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Das, Rupen. Review of "*God's People on the Move: Biblical and Global Perspectives on Migration and Mission*", edited by van Thanh Nguyen and John M. Prior" and "*Religion, Migration and Identity: Methodological and Theological Explanations*", edited by Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy." *Baptistic Theologies* 10, no. 1 (2018): 81-82.

vanThanh Nguyen and John M. Prior (eds), *God's People on the Move: Biblical and Global Perspectives on Migration and Mission* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 204 pages. ISBN: 978-1625640796.

Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy (eds), *Religion, Migration and Identity: Methodological and Theological Explorations* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 192 pages. ISBN: 978-9004326149.

Migration, refugees, and displacement are politically charged topics that are very much part of the social discourse globally today. They have a direct impact on issues of national identity, discrimination, and social justice. It is reflected politically with the election of right wing, nationalist governments in many countries. The complexity of these issues is compounded by the fact that the Christian community in many countries is deeply divided when discussing immigration and refugees. These two books are timely contributions to the discussions within the larger Christian community.

Nguyen and Prior look at not only the biblical perspectives on migration in the Old and New Testaments, but they also examine the role of the Church and Christian institutions in contemporary issues in migration. Chris Wright has observed elsewhere that 'migration runs like a thread through the whole biblical narrative'. The biblical section in the book starts with the understanding of God's blessings being poured out through a migrant (Abraham) and migrants as missionaries (Priscilla and Aquila). There are lessons from history which look at Israel's ancestors as *gerim* or foreigners, as well as Paul and Barnabas at Lystra and the lessons for crossing boundaries and cultures in the context of ministry.

The contemporary issues section chooses particular issues from across the world to understand the role of the Church and the work of mission in each of these contexts. It explores the undocumented workers in the USA, the current trends in migration in Asia, and Francophone migrant churches in Pretoria, South Africa. More critically, it explores a missional theology in an urban culture of displacement and the issue of 'failed' migrant returns, interestingly, using the book of Ruth.

Religion, Migration and Identity, edited by Frederiks and Nagy, is a more academic collection of articles that first appeared in the journals *Exchange* and *Mission Studies*. The book explores a specific aspect of the

migration experience, that of identity and religion. The writers state that migrants 'bring about changes in the religious landscape, in religious beliefs and practices, and in the way people understand themselves, each other, and the world around them'. With that in mind, Frederiks and Nagy introduce the topic with two chapters that explore the relationship of the conceptual, theoretical, theological, and missiological with migration. These provide the framework for the rest of the contributions. There are a wide range of case studies including refugee resettlement in the USA during the Cold War, Nigerian churches in the Czech Republic, migrant churches in Kuwait, and Arab churches in New Jersey. The last three chapters are theological reflections on migrants, identity, and missions.

The important contribution of both books is that they move beyond the basic facts that the migrants are foreigners and therefore should be shown hospitality by the host community. They tackle the theological understanding that God uses migrants for his purposes. Migrants are his tools for cross-cultural missions. Church historian Philip Jenkins has noted that migrants are an integral part of the revitalisation of European Christianity.

Frederiks and Nagy tackle the difficult topic of how religion, identity, and migration intersect. This discussion dovetails with the work of Walter Brueggemann, Craig Bartholomew, and John Inge on the importance of place and belonging, which is vital in determining identity. Migration and displacement destroy this sense of identity and there is a need to reconstruct a new identity in the places the migrants have settled, by integrating their old identity into new roots. Brueggemann writes that 'it is rootlessness and not meaninglessness that characterize the current crisis. There can be no meaning apart from roots.'

The books individually lack breadth in addressing the migration phenomenon and the scope of the refugee crisis. Because of the displacements in the Middle East and the refugee flows into Europe, the conversation about migration and displacement has progressed significantly and the two books predate these discussions. But they are an important contribution to the overall discussion of who the foreigner is in our midst and our responsibility towards them.

Reviewed by Rupen Das