impulse of difference between them and Africans.' Ibid., p. 134.
[46] For example, on the racialized context of modern US immigration policy, see Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkely, CA: University of California Press, 2014); Reece Jones, *White Borders: The History of Race and Immigration in the United States from Chinese Exclusion to the Border Wall* (Boston: Beacon, 2021).

Rome'.[47] While our modern immigration decisions must be made a century and a half after the implementation of such exclusionary and racist laws (the 'White Australia' policy began in AD 1901 and the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in AD 1882), I am considering patristic decisions on migration that began a century and a half after the end of the Roman Republic which was characterized by such openness. This different moral context will raise new issues. For example, I take the early Christian decision to establish xenodochia that were not linked to prostitution and sex trafficking to be uncontroversial in the context of Christian ethics, while modern concerns about sexual purity and immigration have often been racialized, with the intent of sexualizing undesired ethnic groups as a reason for their exclusion.[48] The same valid moral principles might be associated with new moral risks in new sociohistorical contexts.

The militarized and racialized context of modern immigration is one reason of many why we cannot simply imitate patristic actions and teachings on immigration or consider such imitation to be sufficient for Christian ethics. Nonetheless, patristic practices of hospitality do raise questions that prompt serious Christian moral reflection in the context of modern immigration practices. The normative value of tradition as an interpretive guide to Scripture suggests at a minimum that patristic practices may faithfully embody Scriptural guidelines in a manner that should be contextualized and repeated today. Like most protestants, I do not consider tradition to be infallible – it may well be that early Christian institutions of migration had the wrong priorities. However, the weight of tradition suggests a prima facie reason to hold to similar values as our Christian ancestors, barring some sort of persuasive moral argument for the contrary.

Patristic hospitality emphasized care toward different kinds of migrants compared to much modern immigration policy. The ministry of the church to migrants through institutions like xenodochia were combined with ministry to the sick, poor, and elderly.[49] Much modern immigration policy limits migrants' access to healthcare and often refuses immigration to those with significant health issues. In the context of the United States, immigration is often barred for those who might become a public charge,

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[47] J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979), p. 101. The Chinese Exclusion Act restricted immigration to the United States from Asia. The 'White Australia' policy was designed to regulate immigration by prioritizing British settlement in order to ensure that racial demographics in Australia remained unchanged.

[48] See the discussion and examples in Adam Hosein, *The Ethics of Immigration: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 95–96.

[49] This is quite evident in Helen Rhee's survey of ancient xenodocheia in Rhee, *Healthcare in Early Christianity,* pp. 239–44.

depending on the government for financial provision. This basis for being inadmissible for immigration would preclude many with disabilities. The US also has a history of exclusion for those with venereal diseases, deporting immigrants diagnosed with such diseases,[50] with HIV+ individuals denied entry into the United States until 2010.[51] More recently, US policy with Title 42 severely restricted immigration during the Covid-19 pandemic. To be fair, these are complicated ethical issues, and an argument for some medical exclusions surely could be made based on the national right to self-determination and the duty of states to protect citizens. Yet, the focus on protection and exclusion stands in stark contrast to the patristic focus on hospitality toward the sick despite the public risk of such hospitality. At the very least, patristic precedent challenges Christians to question assumed priorities in border screening and admission. Are these priorities morally defensible? Are they ideal from the standpoint of Christian moral theology? The level of evidence required to answer these questions in the affirmative is higher given patristic precedent.

If immigrants are able to secure entry to a country, they often face barriers to accessing medical services in their new host countries. Barriers can have to do with restricted entitlements (i.e., immigrants having access to fewer of the services legislated in healthcare law) or with accessibility. Barriers in terms of accessibility may be structural, such as those resulting from racism against migrants of a certain race or ethnicity, or individual, such as the difficulty a particular individual might face due to lack of knowledge in necessary languages to navigate a medical system.[52] In the European Union, for example, Denmark, Iceland, the Netherlands, Germany, and Slovakia provide lesser entitlements to children of asylum seekers. When children of undocumented immigrants are included, 'no more than a handful of EU/EEA member states have a policy that provides equal entitlement of care to children in the host population for all migrant children'.[53] Here again, patristic emphases in hospitality toward migrants is

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[50] For one such reference, see Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), pp. 99–108.

[51] Hosein, *Ethics of Immigration,* p. 99.

[52] See Marie Norredam and Allan Krasnik, 'Migration and Access to Health Care: Barriers and Solutions', in *Migration and Health,* ed. by Sandro Galea, Catherine K. Ettman, and Muhammad H. Zaman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 54–58 (53–60).

[53] Liv Stubbe Østergaard, Marie Norredam, Claire Mock-Munoz de Luna, Mitch Blair, Sharon Goldfeld, and Anders Hjern, 'Restricted health care entitlements for child migrants in Europe and Australia', *European Journal of Public Health* 27.5, (Oct. 2017), 870–71(869–73).These conclusions are based on an international survey provided to

striking, and it poses a challenge to modern practices that restrict hospitality and care to certain groups of migrants. Nothing in the historical evidence I have surveyed suggests a similar level of exclusion from or restriction of access to xenodochia. Are the health benefits of excluding unhealthy migrants worth the humanitarian risks some of these migrants will face? Should we prioritize safety of citizens over care of migrants? Many modern nation-states have answered such questions differently from Christians in the patristic era, which demands that modern states provide weighty moral reasons for such a difference.

A third example of the different emphases of modern and patristic perspectives on migration is seen in terms of the economic dimensions of hospitality. Consider the United Kingdom, which has preferred migrants from wealthier countries over those with economic need. For example, the United Kingdom had among the most permissive worker migrant policies within the EU toward migrants from other EU member states, [54] but prioritization was toward students and highly skilled workers.[55] Students would be a source of revenue for British universities, while highly skilled workers would generally be among the wealthier immigration applicants. This welcome stands in stark contrast with much of UK policy toward asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.[56] Though there are certainly a range of opinions among UK policymakers, some have even voiced opposition to offering aid to migrant boats sinking in the Mediterranean. Lady Joyce Anelay, for example, remarked in 2014 that rescue operations were 'an unintended "pull factor"' that might increase migration, so the government did not support them.[57] While such callousness was defended because increased migration might result in even more migrant deaths at sea, Lady Anelay neglected to consider the fact that guarded borders push asylum seekers and refugees toward dangerous geographic features by

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national agents who were experienced child health professionals and to Nation Human Rights Institutes in thirty-one EU states. Since immigration policy and health policy are in flux, these numbers are likely to have slightly changed at the time of reading.

[54] For example, the UK had the most permissive labor immigration policies toward incoming A-8 countries that joined the EU in 2004. Lucie Cerna and Almuth Wietholtz, 'The Case of the United Kingdom', in *Migration Policymaking in Europe: The Dynamics of Actors and Contexts in Past and Present,* ed. by Giovanna Zincone, Rinus Penninx, and Maren Borkert, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), pp. 195–244 (p. 198).

[55] For example, from 1995–1999, 100,000 highly skilled workers were admitted compared to 50,000 of manual and clerical workers. Ibid., p. 199. Such priorities

[56] Cerna and Wietholtz summarize, "Since the 1990s, British immigration policy has been characterized as restrictive towards asylum seekers and illegal migrants but welcoming toward skilled and highly skilled migrants." Ibid.

[57] Reece Jones, *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move* (London: Verso, 2016), p. 24.

design in an attempt at deterrence. Here again, the prioritization of immigration for high skilled labour could be defended by appeal to the needs of the national economy and the duty of states to pursue self-interest. However, patristic institutions prioritized other moral concerns, especially solidarity with the poor. Here we must ask: is the modern emphasis on security and prosperity justifiable? Patristic precedent challenges this priority. Again, while tradition is fallible, it is also a guide to interpreting Scripture, a fact that suggests modern immigration priorities are severely misguided. We must also therefore wonder whether modern policies help Christians develop character, or, as seems more likely, whether these institutions undermine our moral formation.

Having noted how patristic immigration practices raise hard questions that challenge modern immigration practices, I would like to conclude by noting one area where patristic practices may fall short in a modern context. The institutions of xenodochia and much of the accompanying theological justification for such institutions focused on offering hospitality. However, emphasis on hospitality may neglect relevant dimensions of ethical analysis. For example, Tisha Rajendra explains that narratives of hospitality and compassion may be rooted in the assumption that citizens have no causal influence on migration or on the needs of migrants.[58] Rajendra argues persuasively, however, that many migration flows were established through the actions of immigrant-recipient countries through colonialism, international trade, and/or guest worker programs. In such circumstances, host countries may have a responsibility to these relationships that extends beyond the voluntary charity of hospitality. Putting the matter even more pointedly, Miguel de la Torre argues,

> To practice the virtue of hospitality assumes the 'house' belongs to the one practicing this virtue who, out of the generosity of their heart, is sharing her or his resources with the Other who has no claim to the possession. But it was due to Latin American natural resources and cheap labor that the U.S. house was built in the first place. The virtue of hospitality masks the complexity caused by the consequences of empire building.[59]

Though patristic practices challenge modern immigration assumptions and pressure modern Christians toward greater welcome and hospitality, it may be that in the modern context, we must go further than our Christian

[58] Tisha M. Rajendra, *Migrants and Citizens: Justice and Responsibility in the Ethics of Immigration,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), p. 29.
[59] Miguel A. de la Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis: Toward an Ethics of Place,* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), p. 159.

forbearers in our moral theology of immigration. This article does not seek to resolve such issues, as a full ethic of immigration greatly exceeds its scope. Rather, may the reader be left with a sense of disquiet at the jarring difference between patristic institutions of hospitality and much contemporary immigration policy.

Back to list of ARTICLES

REVIEWS

Anthony Giambrone, **The Bible and the Priesthood: Priestly Participation in the One Sacrifice for Sins**. A Catholic Biblical Theology of the Sacraments. Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2022. xxii, 297 pp. Paperback ISBN 978-1-5409-6186-0.

This book is dedicated to "Benedict XVI", and takes its cue from the book published by the by then emeritus Pope and Robert Cardinal Sarah, *From the Depths of our Hearts* (2020), widely understood as a reactionary attempt to undermine the reformist agenda of Pope Francis. Whether or not this was their intention or effect, and irrespective of the degree to which Ratzinger was consciously involved in the project, this is an unfortunate starting point, even for a book in a series whose ecumenical vision is limited to Orthodox churches in communion with the See of Rome. Despite its unpromising beginning, this is a book which Christians of other persuasions ought to read, and by which they should be ready to be challenged.

Successive chapters explore aspects of priesthood in the Old Testament, with the formation of the cult in the Pentateuch and the complex relationships between prophet, priest, and king during successive stages in the history of ancient Israel coming under scrutiny. The author demonstrates familiarity with some breadth of critical scholarship, as well as of Jewish and Christian traditions of interpretation, but is somewhat ambivalent in recognising that the myth of descent from Aaron reflects attempts to incorporate diverse cults into a single system, while excluding others, rather than historical reality. He displays also considerable awareness of the influence of ideological and cultural assumptions on the work of other scholars. In many places this work is insightful, but, even where critique of earlier scholarship is sound, alternative interpretations to those offered here are at least as plausible.

The treatment of the New Testament material is more contentious and less persuasive than that of the Old. The critique of Protestant scholarship is strident, but not always apposite. There is a singular failure to recognise that scholars of Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish backgrounds have, particularly during the decades following the second Vatican Council, formed a single academic community, in which most are no longer constrained by the orthodoxies previously imposed by their respective religious authorities, conscious and critical of the assumptions and shortcomings of their own heritage, and engaged in debate on a basis of mutual respect and shared scholarly principles; diversity of opinion no

longer reflects confessional positions. This is as true on questions of authority and ministry as it is on any other point of contention.

It is to be regretted that an opportunity to offer creative and intriguing scholarly insights in an ecumenical spirit has been subordinated to a reactionary and defensive agenda. This is most apparent in the Conclusion, which rehearses inconclusive, selective, and long discredited arguments against the ordination of women and in favour of compulsory clerical celibacy – both issues not discussed in the main body of the text. This raises questions about the frank and in places vicious allusions to the scandals which have confronted the Roman Catholic Church in recent years – and from which no Christian denomination or any other faith tradition and its institutions have been exempt – and neither have secular schools and sports clubs. This obsession does little service to a Church which has invested more than any other human institution in the education and nurture of vulnerable children, and the overwhelming majority of whose priests, monks, and nuns have undoubtedly been conscientious and faithful, within the limits of universal human sinfulness and the limitations of training and resources available to them.

It is unfortunate that a work of very considerable scholarship, with much to offer to Christians of all persuasions concerned with understanding the nature of ministry and its roots in our common biblical heritage, has been marred by reactionary confessional chauvinism. There is much to learn from it, much to be gained from persevering through at least the main chapters and their excursus, and being open to the opportunity to read Scripture that may be refreshing as well as challenging to those of a different confessional background and academic formation.

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Back to list of ARTICLES

Diarmaid MacCullough, **Lower than the Angels: A History of Sex and Christianity.** (London: Allen Lane, 2024). xxiv, 660 pp. ISBN 978-0-241-40093-7. £35.00 Hbk.

It has become almost commonplace to describe books like *Lower than the Angels* as magisterial, but in this case it is certainly appropriate. MacCullough actually covers about three thousand years of the relationship between sex and religion, examining first the ancient cultures of Greece and Israel as a necessary background to the long history of Christianity. He begins by warning us that as we read the narrative that is presented to us we are likely to be in a rage - perhaps for many reasons. For nothing provokes prejudices and anger, or sometimes (and usually unnecessarily) just plain embarrassment, like the subject of sex and its complicated, shifting associate term, gender. Although the Bible is often awkwardly coerced into the arguments, the Christian church has much more often invoked the equally fluid authority of natural law, its roots in ancient Greece and Aristotle but its form shifting through the vicissitudes of history. And if that makes Christians feel uncomfortable, MacCullough emphasizes clearly how the Roman Catholic Church in the nineteenth century privileged the Aristotelian Thomism of its theology to underwrite the hard-line statements of Vatican I under Pius IX.

Despite his often demanding and complex material, MacCullough is a writer of wit and verbal dexterity which ensures that this is an eminently readable book as it traces the fluidity of how the church has dealt with the ineradicable presence of sex in human nature. Change is imposed by myriad means - political, theological, ecclesial, medical, cultural, and more. But the drive remains, though the vestigial romanticism and Victorianism of our current rather battered paradigm of the 'Christian' nuclear family, within which mostly heterosexual sex alone can be pursued, has actually been very far from the norm in history. Polygamy and 'homosexuality' (actually a comparatively recent term coined to describe a 'medically defined behavioural disorder') are everywhere present in ancient, and not-so ancient cultures, as the church has lurched through its troubled history as regards the matter of sex.

Monogamous, heterosexual marriage, broadly understood in the modern sense, has actually little precedent in the history of the church. The same might be said of the relatively recently established strict binary of male and female. More often than not marriage was negotiated between fathers to ensure some economic stability, love between the young - and often very young - partners having little or nothing to do with it - although St. Paul does have some rather different, if inconsistent, things to say about marriage in his writings, which have been variously interpreted - or ignored. The

question as to whether sex is for pleasure or purely procreational has haunted Christian thinking to the present time with its continuing debates on the matter of contraception and indeed abortion, some early Christian theologians, notably the sex- hating St. Jerome maintaining that to 'love' one's wife too much was tantamount to adultery (Chapter 7). Nor, of course, had the initiation of marriage much to do with the church, until it became more convenient to the church to appropriate it, giving it the honour of being a sacrament, for some and for a time at least.

MacCullough divides the history of sex in the church - largely in the West though he does say much about the Orthodox tradition as well - into broadly defined periods, the first extending up to the Reformation when, after a shaky, and now largely shadowy, start primacy was given to abstention from sex, ideally entirely. Celibate priests and men and women living lives of virginal purity behind monastery walls contrasted with the copulating laity. Mary, the BVM, was the great exemplar of purity - though, human nature being what it is, the truth was far from being so neat and tidy. With Martin Luther and the Reformation the focus was on the family, modelled upon the lines of a highly reconstructed Holy Family (Joseph took a long time to be sorted out), rather distant from the glimpses given us in St. Luke and the gospels. Finally the modern age begins with the crumbling of the *ancien régime* in France in 1789, when in France marriage was declared once more to be a civil contract and divorce made legal, though little was said about homosexuality, which was really only to become an issue later.

What is startling is how, time and again, sex is weaponized in Christian culture, and never more so than in the nineteenth century when European countries, with their missionary envoys, were busy seeking to impose 'Christian' culture on very different peoples and societies in Africa, Asia and elsewhere. Throughout its history Christianity, and it is not alone in this, has been almost ineradicably patriarchal, though in different ways women have made their presence felt in the culture of the church, if almost always against the grain. (Here, again, St. Paul has much to answer for.) Certainly in the Church of England, wedded for so long to its Book of Common Prayer, the requirement that a woman at her wedding vows to obey her husband proved remarkably hard to omit, at least liturgically. Wifely obedience, as opposed to marital equality, remained as a clear option in the 'modernized' marriage service of the 1980 *Alternative Service Book*.

Lower than the Angels is a very large book and it makes for sobering reading. It ends on a largely Anglican note with the turmoil and arguments - all finally related to prejudices about sex and gender - over whether women should be ordained - conducted at the same time as the almost entirely male dominated (and single sex educated) culture of the Church of England was producing the abuse scandals that are so currently present to us in the

resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The real wonder is that people are so surprised that such things can happen in such an institution. In the midst of all the arguing and finger-pointing, it is to be hoped that people of all denominations in the wider church will read MacCullough's book, and thereby be better equipped to think a little more carefully, and historically, about the matter of sex, the church and the Christian faith. And perhaps, finally, to echo a note at the very end of the book, which reminds us that after all, God made us for joy, and that includes sex - when it is not narrowed, weaponized, debased, or used as a tool of exploitation.

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Back to list of ARTICLES

Mitri Raheb & Mark A. Lamport (eds.), **Surviving Jewel: The Enduring Story of Christianity in the Middle East. The Global Story of Christianity** (Eugene OR: Cascade, 2022). xl, 268 pp. Paperback ISBN 978-1-7252-6310-2; Hardcover ISBN 978-1-7252-6320-8; Ebook ISBN 978-1-7252-6321-5.

This is the first volume in a projected seven-volume series treating the history and present situation of the Christian communities in different parts of the world, appropriately enough beginning with the geographical area that has come to be referred to as the "Middle East". The editors and authors are well aware of the problematic nature of this expression, and strenuous efforts have clearly been made to ensure that most contributors are Christians of this region, whose religious and cultural roots are in the churches of the region – notwithstanding that several occupy positions in European or North American universities.

The Series Introduction includes the unfortunate statement, "During the twentieth century, the family of faith burst out of European frameworks and began growing rapidly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America." This book, on the contrary, is premised upon the recognition that Christianity "burst out", not of Europe, however defined, but of the Levant, and Palestine in particular. Indeed, this volume, and, one presumes, the series as a whole, represent a determination to move from writings by orientalist scholars objectifying the Christians of the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, to disseminating the scholarship of Christians emanating from that region. It is, nonetheless, conspicuous that a disproportionate number of contributors

emanate from Protestant churches, reflecting the access to "western" academia which European and North American missions and their heirs have made available.

The book is divided into three sections. The first is essentially historical, providing brief and accessible, but nonetheless sound, accounts of the emergence of Christianity, and its development in response to historical events which enveloped the region over the centuries. The second section treats in turn the various churches which form the complex tapestry of Christian expression in the region, their history, theological, ecclesiological, and liturgical traditions, and their present circumstances – which, in most cases, means a significant proportion of the membership living in diaspora or, to be more frank, exile. The existential crises posed by assimilation to host cultures are acknowledged, as is the reality of discrimination and persecution in Muslim and Jewish majority countries, irrespective of the ideology of the regime - and before the emergence of such movements as ISIS/ISIL. The final section treats contemporary social issues, including the evolving role of women in church and society, inter-faith relations, and the role of the churches and their institutions, and of lay Christian leaders, in contemporary societies in the MENA region.

This is undoubtedly a useful resource, containing complex information presented accessibly and concisely. It will be invaluable to the student of global Christianity, and direct those seeking more detailed information to more specialist sources.

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Back to list of ARTICLES