



Faith Perspectives of Mexican Migrant Farm Workers in Canada

Las perspectivas de fe de los trabajadores agrícolas migrantes mexicanos en Canada

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Thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the degree of Doctor of Theology (Ph.D.)

Supervisor

Dr. Charles Van Engen.

FAITH PERSPECTIVES OF MIGRANT WORKERS

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis is the result of my own research
and that it has not been partially or totally submitted to
another educational institution to obtain an academic degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rafael Vallejo". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Rafael Vallejo
January 31, 2018

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation explores faith perspectives and practices of Mexican migrant farmworkers in Ontario using a social-science approach called “Lived Religion”. It uses qualitative data from ethnographic field research done by the author with Mexican migrant farm workers in Southwestern Ontario, Canada from 2012-2017.

The objective of the research was to interrogate faith perspectives of Mexican Migrant Farmworkers who come to Canada eight months a year from April to November under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP). They are among approximately 20,000 migrant workers who work in fields, orchards and greenhouses in Canada every year. Most of them self-identify as *catolicos* (Catholics). They are generally between the ages of 25-40, male and married.

The argument for the dissertation flows in three stages. Part 1 begins with a survey of the history of mission and migration by looking at the historiography of six migrant groups: Nestorians, Huguenots, Puritans, Acadians, Mennonites and West Africans in the transatlantic slave trade. The author argues that the plurality of christian faith expressions in the world today can be traced back to migration and the many different inculturations of the gospel that was brought about because of it.

A critical analysis of this historiography was done using social science concepts of “structure” and “agency”. The author critiques Euro-American and ethnocentric readings of migration, Christian history, culture and biblical narratives and the normalized practice of defining religion within Western frameworks and then applying them to non-Western cultures.

Part 2 interprets four narratives from the Hebrew Bible: Joseph, Esther, Ruth and Daniel to determine what the narratives say about the agency of God in the stories. Central to postcolonial readings of the Bible is a critique of whose voices are included and/or excluded from these writings and who benefits from telling and reading these sacred stories in a certain way and not another. The author uses insights from Ricoeur and Gadamer’s hermeneutics to affirm that no single hermeneutical lens is able to exhaust the manifold layers of meaning that can be found in these texts.

This is followed in Part 3 by excerpts from interviews where Mexican Migrant workers describe faith in their own words. Participant responses were coded and clustered into five themes: 1. *la salud*(Health) 2. *la familia* (Family) 3. *la fe*(Faith) 4. *las remesas*(Remittances) and 5. *la lucha* (Struggle). The author analyses the findings and suggests that religion is a dominant register in migrant ways of believing and belonging.

The dissertation concludes with a constructive proposal to view *missio Dei* (the Mission of God) as “resistance and struggle”. This is supported by a social-scientific reading of the Justice of God (*tsedek/dikiaosune*) in the context of Empire in the First and Second Testaments. The author represents Jesus as the Justice of God and his ministry as being about *dikaiaosunē* as he taught those who followed him to “thirst for justice” (Matt 5:6). To know God in the biblical tradition is “to do justice” which is a sign of the present and future reign of God.

Esta tesis doctoral explora las perspectivas de fe y las prácticas religiosas de los trabajadores agrícolas migrantes mexicanos en Ontario, Canadá, utilizando un enfoque de ciencias sociales llamado "LivedReligion". Utiliza datos cualitativos de una investigación de campo etnográfica realizada por el autor con trabajadores agrícolas migrantes mexicanos en el suroeste de Ontario, Canadá, de 2012-2017.

El objetivo de la investigación fue explorar las perspectivas de fe de los trabajadores agrícolas migrantes mexicanos que vienen a Canadá ocho meses al año, de abril a noviembre, bajo el Programa de Trabajadores Agrícolas Estacionales (SAWP). Aproximadamente 20,000 trabajadores migrantes que trabajan en campos, huertos e invernaderos en Canadá cada año. La mayoría de ellos se autoidentifican como católicos. Por lo general, tienen entre 25 y 40 años, son hombres y están casados.

El argumento para la disertación fluye en tres etapas. La primera parte comienza con un estudio de la historia de la misión y la migración al observar la historiografía de seis grupos de migrantes: Nestorianos, Hugonotes, Puritanos, Acadianos. Menonitas y Africanos del oeste en la trata transatlántica de esclavos. El autor argumenta que la pluralidad de las expresiones de la fe cristiana en el mundo de hoy se remonta a la migración y a las muchas diversas formas de inculturación del evangelio que se produjo a causa de ella.

Se realizó un análisis crítico de esta historiografía utilizando los conceptos de "estructura" y "agencia" de las ciencias sociales. El autor critica las lecturas euroamericanas y etnocéntricas de la migración, la historia cristiana, la cultura y las narraciones bíblicas y la práctica normalizada de definir la religión dentro de los marcos occidentales que luego se aplican a las culturas no occidentales.

La segunda parte interpreta cuatro narraciones de la Biblia hebrea: José, Ester, Rut y Daniel para determinar lo que dicen las narraciones acerca de la agencia de Dios. Es fundamental para las lecturas postcoloniales de la Biblia la crítica de las voces que se incluyen y / o excluyen de estos escritos y quiénes se benefician al contar y leer estas historias sagradas de una manera determinada y no de otra. El autor utiliza ideas de la hermenéutica de Ricoeur y Gadamer para afirmar que ninguna lente hermenéutica única es capaz de agotar las múltiples capas de significado que se pueden encontrar en estos textos.

Sigue la tercera parte con extractos de entrevistas donde los trabajadores migrantes mexicanos describen la fe en sus propias palabras. Las respuestas de los participantes se codificaron y agruparon en cinco temas: 1. la salud 2. la familia 3. la fe 4. las remesas y 5. la lucha. El autor analiza los hallazgos y sugiere que la religión es un registro dominante en las formas de creer y pertenecer de los trabajadores migrantes.

La disertación concluye con una propuesta constructiva para ver a *missio Dei* como "resistencia y lucha". Esto es respaldado por una re-lectura de la Justicia de Dios (*tsedek /dikaosune*) en el contexto de Imperio en el Primero y Segundo Testamentos. El autor representa a Jesús como la Justicia de Dios y su ministerio como *dikaiaosunē*, ya que Jesús enseñó a quienes le siguieron a tener "sed de justicia" (Mateo 5:6). Conocer a Dios en la tradición bíblica es "hacer justicia", que es un signo del presente y futuro reino de Dios.

ABBREVIATIONS

BCE	Before the Christian Era
CDMX	Ciudad de Mexico or Mexico
EI	Employment Insurance
ESA	Employment Standards Act
FBO	Faith-Based Organization
FARMS	Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services
GCIM	Global Commission on International Migration
HB	Hebrew Bible
HRDC	Human Resource Development Canada
IOM	International Organization for Migration
J4MW	Justice for Migrant Workers
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NT	New Testament
OHIP	Ontario Health Insurance Plan
OHSA	Occupational Health and Safety Act
OLRB	Ontario Labor Relations Board

PAR	Participatory Action Research
PBS	Public Broadcasting System (US)
RVA	Reina-Valera Antigua
SAWP	Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program
UFCW	United Food and Commercial Workers Union
UN	United Nations
US	United States
WCC	World Council of Churches
WSIB	Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

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CHAPTER 1**MIGRANTS AND MIGRATION, RELIGION AND FAITH****1.1 Introduction**

There is no universally accepted definition of migrant or migration. This dissertation focuses on one type of migrant: the Mexican migrant farm worker. In migration literature, they fall under the category of labor or economic migrants. The study is situated in Southern Ontario, Canada from 2012-2017.

The migrant workers referred to in this study are all of Mexican descent. They come to Canada for about eight months a year from April to November under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP). After that they go back home to their families in Mexico and wait for their employers to call them back for the next season.

Approximately 20,000 migrant farm workers from the Caribbean and Mexico arrive in Canada to work in fields, orchards and greenhouses every year. Current hourly wage in 2017 is at \$11.43 per hour.¹ In many of these fruit, vegetable, ginseng and tobacco farms one finds Mexican migrant farm workers who self-identify as *catolicos* (Catholics). They are mostly between the ages of 25-40, male and married.

¹ CAD \$1.00 is equivalent to 14.38 Mexican Pesos in June 2017.

The Ministry of Labor has certain criteria for selecting workers for this program. First, they have to have prior working experience in agriculture. Since the main objective of the program is to assist those who are most in need, those with the lowest levels of education, and lack other means of making a living have the best chances of being approved. Since Canadian immigration authorities wish to ensure that this seasonal migration does not turn into permanent residence, they prefer workers who are married and have big families.

In 2015, the United Nations estimated that there were over 244 million migrants worldwide.² This figure does not include internally displaced populations moving from rural to urban areas. Everyday across the world, people make the difficult and sometimes painful decision to leave home, family, community to migrate to another country. They migrate for many reasons: war, poverty, environmental disasters, famine and persecution and the search for a better life. According to Castles and Miller (2009) a key factor in migration today is globalization: a process that is driven not just by economics, but by ideological shifts and political changes toward an assumed universalization of Western liberal democracy. Fukuyama (2006:7) reports that most 19th century Europeans thought that progress meant “progress toward democracy”. Today however there is no consensus on the universality of this ideal. People living in the Western

² This is the latest figure from a new UN dataset, “*Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2015 Revision*” . The number of international migrants — persons living in a country other than where they were born — reached 244 million in 2015 for the world as a whole, a 41 per cent increase compared to 2000. This figure includes almost 20 million refugees. The dataset is available at www.unmigration.org.

Hemispheres are beginning to see that this view may be a reflection of a narrow ethnocentrism on their part.³

Migration studies today focus on the economic, political, legal and social issues that drive migration. Most of the discussions on the topic however are oriented towards policy and how to manage migration rather than understanding what that experience is like for the migrants themselves. The growing consensus among scholars is that migration apart from having gone global has also become more intense and diverse. It is in this context that Massey (1998) speaks of “the Globalization of Migration” itself.

1.1.1 Faith Perspectives of Migrant Workers

This research focuses on Faith Perspectives of Migrant Farm Workers. It interrogates the role of religion in the migration process, and in particular, in the lives of migrant workers. It puts forward a new way of understanding religion as “lived religion”. It focuses not just on what migrant workers believe, but the various ways they perform belief in everyday life. The emphasis is not on the beliefs that migrant workers have, but how belief is experienced by them.

In preparing for it, I read up on the subject of “lived religión” as it relates to religión culture and identity. I learned about international labor migration and temporary foreign workers

programs. I gained a deeper understanding of it in a course at Oxford University on International Labour Migration: Economics, Politics and Ethics with Martin Ruhs, Associate Professor of Political Economy. At that time my interest was not primarily labor migration as much as the human rights of migrant workers. Ruhs (2013) had just researched this tension between wanting to liberalize labor migration and at the same time needing to protect human rights. His findings suggest that it can be difficult to do both.

My interest in the human rights of migrant workers had to do with my involvement with “No One is Illegal” a migrant justice movement in Toronto where I was pastoring a migrant church. The movement is part of the global resistance against colonialism and capitalism. Among the things that the movement advocates are the human rights of migrants to stay, move and return to their home countries.

1.1.2 Migration and Religion

What I noticed in many of the conversations I participated in was the lack of mention about religion in relation to migration. This did not line up with my experience in a congregation of newcomers to Canada where every Sunday I heard congregants talk about how their faith keeps their lives together and how grateful they are that there is a church in the city that understands their situation as migrants. In conversation they tell many stories of how faith helped them before, during and after they migrated.

Academics I talked to said that the reason religion is being ignored is because of the secular character of the discourse itself and of the social sciences in general. There is a widespread

assumption that religion is either non-essential or divisive.⁴ Media reports suggest that nation-states are more concerned with issues like border-security and terrorism. This explains why studies around migration today tend to focus more on frameworks of law enforcement, national security and the threats of terrorism, border controls and deportation.

Hagan and Ebaugh (2003:1145) observe that despite the diversity and prominence of religious beliefs and practice among migrants in the U.S. scholars of both migration and religion, social scientists and policymakers alike “have tended to neglect the role of religion and spirituality in the process of international migration”.⁵

Except for the academic/church circles where I belong, there is not a lot written about migration and faith, migrant religious/ethnic identity, race and gender, or religious belief and practice especially as it relates to migrant rights. An alternative view from Truong et al. (2013) suggest that human security is precisely the framework that enables attention to social justice, gender concerns and human vulnerability.⁶ One reason why I chose to explore the faith perspectives of migrant workers is to learn about social justice and human vulnerability as it

⁴ Khaterreh (KAT) Eghdamian; Religious Identity and Experiences of Displacement: An Examination into the Discursive Representations of Syrian Refugees and Their Effects on Religious Minorities Living in Jordan, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Volume 30, Issue 3, 1 September 2017, Pages 447–467, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/few030>

⁵ Hagan J and Ebaugh H.R., *Calling on the Sacred: Use of Religion in the Migration Process* International Migration Review Vol 37, No.4, (Winter 2003), 1145-1162

⁶ For how mainstream research is still dichotomized according to binaries like North-South, rural-urban, national-international, weak-strong, feminine-masculine, see Truong, T.D. Gasper D., and Handmaker, J. (2013) ‘*Migration, Gender, Social Justice, and Human Insecurity*’ pp. 3-26 in Truong, T.D., Gasper, D., Handmaker, J., Bergh, S.I. (Eds.): *Migration, Gender and Social Justice - Perspectives on Human Insecurity*. Hexagon Series on Human and Environmental Security and Peace, vol. 9 (Heidelberg – New York – Dordrecht – London: Springer).

relates to migrant lives. They represent to me the *terra incognita* that remains occluded in church conversations and mainstream migration research.

When I did read about religion and migration, I noticed that most of the authors were from North America and Western Europe. When religion was spoken of, it usually referred to Christianity as understood in the western Christian tradition. There were not as many voices speaking of the migrant experience from the perspective of Christians in non-western countries or people of other faiths. I think it is fair to say that most of the data and scholarship around migration today is based on the experience of Europe and North America, and the focus of most of the studies are on South-North Migration. Samuel Escobar looks at mission today as “from everywhere to everyone”⁷, no longer a uni-directional process but one which like migration has a multi-directional trajectory.

Allan Anderson argues that scholars have been talking about how Christianity has shifted to the Global South. Most Christians in the world today are situated in Africa, Asia and Latin America. What remains unclear however is what that shift is. He proposes that the shift is not just geographic or demographic. Something has changed in the very character of Christianity itself.⁸

⁷ Escobar S (2009) *Mission from everywhere to everyone: The home base in a new century*. In: Kerr D, Ross K (eds) Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now. Regnum: Oxford, pp. 185–198

⁸ Anderson, A.H. (2013) *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

1.1.3 Global Migration Today

The perspective taken migration studies is similar to what we are being told by the media: migration occurs mainly from poor developing countries of the Global South to rich countries of the North. Current data indicates however that South-South migration accounts for 40% of international migration.⁹ Migration flows (eg Chinese migration to Africa) are becoming equally significant, although not as much attention is being given to them. In recent years, there is much that has been written about Syrian refugees seeking asylum in the UK, Western Europe, the US and Canada. There are however other refugees that are not as visible in the mainstream media: Tibetan refugees flowing into India, Baha'i adherents fleeing religious persecution in Iran, Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar seeking asylum in Bangladesh or Indonesia or Sikh and Ahmadiyya migrants coming to Canada.

Beatriz Campillo Carrete (2003) believes that South to South Migration will likely be treated simply as an extension of former international migration research. She suggests that we use South-South migration as an opportunity to rethink the relation between inequality and migration, along with concepts and assumptions that were used in studies of South-North Migration.¹⁰ The

⁹ Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) 2005, *Migration in an Interconnected World : New Directions for Action, Report of the Global Commission on International Migration* Geneva: Global Commission on International Migration. p.6

¹⁰ See Campillo Carrete, B. (2013). *South-South Migration. ISS Working Paper Series / General Series* (Vol. 570, pp. 1–98). International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University (ISS). Retrieved from <https://repub.eur.nl/pub/50156>

relationship between migration and inequality will be explored in greater depth in the discussions that follow.

Migration is being framed according to the experience of the Global North, even when governments are aware that the realities are different in the South. The debate is normed by what is happening among countries like the U.S., Canada and Western Europe. This is of great interest to me as a student of missiology. Once again I am being reminded about why and how context matters in theological production.

It affirms once again that how people look at migration invariably depends on their own social and cultural location. It is interesting to me that theologies of migration are mostly written by people from the Global North as well. Like other areas of theology, many of the published research on migration and religion reveal a latent eurocentrism.

1.1.4 Migration , Globalization and Religion

How then do we break away from this? What might we do to offer a distinct contribution to the current debate on migration and religion? Where do we begin? For this I went back to reading Enrique Dussel, Walter Dignolo, and Aníbal Quijano. I decided to revisit the history of capitalism itself. Even if I disagreed with it, I followed the traditional model of history where “civilization” begins in Ancient Greece. I took it all the way from there to the emergence of modernity aware that the periodization of it was being contested.

I concurred with the view that modernity can not be seen as a phenomenon separate from the politico-economic project of colonial expansion carried out by Spain and Portugal through the commercial circuit of the Atlantic in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries¹¹. This has been analysed by Wallerstein on a higher level of abstraction using what he calls a world-systems approach as a framework for analysis.¹²

I read up on the trans-atlantic slave trade and the theology that funded that project in Europe and the Americas. I looked at colonial expansion, the spread of christianity and the great migrations from the 15th to the 20th century and related it to neo-liberalization and globalization. After that, I felt ready to do my dissertation.

1.1.5 Migration, Migrants and Christianity

Historians tell us that during the Irish Potato Famine in the 1840's, Irish migrants fled to North America. The famine however was not the only reason. The majority of Irish were Catholics living in conditions of extreme poverty. At the top of the social heirarchy at that time were English and Anglo-Irish families who owned most of the land, held unchecked power over their tenants and collected exorbitant amounts as rent for their farms. There was food but not for the poors

¹¹ For a fuller discussion of this concept read Enrique Dussel, 1492: *The cover-up of the other. Towards the Origin of the Myth of Modernity* Madrid: New Utopia, 9-11, 29 and Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories / Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000, 51-52.

¹² Terry Ann Jones and Eric Mielants eds. (2016) included Wallerstein's world systems theory in Chapter 1 of their compilation *Mass Migration in the World System: Past, Present and Future* NY. Taylor and Francis. In it Wallerstein describes capitalism as a global socioeconomic system based on unequal exchanges that result in the international division of labor.

million who died. Joseph O'Neill (2009) relates how the helpless and dying poor stood and watched as their harvests were loaded aboard ships bound for other lands.¹³

French and English Christians fled because of religious persecutions in their home countries. These were referred to as “religious wars”. From another point of view, they are power struggles among the ruling families who wanted control of both church and state. In the future, as religious/ethnic groups increase and multiply they will demand to be heard and may even change the conversation around migration. Going forward, we will have to be ready to engage other voices many of them non-white and non-christian, speaking from very different cultures and worldviews.

They will want to speak and be listened to and contribute to the conversation around religion, human rights and international migration. A review of migration in world history will show that it was not too long ago when Catholics and Jews were not welcome in the United States.¹⁴ Things have changed a century later as countries adjusted to religious diversity and saw the contributions made by these migrants.¹⁵ Already there are talks on whether in the future one of the muslim majority countries will be France.

¹³ Joseph O'Neill, (2009) *The Irish Potato Famine*, Minnesota, ABDO Publishing

¹⁴ At the time of this writing in 2017, US President Trump signed an executive order to bar entry to the U.S. of anyone from seven Muslim-majority countries from the Middle East and Africa : Syria, Yemen, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, and Sudan. At about the same time in January 2017, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau reaffirmed Canada's commitment to welcoming refugees. His post on Twitter read: “To those fleeing persecution, terror and war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength.”

¹⁵ Amy Chua (2007) makes a similar argument for how nations achieved market success by inviting migrants from diverse cultures in “*Days Of Empire: How hyperpowers rise to global dominance –and why they fall*”, 2007, NY Doubleday .

Migration theory encourages us to recover and reinterpret the history of migration. I do this by going back to migration narratives in the history of christianity to interrogate how they represented migration. I also show how with each wave of migration, migrants created a new form of social organization in their countries of destination. I take the view that God's mission unfolds within human history. History is the story of God's misión to the nations. Following Gustavo Gutierrez, I take the view that there are not two histories. The history of salvation is the very heart of human history.¹⁶

Mexican migrant farm workers, those who till and care for the land (Gen 2:15) are the subject of this dissertation. I see them as today's suffering servants whose hands are held by God so they can become "a light to the nations". (Isaiah 42:6). I use tools from Missiology and the Social Sciences to do a visual ethnography of Mexican migrant farm workers in Southern Ontario. I use an approach called "lived religion" to investigate what their faith means to them and how they practice it. I report on their faith perspective as expressed by them, in their own words. The research for and the writing of this dissertation happens at a time of strong anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States and some countries in Western Europe.

My immersion in the lives of these migrant farm workers who participated in the interviews support the arguments that I advance in regards to human rights of migrants. Action

¹⁶ For a fuller explanation, see Gustavo Gutierrez (1973) *Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll NY, Orbis Books

and knowledge go together as Orlando Fals-Borda argues¹⁷. It comes through actively involving people in generating knowledge about their condition and how it can be changed.

1.2 Background and Significance of the Study

To begin, I feel it necessary to provide a background that will explain the significance of the study. Christianity has been described as a “migratory religion” (Hanciles, 2003), its expansion invariably shaped by migratory movements supported by networks of faith, kinship and commerce. (Walls, 1996). The beginning of the Christian movement was linked to networks of “those who were scattered” : a *diaspora*¹⁸ of migrants and refugees living in Antioch in the early years of the Christian Era. (Acts 11:19-20).

Wherever migrants went, they brought their religion and culture with them and adapted them to the new places where they settled. This resulted in diversity not just in faith but also in culture and language as well. Invariably, the presence of difference also caused tensions and conflicts among diverse ethnic groups. Migrants from other faith traditions were often marginalized by the dominant religious groups in the countries where they settled. While it is clear

¹⁷ See Fals Borda, O and Rahman M. in *Action and Knowledge: Breaking the Monopoly with Participatory Action Research* NY Apex Press. PAR has its origins in the work of Third World social scientists more than three decades ago as they brought new ways to empower the oppressed by helping them to acquire reliable knowledge on which to construct power. The book contains case studies from Asia, Africa, Latin America and North America of actual experience with the PAR approach.

¹⁸ *Diaspora* is a word used in migration literature to refer to the “scattering of people” from their homelands. Often this is done with little or no reference to its roots in the Jewish experience of exile (eg. Exile from Jerusalem to Babylon in c.587 BCE). It was the context of many of the collected writings in the Hebrew scriptures. Today new experiences of exile call for new theologies of exile that go beyond earlier understandings of diaspora based on Judaism.

that religion and migration are inter-related, researchers across the disciplines often tend to treat them separately.

In this study, I will be looking at religion and migration together. I will argue that migration as the movement of peoples, faiths and cultures is an important dimension of God's mission in the world today. As this dissertation was being written, migration crises and issues dominated global news: from Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar to neighboring Bangladesh, asylum seekers in Calais France desperately wanting to reach Great Britain, thousands dying every year on the way to Lampedusa, an island off Italy, and continued attempts of Mexicans to make it to *El Norte* by whatever means. With the generally hostile policy of the Trump regime in the US in 2017, border crossings of Somalis and Haitians and other targeted groups fleeing across to Canada became more common.

Migrants today are being portrayed in the media as illegals who break the law, a threat to national security and the host nations' way of life. Very little is being said about the forces that cause people to migrate in the first place: war, famine, globalization, climate change and religious persecution and global inequalities.

It is difficult to explain all the causes of all the migrations that occur. One of the things we can do however is to describe the social conditions and the economic/political forces that drive migratory movements. We find out about this when we listen to the stories of migrants. We can learn about NAFTA from listening to the stories of workers in Mexico forced out of their livelihoods by US state-subsidized corporate agriculture. The history of Canada can be learned by

looking at how its first nations and indigenous peoples were pushed away from ancestral lands by English and French colonizers.

This study is important because both church and civil society are wanting to understand this sociological phenomenon that we call “migration”, especially as it relates to religion and unequal relations of power. Theologians are searching for ways to approach the subject of migration and the logic of social mobility, as a new hermeneutic for understanding the Mission of God in the world. In this regard, there are scholars who propose that the entire Bible be read as a missionary book. (Wright, 2006; Glasser, 1979). I think it is fair to say that our theologies have not caught up with what is going on in the field of Migration and Religious / Cultural Studies. This study hopes to make a contribution to this growing field.

Migration itself according to scholars is still largely under-theorized. Faith as a category inside the lived experience of migrants also needs to be studied more deeply.

The study of the relationship between religious faith and migration is an emerging field. There are not very many scholars that engage the subject because of the challenges associated with it. As a result of this, many questions about the role of religion in human migration remain unanswered.

My purpose for doing this study is to understand the religious dimensions of migration. By focusing on the everyday lived experiences of migrant farmworkers, I seek to understand the relevance of their faith and religion as lived and described by them. I want to explore why and how faith, belief and practice becomes important to them. I want to listen for how their faith is being expressed by them. I do this by researching faith stories of migrant workers.

This study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of religion as lived by migrant farm workers in Ontario. Using a theological and social science framework, I hope to show that for the migrants I studied with, religion extends far beyond official religious structures, practices and observances. How migrant workers act, feel and think are intricately woven into their religious worldview. For the Mexican migrant workers I talked to, “the sacred” is not separate and distinct from “the secular”. There are multiple connections between them. These findings can potentially change the way we look at religion and migration. They can help us construct a missiology that makes a difference in the world.

A study such as this where migrants are allowed to speak from their own lived experience can offer alternative ways of viewing religion, migration and mission. Although religion is arguably not the most important, nor is it the only significant factor in migration, I suggest that it deserves more attention than it is currently getting from researchers. One desired outcome of this study is to open up spaces for more conversation on the subject of religion, mission and migration.

Historically, a Christian perspective has dominated discussion on the subject of religion. One legacy of the Reformation period is its view of religion as being about biblical texts and core beliefs as stated in official doctrines and creeds of the Western Christian tradition. The approach called “Lived Religion” recognizes this and finds this view inadequate in describing the “religious” lives of migrant workers.

The migrant workers in Ontario are for the most part invisible from the rest of Canadian society. In many of the communities I visited the only time they see migrant workers are on the

one day of the week they go to the bank to send remittances, and to the local supermarket to shop for food supplies (usually Thursday or Friday night) or when they go to church on Sunday nights.

The significance of this study for Missiology is that it helps us see the Mission of God in the world starting with the lived experience of the migrants themselves. It begins with an awareness that migrants live inside, draw upon, adapt and transform their religious beliefs in the farms and the communities where they work. In their practice of their faith, migrants are proposing alternative ways of looking at faith and migration. They also offer us another way of looking at God and the world.

They challenge the dominant view that religion is about doctrine and dogma and “right belief”, as opposed to right praxis. They also challenge the view that the state has an absolute right to decide who may or may not enter their borders and under what terms and conditions they may do so. In some ways it also challenges the church by calling out its commitment to stand in solidarity with migrants everywhere.

Listening to the stories of migrants reveal the historical and material conditions that cause people to be expelled from their homelands. It can lead to new insight into what is meant by “you shall not oppress the alien” (Lev.19:33) and how God’s promise of blessing extends to all the peoples of the world.

The condition described as “oppressing the alien” has persisted throughout human history but takes on a new form in the context of neo-liberal capitalism and globalization. Migration stories describe what migrants do to defy these oppressive forces that lead to their expulsion and

exclusion from mainstream society. In recovering these stories of migrants in human history, in the biblical text and in the films, I hope to show how migration has evolved and the challenges that Christian church today.

It has been shown that western paradigms and ways of thinking about reality affect the way people in general think about religious faith. The dominant Western paradigm in the social sciences influence the way scholars study religion and religiosities. It explains the difficulties associated with using words like “faith” and “religion” and “spirituality”. There is still a lack of conceptual clarity around how these words are defined, by whom and for what purpose. The same issue can be found in defining words like “migrant” and “migration”.

Churches and faith communities are rethinking the ways they do ministry with migrants. It is becoming clear to some that there is a need to go beyond outreach and charity service. I propose that a social analysis of migration can bring a deeper understanding of the issues involved in ministry. Among the things that social analysis can reveal is how religion shapes and is shaped by the experience of migration. Listening to stories of migrant workers shows how religion influences the way they think and feel about themselves. It shows how they use religion as a resource for negotiating the challenges of everyday life.

In a post-secular world that dismisses religion as of little consequence at best, “lived religion” shows the many way religion is constructed and experienced by real people. Research into religion and migration as experienced by social groups (eg labor migrants) can show how religion supports and sustains migrants in their everyday life in more ways than we can imagine.

In my interviews with migrant workers, the word “God” is not always mentioned. When it is mentioned, “God” is associated with experiences of “being helped” or “receiving healing”. This point of view is also present in the migrant narratives in the Bible that are analysed as part of this study. The narratives tell the truth of how God accompanies people in their journey. This supports the view held by Miguez Bonino of seeing truth “at the level of history, not in the realm of ideas”.¹⁹

1.3. Objectives of the Study

This study will investigate the faith perspectives of migrant workers. It will attend to religion in the context of their experience of migration and daily life. Beyond researching the way migrants relate to faith and migration, I want to learn about the ways migrants use faith/religion to make meaning of their lives. By listening to their stories, I want to discover how their faith is lived by them and what purpose it serves them.

1.3.1. The Research Question

What are the self-expressed faith perspectives of Mexican migrant farm workers in Southwestern Ontario?

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

This research study situates itself in Southwestern Ontario where the majority of Migrant Farm Workers in Canada are found. The specific objectives of my investigation are:

¹⁹ See Miguez Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age* (London, SPCK, 1975) p. 72 where he describes authentic reflection on praxis.

To identify the faith perspectives of migrants and how they relate it to the experience of migration.

To select elements in migrant workers' stories that relate to the theological theme of God's mission in the world.

To listen for how migrants express their faith experience in their own words.

1.3.3. Definition of Terms

Faith is often used to refer to "religious" faith. Within the Christian stream of the Abrahamic traditions, this includes faith in a "God". In this dissertation, the word faith is applied more broadly to contexts/events that some people may not consider "religious". The word "faith" is also used to describe religious acts that do not necessarily have God as its object. The Letter to the Hebrews 11:1 describes faith as "the substance of things hoped for". Faith has also been defined as "complete trust or confidence in someone or something".(Pearsall:1998)

Faith Practices refer to all social behaviors that people perform as a way of living out their faith and religious beliefs. Faith practices are activities people engage in that connect their beliefs with their everyday lived experience. Practices that come from non-western cultures and contexts are equally honored as those that come from western Christian traditions.

Faith Perspectives refer to how migrants think about and express their faith. It reveals migrants' experience of the sacred at different levels of reality. It demonstrates how migrant farmworkers read their experience of divine reality using their own hermeneutic.

Migration refers to the movements of people, from a place they call home to other places in the world. This they do, sometimes of their own choice and other times because they are forced by circumstances to do so. The IOM defines migration as "the movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border, or within a State. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it

includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification”.²⁰

Migration Studies refers to the study of the determinants, processes and outcomes of human migration in all of its manifestations. Social actors, causes, types and patterns of migrations are often studied with a view to assisting governments in crafting policies and relevant legislation.

Migrants refers to individuals who cross borders, away from their country of origin (the home country) to a country of destination (the host country) regardless of choice or cause. Migrant is used here as an inclusive term for refugees, forced migrants, immigrants, asylum seekers, undocumented or stateless peoples and the internally displaced. The international Organization on Migration (IOM) defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is.

Migrant Workers in this study refers to seasonal agricultural workers that come to Ontario every year to work in the local farms in the area under the Canadian governments Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP). The study uses as a sample Mexican migrant farm workers most of whom self-identify as “catholic” or “christian”.

Mission - It is difficult to have a single definition of *Missio Dei*, “**the Mission of God**” because the term itself has evolved from the time it was used at the Willingen Conference in 1952. As an activity of the Triune God, it comes from God alone. I will define it here simply as the outworking of God’s purpose for the world and God’s invitation for us to be part of it.

Missiology is a critical theological reflection on the mission and practice of the church in order to enable people to participate in the mission of God in the world. In today’s world, doing missiology requires a prophetic commitment to social justice and human rights.

²⁰ See www.iom.int ,”Key Migration Terms”

Missiological Research is a methodology whose goal is to interact with a human experience or event while prayerfully reflecting and sometimes challenging it in order that communities can participate more fully in God's continuing work in the world.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

In this study, I explore what migrant workers think about and *do* with their religion. This is a challenging project because the word "religion", like the word "God", means different things to different people. For some people it refers to world religions like Christianity, Islam or Judaism. For others, religion means "going to church" or being affiliated with a mainline denomination (e.g. Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, Pentecostal). There are people who describe themselves as having no religion. And there are a growing number who say they are not "religious" but "spiritual". And there are those who claim to be adherents of a certain religion, but further investigation would suggest that their affiliation is "in name only".

1.4.1. Lived Religion as a Theoretical Framework

My research uses a theoretical framework called "lived religion". It has its roots in academic scholarship in the works of historians of religion and anthropologists like David Hall, Meredith McGuire and Robert Orsi.

Lived Religion takes the everyday practices and experiences of specific people groups as the starting point of investigation. It makes the claim that religion exists not just in abstract doctrine or creeds but through the practice of daily life. It purposely explores these popular beliefs

and practices and the everyday things that people do in connection with their religious tradition. Concepts of lived religion are used in this study as a way of understanding faith perspectives of migrant farm workers. It invites readers to listen to their voices and their experiences.

Lived Religion draws from the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau Ponty (1945) and Edmund Husserl (1969) who introduced concepts like “perception”, “lifeworld” and “world of daily life”. These ideas found their way into the sociology of religion and investigations regarding the relationship of self and religion. The assumption is that religious practices have their own distinct impact on the self in its relationship with the world. Religious actions produce religious convictions which over time become traditions.

Religion is regarded as inextricably bound up with symbols and meaning and how people communicate their knowledge and attitudes towards life. There is a close relationship between religion, culture and life. In order to understand it well, we need to locate religion/faith within the culture and the socio-historical context where it happens. A basic understanding of Mexican culture will help the reader understand the responses of Mexican migrant workers in the interviews.

An understanding of Mexican religious iconography can help explain why migrant workers in the interviews relates to *santos* as divinities. Edmondo Lupieri takes us through history where various *cofradías* (confraternities) gathered the people around the Virgin and the patron saints of their *pueblos* (towns) during the annual *fiesta* (festivities). Lupieri gives an example of a place called Amatenango, a Mayan village, where *Santa Lucia* (Saint Lucy) is the patron saint. In

Europe she is said to be the patron saint of eye-specialists, since her executioners killed her by pulling out her eyes. She is considered to be the divinity of that village and apart from being prayed to by those needing cures for blindness, she is also credited with the discovery of maize.²¹

The faith perspectives and practices of Mexican migrant workers in this study may or may not conform with academic understandings of religion or the official views of the religious institutions to which they say they are affiliated with. All of the respondents in this study self-identified as Christians. Most of them said that they were *catolicos* (catholics). Within a largely secular culture voluntary disclosure of one's faith takes courage.²²

Lived religion is based on the claim that religion is not something that is different from everyday life and therefore it is difficult to separate itself from it. Moreover, it is in "the everyday" where religion is lived. Religion happens in the same places where all of life happens.

Life happens in a world that we construct together around symbols and stories that are told and re-told by us. It is what holds our faith and our world together. It is how we experience God and world together in the places where we live. These are important points to remember when listening to the stories of Mexican migrant farm workers who are the subjects of this dissertation.

1.5. Methodology

1.5.1. Subjects of the Study : Migrant Farm Workers in Southern Ontario

²¹ Edmondo Lupieri, *In the Name of God: The Making of Global Christianity*, p.79

²² Anders Vassenden and Mette Anderson *Religious symbols on rearview mirrors* in *Seeing Religion: Toward a visual sociology of Religion* Roman Willams (ed) New York, Routledge, 2015 p.92

The human subjects for this study are Migrant Farm Workers who participate in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. (SAWP). The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) is a program designed by the Canadian government to address shortages in labor supply in the Canadian agricultural sector. The program is authorized by the federal government through the Human Resources and Skills Development Council (HRSDC) and administered by privately run agencies. In the provinces of Ontario and Nova Scotia, the Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services (F.A.R.M.S) administers the program. Employers request workers through F.A.R.M.S. after getting approval from the HRSDC.

The SAWP operates in the provinces of Alberta, Quebec, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Ontario which receives 90% of migrant workers. Migrant sending countries like Mexico and the Dominican Republic select and screen workers. Workers and employers sign a contract that lays out the respective rights and obligations of each party to the agreement. The length of employment ranges between 3 to 8 months. New SAWP participants are sent to the same farm for the first 2 years. Thereafter, they may be relocated to another farm if they are not requested back by their original employer. As soon as their contracts expire, workers go home to their countries of origin. They report back with evaluation forms made by their employers. These reports are important because a negative report can result in job loss. Employers in Canada can "name" the workers that they would like to return to their farms the next season.

The minimum age for participating in the program is 18 although the Ministry of Labor and Social Planning gives strong preference to those 25 years of age and older since they are more likely

to have large families to support. Canadian farmers request mostly men and will very rarely ask for women workers since they will require that farm owners provide separate living quarters.

For purposes of this study, twelve SAWP migrant farm workers were interviewed in Simcoe, Port Dover, Burford, Delhi, Waterford and Haldimand-Norfolk County in Southwestern Ontario as part of an ethnographic research study that uses an approach called Visual Methodology.

1.5.2. Visual Sociology

Visual sociology has been described as research that is based on empowerment, mutuality, shared ownership of knowledge and co-learning. As the term suggests, it uses “visuals” as a tool for social scientific inquiry. The assumption here is that visuals go beyond text and numbers. They are able to capture and express meanings that may otherwise not be “voiced” during interviews.

The “visual turn” in the social sciences is reflected in the presence of images and visual culture in social media (eg. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and in built environments especially in the cities. In my research the camera (or camera-enabled cellphones) is used and made into a critical tool for investigation. Migrant farm workers as the subjects of the study are encouraged to become collaborators and co-investigators by taking pictures of their environments as well.

The methodology has three pieces: visuals as input, visuals as process, and visuals as output. I used existing visuals as primary data for research and as a way to initiate conversation. I took a lot of photographs of the migrant workers in different contexts (eg working in the farms,

going to church, visiting the clinic etc). I asked the participants to look at the photographs and tell me what they saw. From there I asked them to tell me stories around the theme they feel is being represented in the photo (e.g. food, family, faith).

I chose visuals for their ability to start a conversation regarding lived religion and faith practices of migrant workers. Since the topic of my research is faith perspectives of migrant workers, I asked them to connect what they saw in the photograph with their daily lives and their experience of God. Sometimes I asked them to take pictures of how they see God in their daily lives. The same visual data set was shown to all respondents to look at and make meaning with.

The visuals used in the research came from existing imagery, researcher-generated visuals as well as respondent-generated material. Some respondents were given a camera enabled phone with basic instructions for how to capture their own faith perspectives through pictures.

Participants in the study are asked to “read” the photographs and tell stories of what they see in the images presented to them. All photos used for the interview have no known copyright restrictions. Using photos of their immediate surroundings is one way the researcher established rapport with participants during initial conversations. The objective of the interviews is to gather as much information and generate new knowledge around the research question: how do migrant workers view religion and faith in everyday life? The expected outcome is that participant responses will reveal “lived religion” as it happens in the everyday lives of migrant workers in the farms that were visited. I use photography to describe and re-describe the world that migrant workers inhabit and to invite conversation and dialogue around their experiences in it.

1.5.3 Post-disciplinary Approaches

“Postdisciplinary” is a generic term for all research approaches that seek to go beyond the established boundaries of any discipline.²³ (Nicolescu 2002). I approach the study of faith perspectives of migrant workers using post-disciplinary tools and methods. While it is clear to me that what I am doing here is missiological research, I do not confine myself to the boundaries of theology but draw from many other disciplines that include migration studies, the sociology of religion, anthropology, hermeneutics, philosophy, law and cultural studies.

Studies suggest that migrants bring their religion (ie. narratives, practices, material objects etc.) with them when they migrate. They carry it with them as they cross borders and live simultaneously in between and inside countries of origin and destination. They live their religion and rely on it as they wrestle with the challenges of what one migrant worker described as “*trabajando duro todos los dias*” (working hard all days). Theirs however is not a world given to intellectualizing, writing or a concern for completeness or coherence. It is a world that is best described as stories, practices, *dichos* (proverbs), relationships and memories.

This is where photographs become useful in their ability to “show” and “tell” and reveal the cognitive/affective frames migrants use to make sense of *la lucha*: their everyday struggle. I

²³ Postdisciplinary describes a research strategy for problems that cross the boundaries of two or more disciplines (eg. migration and religion). It can also refer to methods that originate in one discipline and then used in several others (eg. ethnography). According to Nicolescu it is necessary to explore the spaces between and beyond disciplines, since it is unlikely that one can understand several levels of reality/world using only one framework of investigation/interpretation.

start with the assumption that every photo contains a narrative. The narratives carry coded seeds of meaning and this meaning resides in the photo as well as the persons who created and interpret them.

This relationship between the photo and the person is both socially constructed and culturally conditioned. Therefore the meanings people draw from the photos cannot be universalized and the interpretations that arise from the participants in this study are also not generalizable. Consequently, tests of validity are unnecessary.

The research uses identical visual data sets for all respondents. Interviews are held in different farms to allow for multiple rather than single data sources. This is made with the awareness that migrant workers know far more than they are able to put into words. Like the rest of us, they too have feelings that they sometimes cannot name. These embodied feelings and beliefs are very much a part of what constitutes their “lived religion”.

There is always something “unspoken” in every photograph that we need to listen for. There is a sense in which everything that is “said” by the migrant workers opens up to what is “unsaid”. A good hermeneutical study according to Gadamer (1989:38) is one that opens us to experience “the fecundity of the individual case”.²⁴ I will argue that there is such a fecundity in every photograph that is used in the interviews.

²⁴ Gadamer, H.G. (1989) *Truth and Method* NY Continuum Press

I use photographs as “metaphors” of the world around us, this world that God so loves. (John 3:16). There is a way that we can view photographs as “scriptures” where God speaks to us. in migrant faith stories that are both personal, theological and political. Ever since the Reformation material objects like shrines and the display or veneration of sacred images have been frowned upon as superstition. One emphasis of the Protestant tradition was *sola fide* (faith alone) personal relationship with God unmediated by angels and saint, shrines or amulets.²⁵

Lived religion can be seen in the religious worlds people construct through photographs, and in the case of the migrant farm workers I interviewed, I have found that there are worlds upon worlds upon worlds. It needs more than theology to access the many different levels of the reality they describe in their stories.

The old distinction between sacred and secular does not hold as much meaning in this context. The way that migrant workers manage their daily lives, the way they practice their faith are being represented using everyday language. Listening to them shows that everyday practice is driven by religious and cultural understandings. Faith is how they organize their world and make sense of their moments.

In daily life, religious belief and culture tend to overlap and it is difficult to separate one from the other. Whatever migrant workers do can acquire religious meaning for them. This nuanced understanding becomes more evident when they speak about their faith perspectives.

²⁵ Vassenden and Andersson, p.97

There appears to be a religious dimension in their lives that others would not even categorize as “religious”. These perspectives and behaviors are often overlooked and sometimes deliberately left out in some of the research done regarding religion and migration.

In an increasingly image-based world, I have taught myself how to use the camera as a tool for theological production. I demonstrate that methodology in the way I do ethnography by using photographs to gather data. Research participants are able to answer research questions through pictures as well as words. Narrative and visuals are used to support findings in the study.

1.6 Survey of Related Literature

1.6.1. Migration and Religion

As social phenomena migration and religion have been around for a long time. It is only recently however that scholars have turned their attention to the intersection between the two.(Herberg 1960; Handlin 1973; Foley and Hoge 2007; Hirsman 2007) . It has been observed that for migrants faced with the many challenges of adapting to a new environment religion offers a sense of belonging (Baumann and Salentin 2006). The role of religion and beliefs has been the subject of research in migration and religious studies. *Immigrant Faiths*²⁶ highlights religion as a

²⁶ Leonard, Stepick, Vasquez and Holdaway (2005) *Immigrant Faiths, Transforming Religious Life in America* Maryland: AltaMira Press

major force shaping and changing constructions of personal and communal identity. It analyses religion and state policy and the highly contextualized ways that migrants practice faith in their new environment. They show how religious commitments sustain a sense of identity and provide social capital as they adapt to their new country. The country referred to is the United States of America. Others (Bonifacio and Angeles 2010) interrogate religion as a pathway of integration based on gendered migration experiences of peoples across geographic regions.²⁷

Some writers question the conventional Western and European views of religion. The recent experience of religions resist categorization and do not fit neatly with older definition of religion. The scholarship shows an ethnocentric and Eurocentric view when set side by side with Asian origin religions like Hinduism or Buddhism which are now present in the U.S. Many people in the world combine aspects of different religions. Transnational religious networks now show hybrid practices between migrant and country of origin beliefs and practices. This relates to how migration impacts religion and the intersection of typologies of nation-state, language, religion and civil society.

1.6.2. Migration and Globalization

Migration's relationship with globalization continues to be the subject of many debates on global inequalities and human security. The movement of people seems to see tighter controls while goods, services, information and capital tend to move freely across borders. This is based on

²⁷ Bonifacio and Angeles (2010) *Gender, Religion and Immigration* Maryland: Lexington Books

neoliberalism's view (Harvey 2007:2) that human well-being can best be advanced by free trade and free markets that open markets to direct investment.²⁸ Within this worldview, the interest of capital is paramount and the role of the state is reduced to supporting the global economy. There are methodologies in the study of religion and migration that perpetuate this neoliberal claim.

Critics of globalization on the other hand that this creates more inequalities and social vulnerabilities that fuel migration even more. Migration scholars call out the failure of studies to highlight the lived experience of migrants and questions around social justice and human rights. This is specially urgent in countries with anti-immigrant sentiment is strong and where the overall perception of migrants tends to be negative.²⁹ Religion and religious discourse has been found to be helpful in providing ontological and moral weight to the need to honor respect and protect the human rights of migrants.

Immigrant America (Portes and Rumbaut 1996) and Handbook for International Migration (Hirshman et al 1999) do not mention religion at all. Some of those who do mention religion see it as a "privileged strategy of power" (da Silva 2001:427).³⁰ Today it is often studied in the context of globalization where religion is sometimes seen as part of other cultural flows (Appadurai

²⁸ Harvey D. (2007) *A Brief History of Neo-Liberalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

²⁹ IOM 2011, p 3-4

³⁰ Da Silva, Denise Ferreira "Voicing Resistance: Race and Nation in Global Space" in *Identity, Culture and Globalization*, edited by Eliezer Ben-Rafael with Yitzhak Sternberg The Netherlands : International Institute of Sociology, 2001

1996).³¹What if anything does the study of migrant religion add to our understanding of society? Scholars address the relationship between migration and religion from different starting points, their focus invariably determined by their research objectives. Among the topics addressed in current scholarship are the role of religion in identity formation, migrants use of religion, impact of migration on religious organizations or congregations, religion and transnationalism and the relationship between religion and adaptation to the new society.

In the emerging literature on migration and religion, Warner and Witter 1998, Ebaugh and Chefetz 2002 are among the most visible influencers. The term transnationalism have been analyzed by Levitt 1998, Morawska 2001 and Portes 2001. What needs further research is what difference religion makes on our understanding of migration.

1.6.3. Migration and Religious Identity

In regard to identity formation it used to be that Christians when asked who they were and how they identify simply answered Christian. Now there seems to be more hybridity, flexibility and mixing of categories. Most research on migrant religious identity emphasize religion's role in providing cultural continuity by tying migrants to belief and practices in their homeland. It can also serve to unify an ethnic group as was the conclusion reached by Richard Tweed (1997) study of the shrine of *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre* (Our Lady of Charity) and it's role of bringing together factions in the Cuban community in Miami. Not all scholars agree however that religion

³¹ Appadurai, A (1996) *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press

leads to a deepening of solidarity or religious identity among migrant groups. National identity and religion are separate categories and the question remains on the relationship between the two. Researchers are looking at occasions when people choose to use their religious rather than national identity aware that religious identity sometimes competes with other identities (eg. race and gender). Sociologists study how these choices impact conflict and cooperation among groups from different religious traditions and how religion plays into the construction of migrant ethnic groups. Some argue that migrant religious organization at least in the US. Tends towards a congregational structure regardless of their format in their home countries (Bankston and Zhou 2000) . Many are aware of the “racialization” of religion in the U.S. . Muslims in the US after the Sept 11 attack were quick to distance themselves from terrorism knowing that acts of religious intolerance and hate speech and crimes would be directed towards their communities. Europe has had to address immigrant religious diversity in recent years because of growing anti-immigrant sentiment.

1.6.4. Migration and Integration

A number of scholars focus on how immigrants use religion in the process of adaptation/integration. It has been observed that Korean congregations tend to be associated with social networking and building social capital among new immigrants. Everything from food, loans, rides, job-referrals and childcare can be connected with the local church. Following Weber’s study of western religion and capitalism research seek to understand the relationship between religion and moral discourse in different contexts.

Transnationalism means many things in its relation to migration and religion. New typologies still need to be tested and refined. The world dominant religions Christianity, Islam and Buddhism have grown primarily because of transnational connections. Historically as this dissertation argues the Christian religion was exported abroad through colonialism. Vasquez argues that it is no longer possible what is happening to congregations in Latin America without paying attention to their links with Latino communities in the US.³²

Further research is needed to understand more about how religion affects migration beyond congregations. Conflict between generations in these congregations and how they are being addressed and resolved is another area of investigation. Also of interest is whether the congregations that migrants belong to are invested in social change and political engagement on migration issues. How congregations mark hybridity and generate difference is relevant to many religious groups engaged in ministry with migrants.

1.6.5. Migration and “Lived Religion”

Migration Studies have had major impact in the study of religion as “lived religion”. Orsi suggests that the “textual orientation” among American Catholics and scholars of religion is one of the obstacles in the study of contemporary Catholicism (Orsi 1994:142).

³² Manuel Vasquez, *Historicizing and Materializing the Study of Religion* in Immigrant Faiths p. 220

In *Genealogies of Religion*, Talal Asad (1993) critiques religion for universalizing a Western definition of religion: religion as interiority.³³ Influenced by the deconstructionist view that there was nothing outside the text, religion has been reduced to belief systems that need to be decoded to be understood. The focus on meaning and signification ignored the material embodied and place-making dimensions of religion. Many religious practices among migrants highlight material culture and religious practices. Migration pushes religious studies to go beyond studies on religious meaning making and inner spiritual subjective states. Signs of this “re-materialization” of religion can be found in the works on material and popular culture (McDannell 1995, Forbes and Mahan 2000) sacred architecture (Meyer 2011), pilgrimage (Eade and Sallnow 2000) .

Earlier definitions of religion were provided by Eliade who spoke of it as an “encounter with the sacred”³⁴ (Eliade, 1969:25) and by Geertz who saw it as “a system of symbols”³⁵. (Geertz 1973:90) . Migration has affected the study of religion to the point of refining the discipline itself. In the wake of postcolonial and postmodern views it has become the practice to begin academic work by stating one’s own positionality.

³³ Immigrant Faith p. 224

³⁴ Eliade, M. 1969 *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

³⁵ Geertz, C. 1973 *The interpretation of Cultures* , New York: Basic Books

Harvard Divinity School Scholars Robert Orsi and David Hall were the first to identify and systematize the “lived religion” approach.³⁶ They drew from interpretive paradigms from anthropology and used it in the field of Religious Studies. Orsi’s *The Madonna of 115th Street*, documents a communities faith relation to an image of the Virgin Mary in Italian Harlem and Thomas Tweed’s *Our Lady of the Exile* about a Cuban Shrine built by refugees in Miami and Jennifer Hughes *Biography of a Mexican Crucifix* about popular devotion to the *Cristo Aparecido* (the Christ Appeared) in Totolapan, Mexico are examples of this approach. This emerging field represents a search for new theoretical models that can capture the nuances and textures of everyday life.

The devotions of Mexican migrants are not just private devotions but part of an entire informal network defined by Vasquez as consisting of *curanderas* (healers), *rezadoras* (prayer specialists) and *espiritualistas* who work in the gaps left by religious institutions.³⁷

Levitt (2001) emphasizes research in both home and host countries and she has articulated a model for the transnational study of religion. She proposes the study of everyday lived practices of religion in both countries. Her study of Dominican migrants from Miraflores who settled in Boston is one such work. She speaks about social remittances (ie religious ideas behaviors and social capital) are circulated within the migrants social networks.

³⁶ Jennifer Hughes, (2010) *Biography of a Mexican Crucifix: Lived Religion and Local Faith from the Conquest to the Present*, New York, Oxford University Press, p.14

³⁷ *Immigrant Faiths* , p.233

The works of Cohen (1997) and Vertovec (1997) show the role of religion in diasporas and its relation to religious practices in home communities. Globalization scholars (Casanova 1994; Robertson ³⁸1992;and Piscatori 1997) describe the role of religion in creating and sustaining global structures and relationships among migrant communities. Religion forms part of identity and plays a critical role in the way migrants view themselves and how they relate to others³⁹. (Richter et al.2005:21) , Wuthnow and Hackett studied religion as social capital that allowed migrants to cross boundaries and create links with communities. Van Tubergen (2006:168) argues that little is known about individual and contextual determinants of religion.⁴⁰ He proposes that research of migrant integration include religious participation. Schiller talks about this as “ways of being” and “ways of belonging”. (Schiller 2010) where religion is a dominant register in migrants’ lives.

1.6.6. Migration and Secularization

Migration has also changed the way Religious Studies looks at secularization and pluralism. Rodney Stark and Roger Finke (2000) are architects of this new paradigm in religious studies that consider the secularization paradigm as obsolete. Peter Berger (1997:974) makes the

³⁸ Wuthnow and Hackett, “The Social Integration of Practitioners of Non-Western Religions in the United States” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42,4 December 2003, 651-667

³⁹ Richter, Rapple, Medschiedler and Peterson, 2005 *Understanding Religion in Global Society*, Belmont : Thomson Wadsworth p.21

⁴⁰ Van Tubergen, F (2006) *Immigrant Integration: A Cross National Study* New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing, LLC

claim that “Most of the world today is certainly not secular. It’s very religious”.⁴¹ The thesis can still be useful but it needs to be relativized. It may be true in Central and Western Europe today but even that can change with migratory flows. It therefore cannot be the primary interpretive frame for studying religion today. Neither should the American model with its emphasis on congregational studies be universalized as the new paradigm for understanding religion and be allowed to deny the coevalness of religion in migrant societies of origin. Postcolonial historian Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) has critiqued attempts to use concepts like tradition and modernity to invent a hegemonic Eurocentric history⁴². This has been the complaint of “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer and Schiller 2003) where one nation-state becomes naturalized as the sole unit of analysis in the social sciences.

In light of newer studies on religion and power, some scholars of religion have begun to caution against the uncritical use of the category religion, with some going to the other extreme of proposing that the category be eliminated completely. There is evidence that religion is largely constructed and contingent on culture and cannot be investigated without reference to it as context.

There is as well a lack of historically informed studies on migration. There is evidence of a deliberate forgetting of the history of forced migrants. This is not accidental but part of the politics of memory. The denial of refugee histories appear to be part of the process of denying

⁴¹ Berger, P. 1997 “*Epistemological Modesty: An Interview with Peter Berger*” *Christian Century* 114 (October 29) 972-75, 978

⁴² Chakrabarty, D. 2000 *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press

refugee realities today⁴³. (Marfleet 2007, 137) This can be corrected by constructing a genealogy of current attitudes towards migrants. A study of the history of migration will reveal how our ways of seeing have been shaped by ethnocentric assumptions. A cross-cultural comparative study of migrations can be helpful in this regard.

This short survey of related literature shows that there is still a long way to go in understanding the features of Religion and the consequences of Migration. As well, there is more work that needs to be done in developing more effective methods for theorizing and researching religion and migration.

1.7 Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 provides a general introduction to the topic of migrants, migration and religion. It presents the objectives of the study, the research question, definitions of key words and the significance of the study

Chapter 2 introduces the research design and the methodology that was employed to answer the research question: “What are the self-expressed faith perspectives of migrant workers?” This section describes how human subjects for this study were selected for multiple in-depth, open-ended interviews, how data gathering was conducted using visual methodology and

⁴³ Marfleet, P. “*Refugees and History: Why we must address the past*” Refugee Survey Quarterly, 26.3.(2007) 136-148

how participant-observation techniques were used in the process. A more detailed discussion of “lived religion” as a theoretical framework is presented.

Chapter 3 looks at six migrant groups in world history. It analyses these narratives of migration as it relates to religion and society. It lays the groundwork for the argument that a study of migration must of necessity consider its religious dimension.

Chapter 4 retells and then analyses four narratives from the Hebrew Bible: Joseph, Ruth, Daniel and Esther. These are analysed as migrant narratives. What I am listening for is what they tell us about how God works with migrants to carry out God’s intentions for the world.

Chapter 5 presents the data as gathered from twelve interviews of Mexican migrant farmworkers in Southern Ontario. They are analysed from the point of view of faith perspectives and key findings are presented. Direct quotations from migrant workers are reported in Spanish with English translations for the reader.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings and contains my reflections on the results of the research.

Chapter 7 presents some recommendations on how churches can use the study in their ministry with migrant workers. It discusses the implications of the findings on the practice of missiology and points to future research in the areas of religion and migration.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 The Interview Process

In preparing to write my dissertation I looked at archival and oral history research conducted by others regarding migrant workers. I mined databases of local news and social media to search for stories about migrant workers in Ontario. These indicated how migrant workers were being represented in the wider society and how they were being perceived. I took pictures of

migrant workers at church, in the farms, at the mall, on the road and listened to stories of faith that came out during the one-on-one interviews. In addition, I also interviewed pastors, social workers, health professionals and community organizers who served with migrant workers.

2.1.1. Location

The subjects were also chosen from locations in Southwestern Ontario. Most interviews with migrant workers were conducted on a Sunday which is the usual day-off for most workers. In other farms where workers do not work when it rains, they were conducted during rainy days when they came back to their living quarters. The approach used is called visual sociology. Photos are shown to participants as a way of starting conversation and eliciting responses. Most of the time the same photos are used. These photos were either produced by me or by others. All photos chosen for the interviews were have no known copyright restrictions on their use. All of them are assumed to be in the public domain. I took note of the photo being shown and recorded the responses in my field notes paying particular attention to how they were being expressed in Spanish. All in all, twelve photos were used and they are contained in the text and in Appendix B of the dissertation.

The roles of interviewer, transcriber, analyst and author were all performed by me as the researcher. Field notes were transcribed by me as soon as possible after the interview. Migrant workers interviewed were assured that transcripts and audiotapes will remain confidential and will be only be used for research purposes.

No attempt was made to systematically categorize, classify or cluster the data from the interviews. They were treated as stories and reported as such using pseudonyms to protect the identity of the respondents. Somebody else reading these same stories can come up with very different conclusions.

2.1.2. Participant Selection

Participant respondents were selected from farms in Southwestern Ontario. Participation was voluntary and in every case, the owner was informed when it was being done in the farm. Participants were given a detailed explanation of the purpose of the interviews and were assured of confidentiality. They were also asked to choose a time and a place that was most convenient for them. They were told they were free to answer any questions asked or not and they can decide to stop participating in the interview project at any time. All of the migrant workers interviewed are men, since female participation in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program is very low.

2.1.3 Informed Consent and Research Ethics

In addition to safeguarding the identity of subject all names in the report have been changed. The purpose of the research was thoroughly explained and respondents so that they were fully aware of the project in order for them to be able to give free and informed consent. It was made clear that ultimate control regarding involvement in the research rested solely with the participant who could opt out of the process at anytime.

2.2. Research Design

2.2.1. Life Stories and Narratives

I have chosen to use life-story and narrative-based methods for my research. I cannot claim expertise on the subject except that in my role as Pastor I have given many hours to deep listening with migrant families, especially those in my congregation.

I am aware that there is a growing interest in a “narrative” sociology. Bruner referenced in Horrocks et al (2003) describes the self as a “library of stories”. He says that when we try to characterize people’s lives as I hope to do in my investigation on Migrant Farm workers “there is an acceptance of the need to look at how people actually live and make sense of their lives”.

Sometimes these stories are complex and contradictory and that is because they are true. And there are many reasons why they tell them, one of which is to relieve the stresses of daily life as migrants. The narratives we construct are always subject to repetition and revision. Sometimes they are not always coherent. What I hope to do is to gather these stories with all their possible flaws and inconsistencies and interpret them through a theo-ethical missiological lens.

This will be my humble contribution to the household of God and to the flourishing of migrant families. The combination of biography/narrative (ethnography) and photography is an exciting mix. There is that constant tension between empirical and interpretive approaches, between the reality and the representation. Visual methodologies and narrative research have their limitations and unique challenges. I do my best to understand the faith perspectives of migrant farm workers with these methodologies.

I have found that trust takes time to build especially among new migrants. It must be even more difficult to talk with those who are undocumented. Some people may not find migrant stories to be credible and that may be the reason why they are not heard at all. The goal of narrative in this project however is not just to produce new knowledge but also to enable social justice and grow power in the community so people can be mobilized for action on migrant issues.

I see narrative sociology and this project in particular as a safe place where migrant workers can speak and be heard. It is important I think as researchers that we listen to how migrant workers ascribe meaning to their faith and life experiences. It is vital that we honor their “ways of knowing” no matter how different it may be from how we would do religion ourselves.

Understanding migrant workers involves relocating oneself inside their life-worlds. The possibility of “projecting oneself into the other” is always present. And therefore I worked hard to detach my own views making sure I do not get overly involved in the narrative I am reporting.

Key aspects to consider in life history/biography research include the importance of memory and forgetting as part of broader structures and processes. When migrant families are telling their stories, they are actually ordering their lives and mapping their story of migration in order to make meaning out of it. Faith becomes a kind of a marker of time and space in the process. This may account for why some stories are said to lead to the healing of memories and contribute much to “the project of self” (Giddens, 1991)

What does the process of memory-making involve? How do people remember? And why is it important in telling stories? Most experiences, we are told, leave traces of memory. Some say

autobiographical memory is the most enduring. Listening to stories of migrants has made me realize how “thick” and “deeply encoded” these memories are.

The past is being reconstructed as they speak. Everything they remember and report becomes part of data sets that I will have to interpret. These relics from the past however are valuable in that they can transform their present. They can produce meaning for now as they did then. Alternative narratives in particular have power to change the way we look at the present and propel us into the future.

Migrant farm workers in the course of their development construct paradigms: ordered sets of beliefs about the social world. Beliefs are looked upon by sociologists as shared constructs. They shape the way people live together in society. They also affect the way we look at the world or what pictures of reality we use to make meaning of our lives.

One thing I learned from ministering with migrant workers is the importance of listening to their stories. What I heard them tell me over and over again is that their faith accompanies and supports them through their daily struggles. It is one of the ways in which they and their families are able to make meaning and find hope. Their life stories show in the interviews as they talk about life and family, work and prayer.

Timothy Smith (1978) argues that migrants make sense of alienation and migration in religious terms. I wanted to find out if this was true. I wanted to discover whether faith may be the reason for their incredible resilience in the midst of adversity.

Migration as a phenomenon is located in the cultural and social system of human organizations and societies. In developing a research framework then, it is necessary to consider all the different dimensions of migration including “the religious” without which the picture would be incomplete. Life stories became the way to reach into the religious life of migrant workers.

2.2.2. Critical Theory as a Social Scientific Framework

One of the theoretical frameworks I used in my investigation is Critical Theory from the Frankfurt School and the writings of Theodore Adorno. Critical Theory states that analysis of specific social phenomena requires awareness of the connectedness and embeddedness of that phenomena in the broader totality.

The theory suggests that I should at least make the effort to connect the investigation of new phenomenon (e.g. migration) to a bigger and broader totality (e.g. globalization, neo-liberal capitalism). Another way migration is connected to a bigger picture is when it is presented as a “product” of post-modernity.

This research on Faith Perspectives of Migrant workers is part of a much bigger phenomenon: how migrants are changing the way we look at borders and human rights. When I research faith perspectives, I do not see faith as separate from the struggle for migrant justice. My research is actually part of the growing resistance against western religious and cultural hegemony, the continued misrepresentation of migrants in migration discourse media and injustice inherent in exclusionary legislation.

Critical Theory suggests that a social phenomenon, like religion, needs to be examined in relation to everything else in society. I have therefore made a conscious effort to situate this study in the context of other social constructs like globalization, neo-liberal capitalism, labor migration and human rights legislation and events that were current at the time I was writing it.

Migrant workers like the rest of us are impacted by globalization. Also impacted is how “religion” is perceived in the context of migration in a global world. Ethnic conflict can sometimes have religion tied up with it as well. This was the case in the conflict between the Myanmar military and Rohingya Muslims in the summer of 2017. The result was mass migration into neighboring Bangladesh.

One of the potential areas of conflict revolves around labor. Media plays on the idea that migrants are “taking our jobs away from us”. Often this is untrue since while the locals seek employment in the primary sector, while migrants find employment in the secondary or informal sector. Unskilled migrants seek jobs as nannies, domestic help, foodservice workers, fruit-pickers etc. Privileged migrants like doctors and nurses, software engineers, lawyers and university professors compete on higher levels of the job hierarchy. The two sectors are actually complement each other.

2.2.3. Faith perspectives of Migrant Workers

Faith perspectives are understood as the ways people describe their faith to themselves and others. Faith practices on the other hand are concrete, identifiable behaviors that we can see and observe among people who claim to belong to a certain faith tradition. Faith perspectives are

about the way people express this connection between their beliefs and their practice of everyday life.

One example of a faith practice is prayer. One faith perspective is that prayer is an important resource and that it provides comfort when faced with difficult situations in the migration process. It is possible to observe how people pray, listen to what prayers people use, and track how often people pray on any given day. Prayer itself however cannot be reduced to visible and measurable behavior. Prayer relates to deep inner feelings, deeply held beliefs, ancient symbols and worldviews. While we cannot access what goes on in a person's heart in prayer, we can listen to what people say happens to them when they pray.

From interviews, respondents say that praying influences the way they relate to events that happen to them. It also affects the way they relate to other people. Prayer makes them feel "closer" to God. In the experience of migrant workers interviewed in this study, they report that prayer somehow brings into existence and manifests what they affirm. They attribute certain events like getting a visa to having prayed to a saint or the Virgin.

Migrant workers are not always able to articulate what faith is, because they do not usually think in terms of concepts. Since they come from a culture of orality, they have many stories that describe what their faith looks like when it is seen as part of their daily lives. They tell me that there are some things that they experience that they have no words for.

The research balances an etic account of faith viewed from my perspective as a researcher with an emic account of how migrants themselves speak of their faith in their own words. I see my

task here as not to generalize across cases, but within them, by using thick and deep descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of faith perspectives of migrant workers, aware that not everything can be captured by language.

Migrant narratives are studied using diachronic and synchronic analysis. I listen to the narrative as expressed to me at a particular moment in time, but I also research their significance and their history over time. One example is the expression “*Si Dios quiere*” (God willing) which I hear as a religious expression but I also parse theologically under the rubric of the Christian doctrine of Providence. Future work on the faith of labor migrants will necessarily have to look at the way that religion plays into how migrant workers interpret their lives. A missiology of migration in my view should do the same thing.

This project situates faith/religion as part of the set of ideas, social capital and identities of Mexican migrant farm workers. The narratives that result from listening to the faith perspectives of Mexican migrant workers make for an interesting study of the role of religion in migration. In future, tests of validity can be performed through analysis, cross-comparisons and triangulation of data sets and methods among different migrant groups. This study however limits itself to the missiological aspects of religion and migration.

2.2.4. Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is another methodology I employed for my dissertation project. One reason I chose it was because it enables the migrants to speak in their

own words. This connects with my desire to make their faith-world and experiences visible and accessible to others.

Fals-Borda (1999) describes PAR as postmodern in that it draws from a range of theories to guide fieldwork. PAR as a social research methodology views subjects as “co-creators of the research”. Among the principles he puts forward are a. working with participants as full partners in the research process b. not trusting elitist versions of history/science that respond to dominant interests c. not depending solely on one’s culture in interpreting outcomes and d. diffusing and sharing what is learned with the people themselves.

PAR creates a space for migrant workers to get actively involved in the process of research and social change. The process can be designed to facilitate change in migrant communities and promote social justice. Migrant workers invited to participate in the research were told that they will be given the opportunity to talk about their faith experience and concerns in a safe space. Following Fals-Borda’s PAR principles, I reminded myself when I started fieldwork that I was going to be working with the migrant farm workers, not on them or for them.

After just a few interviews, I began to challenge the stereotypes used to represent migrant workers in the media. I saw the need for greater inclusion of migrant workers into the communities where the farms are located. I started having more proposals for how faith-based organizations and NGOs can support migrant workers. I realize that all of us are still learning how to do this well.

I found that a genuine partnership and collaboration is not only possible, it can be very empowering. It prevent participants from feeling that they are just being “used” for the study and have no real agency in the process. Participatory research is effective when it pays attention to “participation”.

In this study, participation extended to getting respondents to capture the complexity of their lived experiences in a photograph. This was something new to many of them. They found a way to give voice to their experience through photographs using in most cases a cellphone.

I have heard it said that research is as much a place for conversation as it is about methods. There are many things that are involved when one does research: roles, tasks, responsibilities, boundaries and power. What I found was that from another point of view it really is about trust. When it has been built, both researcher and migrant worker are ready to work together as equal partners and co-creators of new knowledge.

2.2.5. Visual Sociology

In addition to lifestory and biographical narratives I also used photography and images, drawing from techniques developed in the field of “visual sociology” to assist in the process of understanding what goes on in the migrants faith-world. Understanding this method requires that readers have a basic understanding of the visual and of the ways to deal with it in encompassing

and explicit way.⁴⁴ In line with this methodology, I used visual language to form ideas, gather data, and communicate my findings. I explored the use of photography as a missiological method and employed the camera as a tool for theological production. In this research the act of producing images, undertaken by both researcher and respondents is seen as a critical social practice.

I used photographs to portray, document and explore faith perspectives of migrant workers. Some of the visuals came from found photographs selected for their ethnographic value. Using pictures of familiar surroundings has the added benefit of establishing rapport with respondents during initial conversations. There is some truth to the saying that *una imagen dice mil palabras* (a picture says a thousand words).

Respondents were asked to study the photographs and tell stories about the more profound aspects they see in them. The photographs were selected by the researcher for their ability to elicit information and open up conversation regarding faith. The photographs were treated as a serious source of data worthy of analysis (Ball and Smith, 1992) and as a complement to case study and other qualitative methods. This methodology is rooted in the assumption that valid scientific insight can be gained into faith by observing visuals of people's religious behavior and material objects from their culture.

Since the focus of my research is faith perspectives, respondents were asked to connect the world depicted in the photographs with their experience of God. They were told that the photos

⁴⁴ Luc Pawels (2015), *Reframing Visual Social Science: Towards a More Visual Sociology and Anthropology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p, 310

were there not to test them on anything, but simply to get them started in talking about their faith experiences. The same visual data set was shown to all respondents to decode and interpret. They were also given the option to not respond to a picture if they preferred not to. The visuals used in the research came from existing stock imagery, researcher-generated visuals as well as respondent-generated material.

Some respondents who agreed were given a camera together with basic instructions for how to capture their faith perspectives in pictures. For some this was easy because they had mobile phones with the ability to capture and send images. It was how they communicated with their families back home. Some of them showed photos of their own families. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu spoke of family photographs as an important part of the modern family. Its use reinforces the integration of the family. (Schwartz and Ryan 2003:97)⁴⁵ They routinely use text and visual narratives to record and share the events of their lives with their friends through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

This ability to make pictures using a mobile phone (or any other camera-enabled device like a tablet or laptop) transfers agency and control of the process from the researcher to the respondent. It enables the respondent to participate in the research by visually recording their experience using camera-based imagery to respond to the questions like: How do you practice

⁴⁵ Schwartz and Ryan (2003) *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, London, Tauris & Co.

your faith while working in the farm? This process makes for a more equal relationship between the researcher and the respondent..

This methodology considers the photograph as “data” about what goes on inside the faith world of the migrant worker. This data was read ethnographically within the context of the research questions and then interpreted missiologically for the purposes of this study. The first task for everyone who sees a picture is to see it and then to make meaning of what is seen. This reminds us that our knowing comes from how we see a particular object. As such, our view is always partial within a much bigger reality.

To summarize, photography was employed to draw out responses regarding the faith perspectives of migrant farm workers. The workers selected in the sample were given the opportunity to speak for themselves, by providing data through verbal (or if they so choose visual) responses to photographs, some of which were made by them. Participant directed photography brings into view often taken for granted aspects of a migrant workers life. They provide the optics for understanding their faith experiences. Their ability to produce their own photos as observer subjects of their own faith experiences show their own way of constructing reality.⁴⁶ It is one of the ways migrant workers take possession of spaces in which they are insecure.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ayona Datta *Where is the global city? Visual Narratives of London among East European migrants* in Lozanovska *Ethno-architecture and the Politics of Migration* Routledge 2016, p.14

⁴⁷ Sontag, S (1973) *On Photography*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux p.9

Many researchers working in the field of migration are inspired to do so from their own biographical histories and experience. I have found this true for me: since I came to Canada as a migrant worker myself, although not in the farm, but in the restaurant. The salience of the researcher's "self" and individual experiences in informing academic inquiry is both a celebrated and contested notion within the social sciences. (Voloder 2014). The theory is that all researchers in one way or the other are connected to or are part of the object of their research. (Davies 2008)

2.2.6. Missiological Research using a Social-Scientific Framework

I want to make it clear that what I am doing here is missiological research. I am however using social-scientific frameworks and categories for my investigation of my topic. I am looking to explore theological connections between mission and migration, and labor migration in particular. I am wanting to find out where migrant workers locate God in their everyday experience and how religion and faith practices flow into that process. I make the assumption that what is seen (i.e. the faith practices) are somehow related to what is unseen (i.e. the faith of migrant farmworkers).

In doing this I use tools of social research that are available, aware that social sciences may not always adequately describe realities in the realms of faith, spirituality and religion.

2.2.6.1. Migration, Economy and Community

Migrant workers contribute to the economy of the local community where they work. They buy and sell goods, they pay taxes, and sometimes they even provide capital to start new businesses. They contribute to the economies of their countries of origin through their *remesas*

(remittances). They participate in the global economy by providing seasonal labor in countries that need it. Families of migrant workers are able to clear their debts, build houses, send their children to university and improve their overall standard of living by working overseas.

Beyond contributing to the economy, migrants are able to create community by investing meaning to their experience of migration. They sometimes attach religious meanings to these experiences as when Mexican migrant farm workers refer to their annual journey to Canada as a *perigrinacion* (pilgrimage). They use religious language to describe their struggles based on religious worldviews they grew up with in their countries of origin. Some describe their experience as being like a tree that is “uprooted” or as use the biblical language of *exilio* (“exile”).

This is described by Tweed in his ethnography of Cuban exiles and their devotion to *Nuestra Senora de la Caridad del Cobre* (Our Lady of the Exile) in Miami. Tweed (1997:119) says that children are brought to the shrine to introduce them to the Virgin who is “The Guardian of all Cubans” and initiate them into the exiled Cuban community in Miami.⁴⁸

Having to leave behind familiar things, places, food and memories to go to a strange place and start all over again, they find comfort and build national identity by coming to the Shrine. The fact that the Masses in Miami are broadcast in Cuba closes the space of exile and reunites them virtually with the people back home in the island.

⁴⁸ Thomas Tweed, (1997) *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami*, NY Oxford University Press

When asked what keeps them hopeful in the midst of adversity, it is not surprising that many interviews with migrants mention faith, belief and worship as resources they fall back on to face the many challenges they encounter in their migration journey. Faith far from being fixed is dynamic and they undergo significant changes with time. They relate how migration itself has changed the way they look at life.

Recovering and retelling stories of faith are necessary because they hint at what goes on “inside” the lives of migrants. When migrants perform their faith they imagine themselves as being in community with all others with similar practices or use similar language, signs and symbols. In performing their faith, migrant workers experience themselves as agents constructing their own faith world, as subjects of their own speech and the authors of their own stories. The questions: Who speaks? Who speaks for whom? Whose voices are listened to? Whose voices are ignored? And who has no voice? are important in this regard.

Living together in bunkhouses in the farm they are their own “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983) a community held together by stories, images and symbols that represent shared meanings. Ideally this should be what church is. The farm as a social location and insofar as it provides the content and context for these stories, images and symbols is key to understanding the lived religion of migrant workers.

This requires everyone who wants to understand migrants to consider religion as an important dimension of the migration experience. The religious language that migrants use when

they tell their stories can no longer be ignored. They are salient to the whole discussion around the migration. They help make the experience intelligible not just to the migrants but to those who research migration, whether they are “religious” or not. We need a language that will make migration and the experience of faith intelligible to more people. Faith practices after all are meaning-producing activities that people engage in as they move from here (their countries of origin) to there (their countries of destination).

This is why I found participant action research, ethnography, life-study and visual sociology as appropriate methodologies for this project. They helped yield in-depth information regarding faith experience. “Narrative Identity” is the term we use to describe how and where storytellers locate themselves in the story. It was interesting to see that in almost the stories told to me, the migrant worker as subject was also the lead actor.

2.2.6.3 Etic and Emic Perspectives

Since migration as we have seen is a complex phenomenon, it will require the use of interdisciplinary categories, models and methods. A certain amount of methodological pluralism may be necessary. Emic and Etic have come to stand for two necessary perspectives in ethnography. Both etic and emic perspectives are important in order to be able to combine outsider and insider approaches. As a researcher who is also a migrant, the work challenged me to define and re-define my own etic/emic perspectives.

Since migrant workers are a diverse population I as the researcher needed to be sensitive to difference. At the preparatory stages, much energy was devoted to establishing rapport and building trust in the community. Fieldwork as always had to rely on personal relationships that reduced the distance between me as the researcher and the participants.

The goal of this research is modest: to hear the migrant workers speak on their own terms. My contribution was to interpret what I heard and relate it to how how faith is used in meaning-making by migrant farm workers participating in the research. This brought me back to missiology where we reflect on events of daily life and interpret them in light of biblical narrative and Mission of God in the world. I look forward to the day when we can take this missiology to the streets. From the many years I have spent researching this subject, I know that this is where I have been met by God.

CHAPTER 3

MIGRANTS AND MIGRATION IN WORLD HISTORY

They did what humans have done for centuries when life became untenable... what the pilgrims did under the tyranny of British rule...what the Irish did when there was nothing to eat, what the European Jews did during the spread of Nazism...They did what human beings looking for freedom, throughout history have often done. They left.” – Wilkerson, (2010), The Warmth of Other Suns

The past is never dead. It is not even past. – William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun, 1951

Han de ir por todos los fines de la tierra, a la mano derecha, y al la mano izquierda, y de todo en todo iran hasta la ribera de mar y pasaran adelante.

- *Relacion de Michoacan, ca. 1540*

3.1. Learning from Migration History

Revisiting the historical antecedents of migration helps us understand the present through what has gone before. A better understanding of the dynamics of population movements can provide insight to the cultural assumptions that shape migration policies today. After the historiography has been presented they will be analysed for their relevance to religion and faith perspectives. This is done using social science categories of “agency” and “structure”.

The historiography of six migrant groups are used here as data points to examine the impact of migrants on world history. The six migrant groups chosen for this study are : Nestorians in the 7th, Huguenots in the 16th, Puritans in the 17th, Acadians in the 18th and Mennonites in the 20th century. I end with a special section on the trans-atlantic slave trade from the 16th to the 19th century. Based on these narratives and their analysis I offer my reflections on migration and mission.

The Nestorian Christians who travelled to Chang'an, China, the Huguenots who fled France, the Puritans who sailed from England to the New World, , the Acadians who were deported from Nova Scotia to Louisiana, and the Mennonites who left Canada and Russia for Paraguay and

Mexico, as well as the fifteen million from Africa that were forcibly transported to the Americas as part of the Trans-atlantic slave trade are categorized in this chapter as “migrants”. Their journeys from their countries of origin to their places of destination are referred to as a “migration”. This is consistent with how these terms were defined in Chapter 1.

In the history of Christianity there have been many instances of these types of migration. All six in their own way are “significant” in the history of Christianity. If it is true that Christianity cannot be understood apart from its social location and context, then it is helpful to read about who these migrants were, where they came from and what were the historical circumstances that led them to migrate. When and why and how did these migrations happen? In what ways were the experiences of these migrants similar, and in what ways were they different from each other ? What social impacts did they have in the places where they migrated to? What legacies, if any, did they leave behind?

The enormous impact of the trans-atlantic slave trade on the making of the Americas is still being studied today. Christianity has a long history in Africa and some scholars argue that Africans were already practicing Christianity long before the Europeans came, which means that it

also predates colonialism and slavery.⁴⁹ The forced migration of some fifteen million people from Africa to the Americas enabled the development of global trade.⁵⁰

The stories of these six migrant groups chosen are linked with World History as well as the history of the places where they came from (e.g. England and France and Canada) and the places where they settled: (e.g. New Amsterdam, New England, Louisiana and Paraguay).

I make the assumption that all of these migrations are somehow related to each other. I will argue that the migration of one group is connected with all others when seen within the story of the Mission of God. If there is indeed a link between migration and the Mission of God in the world, I propose that these narratives be read as stories of how God's blessing is "revealed among the nations" (Rev.7:9). They show how the Mission of God is enacted God in human history. They demonstrate how God's providence works in the stories of migrant peoples.

These six narratives contain significant events in world history. It describes how certain events forced people to leave their countries of origin to settle in other places. As with any narrative, the received reports of these migrations, the way they are told to us, reflect the interests, values and beliefs of their narrators.

⁴⁹ This view is expressed by Dr. Lawrence Mamiya, co-author of *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* in <http://www.theroot.com/blacks-were-christians-before-slavery-and-before-white-1790895789>

⁵⁰ Castles and Miller (2009) *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, Fourth Edition. New York: Guilford Press p.80-82

It is interesting for instance that while there are abundant sources of data about White European migrants, there are not as much available for Black slaves who came to the Americas in one of biggest examples of forced migration in history: the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

There are many definitions of “migrant” today. There is however no one universally accepted definition of migrant or migration. This may be because there are so many different kinds of migrants. When I use the word “migrant”, I include refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers, asylum seekers, and stateless persons. Migrants also includes those who are smuggled or trafficked for profit and those who have been displaced by conflict or forced to migrate due to famine and natural disasters.

And so, the Eastern Christians, the Syriac scholars , merchants and missionaries who travelled the Silk Road that stretched from Syria to North Persia to India and China, the English and French refugees fleeing from Europe, the Acadians expelled from Nova Scotia to Louisiana, the Russian/German Mennonites who left Canada for Paraguay and Mexico, as well as the million of West Africans that came to the America’s as part of the Trans-atlantic slave trade are all referred to in this study as “migrants”. Elsewhere in the historical records, they have also been referred to as “missionaries” ,“European settlers” or “colonizers” or “indentured labor”, terms that upon examination can actually be just as ambiguous as “migrant”.

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Rodney Stark (1997) suggests that although there were many wandering preachers, it seems likely that the primary bearers of the christian faith were ordinary believers who travelled for commercial and personal reasons across and beyond the boundaries of the empires of that era.

The term “missionary”, “European” and even the term “colonizer” covers a wide diversity of meanings among religious and social groups. Although they are both “European” , the Dutch who created New Amsterdam in what is now New York are different from the Swedes and Finns that built New Sweden along the lower reaches of the Delaware. The English are “European” as well, but it can be argued that the English Quakers of Pennsylvania are different from the English Puritans of New England or the English settlers of Jamestown, Virginia and the Georgia Colony, one of the last of the southern colonies of British America created as a territorial firewall against Spanish Florida.

The term “colonizer” can also refer to different people. During the 15th and 16th century, they referred to Spanish and Portuguese groups who had shipbuilding and navigation skills and a desire to colonize the “New World” whose boundaries had been mapped for them by Papal Decree. The British “colonizers” included a group of London-based merchants and entrepreneurs who partnered with government with the goal of increasing political power and personal wealth. Revenue from these alliances funded the Royal Navy that colonized New Amsterdam in 1664.

In his research on Tamil Evangelical Christians and Protestant Origins in India, Dennis Hudson (2000) retells how Dutch Reformed ministers who worked in the colony considered

themselves as neither “colonizers” nor “missionaries” but “religious entrepreneurs” funded by the Dutch Crown and employees of the Dutch India Company.

How then shall we call Russian explorers and cartographers in the 1730’s up to the early 1740’s who brought the Russian Orthodox church to Alaska as part of the Kamkatcha expeditions, considered one of the largest organized exploration that resulted in the mapping of the Arctic coast of Siberia?

Lydia Black (2004:225) simply refers to them as “ordinary people”. They were not missionaries, just ordinary people who brought with them their spiritual treasure: the Orthodox faith. They shared it in a way that Alaskan natives came to them to be baptized and given a new name, usually that of the saint whose feast fell on or near the date of baptism.⁵¹

Colonizers, explorers, mapmakers, missionaries or migrants? All of the above names in some way describe who they were. We live in a socially constructed world filled with many stories and heroes. K.S. Latourette (1975:xiii) says that this is the sense in which Christianity is not only old, but is also new. We are always discovering fresh ways to re-tell the story.⁵²

⁵¹ Lydia Black, *Russians in Alaska 1732-1867* Fairbanks, University of Alaska Press, 222-5

⁵² K.S. Latourette (1975 Revised) *History of Christianity, Vol 1, Beginnings to 1500* , San Francisco, Harper

3.2 Migrant Groups in History

Jehu Hanciles (2013) suggests that the links between migration and faith go deep among today's migrants. Timothy Smith (1978) observes that immigrants tend to make sense of alienation and migration in religious terms.. This suggests the importance of including religion and faith practices when doing research on migrants and migration. The difficulty is that "religion" itself as a category and unit of analysis is a contested term.

Two studies came out in 2012 both of them examining religion and migration globally. The Pew Forum's March 2012 report *Faith on the Move: The Religious Affiliation of International Migrants* used estimates by the U.N. Population Division to report on the total number of international migrants around the world.

The second study on faith and migration was an analysis by Johnson and Bellofatto titled *Migration, Religious Diasporas, and Religious Diversity: A Global Survey*. Their research on religious diasporas indicate that there are about 859 million people (12.5 percent of the global population) from 327 ethno-linguistic groups around the world today that can be said to be part of the global diaspora.

Similar to the Pew study, their data indicated that while Christians and Muslims make up only 55.3 % of the world's population, they are heavily represented (72.8%) in the global diaspora. If the data sets from these two studies are accurate, the intersection of faith and migration becomes a good point of departure for research in the fields like theology, missiology and mission studies.

What I hope to show in this chapter is that this phenomenon we call migration has been unfolding for thousands of years. There are however some who make the case that the migration that we talk about in migration studies is a product of the modern period in human history. What follows is a re-telling of six migrations and migrant groups in world history and the history of Christianity.

3.2.1. The Nestorians as Migrants

The first group we will look at are the Nestorians. An early Nestorian “mission” to China is dated back to 635 CE, when migrants from the Church of the East reached the Chinese imperial capital of Ch’ang-an (now Xian). The story says that the mission endured for over two hundred years. This was at a time when the Emperor of the new Tang dynasty was open to foreign influences, including Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Christianity which they referred to as *Jingjao* (“luminous teaching”) from a land called Daqin (Tai-c’hin) or Syria. Around this same time, migrant missionaries brought Christianity to Mongolia, and eventually reaching as far as Korea. A stone *stele* erected at the Tang capital of Chang’an in 781 and rediscovered in the seventeenth century describes flourishing communities of Christians throughout China, but beyond this, relatively little is known of their history.

The Nestorians initially entered China as traders and travellers rather than as missionaries, and were largely of Hebrew extraction, tracing their lineage to those who did not return to Palestine following the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

In writing about the Nestorian Missionary Enterprise, the Rev John Stewart reports that like the Huguenots who brought the silk trade to England and the Pilgrim Fathers who brought the best of Puritan energy to the New World, the Nestorians brought their skills as carpenters, weavers and smiths.⁵³

During the early centuries of Christian expansion, they considered the message of Jesus a fulfillment of their own Jewish traditions. Eventually, the Nestorians intermarried with other Syriac-speaking peoples east of the Euphrates and spread their faith throughout Turkestan, Mongolia, China and Japan.

The Nestorians faced China during the Tang Dynasty when it was at the height of its cultural and intellectual development. Tang China possessed a sophisticated religious and ethical system; its people had long lived in an environment of religious syncretism. When Tang forces conquered Turkestan (630 CE) and reopened the ancient trade route to the West, Alopen, the Persian bishop, felt the time had come to evangelize this mighty empire. He was welcomed by the authorities, in line with their policy of toleration and growing interest in foreign religions.

When Alopen arrived at Chang-an (635 CE), he was almost immediately commissioned to translate the Nestorian Sutras into Chinese. Scholars were assigned to assist him in this project. By 638 CE, the first Christian book was published, *The Sutra of Jesus the Messiah*. It sought to

⁵³⁵³ John Stewart, (1928:9) *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise: the Story of a Church on Fire*. Edinburgh. T & T Clark

introduce the Chinese to the Christian faith and specifically pointed out that the gospel contained nothing that contradicted China's ancient traditions, because loyalty to the state and filial piety were also part of the essential teachings of Jesus. This pleased the emperor, and by decree he proclaimed the virtue of the Nestorian religion, giving Alopen the title of “Great Spiritual Lord, Protector of the Empire” and opened China's doors to the Christian gospel: “Let it be preached freely in our empire.” he is quoted as saying.

And so the Nestorians established monasteries in China's key cities and proclaimed their faith enthusiastically, framing the Christian message in the philosophical language of the Confucian court in order to make it more intellectually acceptable to Chinese scholars. Their medical knowledge and surgical skills gave the Nestorians a good reputation, but Nestorian Christianity was classified along with Buddhism and Zoroastrianism as just another “foreign religion.”

Isolated from the religious centers in the Near East, the vitality of the Nestorian churches diminished as time went on. By the middle of the ninth century, the government's hostility towards Buddhism extended itself to all foreign religions, which led to Christianity being banned as well. The Emperor decreed that all foreign religions were required to pay taxes, and if unwilling or unable, they could all be sent back to their countries of origin.

Christian monks and nuns were evicted from monasteries, their properties confiscated, and they were ordered to seek a secular living. Christian monks were forced to hide , hold underground services or flee.

When Marco Polo arrived in the 1200s , medieval western writers reported that many Nestorian communities were found in China and Mongolia; However, they clearly were not as vibrant as they had been during the early days of the Tang dynasty.

The Nestorian church continued to flourish throughout Central Asia well into the fourteenth century among the northern tribes, such as the Uigurs, Turks, and Mongols. The discovery of the Nestorian Stele in Xi'an, where a record of Nestorian missionaries coming to China was written in both Chinese and Syriac continues to be significant . Nestorians are remembered for their role in introducing Christianity to China. Until the time that the Portuguese arrived in India, the Syrian Christians who claimed to have received the gospel from Thomas were referred to as Nestorians. (Stewart 1928:101)

Centuries later in Western Europe another group of people would be persecuted and will bring their faith to a more parts of the world. They were called Huguenots.

3.2.2.The Huguenots as Migrants

During the 16th and 17th centuries , members of the Reformed Churches in France were referred to as Huguenots. It is unclear how they got that name. These French Protestants drew their inspiration from the writings of John Calvin in the 1530s.

By 1562, the estimated number of Huguenots peaked at approximately two million, concentrated mainly in the southern and central parts of France, compared to sixteen million Catholics during the same period. The numbers for Protestants became smaller as many of them migrated to Switzerland, the Netherlands, Italy, and England.

Catholicism became the state religion of France through the Edict of Nantes (c.1598) Protestants were granted equality with Catholics under the throne and there was some degree of religious and political freedom. The Edict however was created to protect Catholic interests by discouraging the founding of new Protestant churches in predominantly Catholic regions.

At this time, French Protestants took the view that the ritual, images, saints, pilgrimages, prayers, and hierarchy of the Catholic Church did not help anyone toward salvation. They saw Christian life as something to be expressed as a life of simple faith in God, relying upon God for salvation, and not upon the Church's sacraments or ritual. Like other religious reformers of the time, they felt that the Catholic Church needed radical change. They thought the Pope ruled the Church like it was a worldly kingdom. And as events unfolded, the enmity between Protestants and Catholics became worse.

The Catholic Church in France and many of its members opposed the Huguenots. Some Huguenot preachers and congregants were attacked as they attempted to meet for worship. At the height of this conflict, the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre happened, where it was reported that from 5,000 to 30,000 were killed.

Huguenot numbers grew rapidly between 1555 and 1561, among nobles and city dwellers. Their opponents referred to them as Huguenots but they preferred to call themselves *réformés*, or "Reformed." The French Wars of Religion began with a massacre at Vassy on March 1, 1562, when many Huguenots were once again killed, and wounded. Soon, the Huguenots got more organized and became a political movement in France. Protestant preachers rallied a considerable army and a formidable cavalry.

By 1620 the Huguenots were again on the defensive, as the government moved in to apply more pressure. A series of small civil wars broke out in southern France between 1610 and 1635. These civil wars were in fact religious in nature, a continuation of the French Wars of Religion that were thought to have ended with the Edict of Nantes in 1598. Small wars in the provinces of Languedoc and Guyenne show Catholic and Calvinist groups using destruction of churches, iconoclasm, forced conversions, and the execution of heretics as their weapons of choice.

Louis XIV became more and more aggressive towards the Huguenots forcing them to convert. At first he sent missionaries out to convert them, offering financial incentives for conversions to Catholicism. After that he imposed penalties, closed Protestant schools and excluded them from favored professions. He then tried to forcibly convert the Huguenots by using armed soldiers to occupy and loot their houses. In 1685, Louis XIV even revoked the Edict of Nantes and declared Protestantism to be illegal through the Edict of Fontainebleau.

The revocation forbade Protestant services, required education of children as Catholics, and prohibited emigration. It proved disastrous to the Huguenots and costly for France because the repression led to even more bloodshed, destroyed commerce, and resulted in the illegal flight from the country of hundreds of thousands of Protestants, many of whom became intellectuals, doctors and business leaders in Britain as well as Holland, Prussia, and all the way to South Africa. By the end of the 17th century and into the 18th century, roughly 500,000 Huguenots had fled France to migrate to other lands.

Four thousand Huguenots were reported to have emigrated to North American colonies, where they settled in places like New York and Virginia. The English there welcomed the French refugees, providing money from both government and private agencies to assist with their resettlement. The Huguenots who decided to remain in France eventually became Catholics and were called "new converts". Four thousand Huguenots were reported to have emigrated to North American colonies, where they settled in places like New York and Virginia. The English there

welcomed the French refugees, providing money from both government and private agencies to assist with their resettlement.

In time, waves of Huguenot migrants would resettle in surrounding Protestant countries like England, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, and Prussia, where the Calvinist Great Elector Frederick William welcomed them to help rebuild his war-ravaged and underpopulated country.

A group of Huguenots became part of the French colonisers who arrived in Brazil in 1555 to found France Antarctique. The Huguenots of Guanabara, as they are now known, produced a declaration of faith to express their beliefs to the Portuguese. This document, the Guanabara Confession of Faith, became the first Protestant confession of faith in the whole of the Americas.

A group of Norman Huguenots established a colony on the banks of the St. Johns River, in what is now Jacksonville, Florida. The colony was the first attempt at any permanent European settlement in the United States. In September 1565, an attack against the new Spanish colony at St. Augustine backfired when the French ships were hit by a hurricane on their way to the Spanish encampment at Fort Matanzas. Hundreds of French soldiers were stranded and surrendered to Spanish forces led by Pedro Menendez. Menendez proceeded to massacre the defenseless Huguenots, and the Spanish wiped out their garrison.

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In South Africa, Huguenots migrated and settled at the Cape of Good Hope from as early as 1671 to establish a settlement at what is today Cape Town. In December 1687 the first group of Huguenots set sail from the Netherlands to the Dutch East India Company post at the Cape of Good Hope. The official policy in the Dutch East India governors was to integrate the Huguenots with the Dutch communities. Within three generations French was replaced by Dutch as the home language of most of the Huguenot descendants. The wine industry in South Africa owes a significant debt to the Huguenots, some of whom had vineyards in France, or were brandy distillers, and used their skills in their new home.

In 1700, several hundred French Huguenots migrated from England to the colony of Virginia, where the English Crown had promised them land grants in Lower Norfolk County. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, descendants of the first Huguenot migrated across the Appalachian Mountains into the West of what became Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and other states. In the early years, many Huguenots also settled in the area of present-day Charleston, South Carolina.

A number of French Huguenots settled in Wales. The community they created there is still known as *Fleur de Lys* (the symbol of France), an unusual French village name in the heart of the valleys of Wales. In relative terms, this was one of the largest wave of migration on record of a single ethnic community to Britain.

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Huguenots also settled in Ireland in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, encouraged by an act of parliament for Protestants' settling in Ireland. Huguenot regiments fought for William of Orange in Ireland, for which they were rewarded with land grants and titles in Dublin.

Around 1685, Huguenot migrants also found safe haven in Lutheran and Reformed states in Germany and Scandinavia. The Berlin Huguenots preserved the French language in their church services for nearly a century.

Some Huguenots also found their way to Canada. There are records of Huguenots who became involved in the fishing industry in Newfoundland and became part of the Canadian fur trade. After 1627 in Canada and 1659 in Acadia, Protestant worship and Protestant teaching were no longer permitted. The British conquest brought with it freedom of worship and the term "French Protestant" came into use. In August of 1764, the Protestant religion gained official status and soon some Huguenots were appointed to important offices in government.

In New York, the government allowed them to form and manage their own communities. Many Huguenots became farmers while other migrants chose to take advantage of skills specialization in New York City fueling population growth and further urbanization. In this places they supported other refugee congregations and promoted a new and unique refugee piety.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Jon Butler (1983) *The Huguenots in America*, p 207

Their eventual disappearance in America points to the need for migrants to find ways to adapt and survive in any new environment. Observers say that the Huguenots came to America at a time of dramatic growth in the colonies, when the economy was growing and small towns were becoming cities. The Huguenots who persevered eventually prospered and became the first immigrant group to benefit from the boom.

One question still remains unanswered to this day : Why did the Huguenots eventually disappear in America? Some say it was the failure of clergy not being able to hold the communities together. Some cited internal problems and church-state relations. Some said that they were so few that when others decided to turn their loyalties elsewhere, the group started to disintegrate. Although there is still a Reformed Church of France, the Huguenots have virtually disappeared in Europe. The disappearance of the Huguenots in America according to Jon Butler (1983:199) reflects the complexity of interaction in a pre-revolutionary society and the pathology of 17th century French Protestantism.⁵⁵

Huguenot migration began with a group of people fleeing from a place where they were being persecuted for their faith. This of course is not unusual, but what was unusual was how this event would bring the Christian faith to all the places where they went. Their presence in all the places they migrated to affected not just the religious life, but also the politics, the culture and

⁵⁵ Jon Butler (1983) *The Huguenots in America: A Refugee People in New World Society*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press p. 199

the local economy. Today many of these places look back with fond memories to “The Huguenots from France”. Sassen (1999:35) and Zolberg et al (1989:5-29) suggest that the word refugee was probably associated first with Huguenots in the 16th century who described themselves as “*refugies*”.

At around the same period in England, another group of Protestants would begin an even greater migration to the New World. This group of migrants are referred to in history books as “The Puritans”.

3.2.3. The Puritans as Migrants

The word "Puritan" is applied unevenly to a number of Protestant churches (and religious groups within the Anglican Church) from the late 16th century. John Brown argues that Puritanism was not so much an organized system as it was a “religious temper” and a “moral force”. In the 16th century it was tied up with the Protestant Reformation, in the 17th it was the name of a political party interested in religious freedoms and civil liberties.⁵⁶

The Puritan “Great Migration” to New England happened for two decades from 1620 to 1640, after which it declined sharply for some time. During this time English migrants, primarily Puritans settled in Massachusetts, the warm islands of the West Indies, and the sugar rich island of

⁵⁶ John Brown (1912) *The English Puritans* Cambridge: University Press

Barbados. They came in family groups (rather than as isolated individuals) and were motivated mainly by a desire for freedom to practice their Puritan religion.

The Puritans, undertook the 3000 mile sea voyage across the Atlantic to migrate to the “New World” believing that they would be able to establish a pure church in the colonies, in the lands known as “New England”. They thought they could offer a model for the churches in England and reform the Anglican Church and cleanse it of any vestiges of Catholicism.

The Great Migration refers to that period between 1620 and 1640 when twenty thousand English men, women, and children crossed the Atlantic Ocean to settle in New England. The year 1620 marks the arrival of the Mayflower and the founding of Plymouth Colony by the Separatists – the most extreme Puritan sect.

Moore (2007) estimates that up to 11% of Puritan migrants returned to England after 1640, including about a third of their clergymen. The Puritans created a deeply religious, tightly knit, and politically innovative culture that can still be found in some places in the United States. They hoped this new land would serve as a "redeemer nation." They fled England and migrated to America in an attempt to create a "nation of saints": an intensely godly, thoroughly righteous community designed to be an example for all of Europe. Winthrop's famous words, “A City upon a Hill”, referred to a vision of a new society, not just the pursuit of personal economic opportunity.

Migration led to the formation of Puritan communities with their own regional customs and beliefs. As soon as there were New World Puritans, their policies of church governance diverged from those who remained in the British Isles, who by then were faced with different issues than the ones they started out with.

Some Puritan religious beliefs had direct impact on culture and the way they practiced their faith. Education was considered essential for everyone, so that they could read the Bible for themselves. Puritans placed family at the center of their societies, as an organization to facilitate their devotion to God.

The migrants who came to New England differed from migrants from other regions in a variety of ways, all stemming from their fundamental desire to obtain spiritual rather than economic rewards. Motivated primarily by religious concerns, most migrants in the Great Migration traveled to Massachusetts in family groups. In fact, the proportion of Great Migration migrants who traveled in family groups is the highest in American migrant history.

One of their main contributions according to David Thomas Konig (1979) was the development of law and legal institutions⁵⁷. A decline of piety later on led to legal conflicts.

⁵⁷ See Konig D.T. *Law and Society in Puritan Massachusetts, Essex County 1629-1692*. University of Carolina Press,

Having gone through the French Huguenots and the English Puritans we now see the French and the English once again in Atlantic Canada. The next migrant group we will look at are the Acadians of Nova Scotia.

3.2.4. The Acadians as Migrants

The Acadians were French-speaking inhabitants of a small corner of North America in a place called “Acadie”. The Mik’maq word *shubin acadie* refers to “a place where potatoes grow” or “a place of abundance”. The word became Acadia in English Amy Boudreau describes them as a happy and industrious people.⁵⁸ The original settlers came from France, in search of making a fortune in the fishing or fur industry, while escaping devastation caused by Religious Wars on La Rochelle.⁵⁹ The need for fish and the growing demand for fur make them profitable enterprises at this time.⁶⁰ And other parts of France in the 17th century. They called this place their home for more than a century. Later the British would name it “Nova Scotia” (New Scotland).

In the fall of 1755, soldiers attacked the countrysides and rounded up thousands of people as hundreds more fled to nearby forests. Their homes were burnt , their cattle confiscated, along

⁵⁸ Amy Boudreau, (2006) *The Story of the Acadians*, Gretna, Pelican Publishing

⁵⁹ James Laxer (2006) *The Acadians in search of a homeland*, Anchor Canada. P.2

⁶⁰ N. Griffith, (2005) *From Migrant to Acadian: A North American Border People 1604-1755*. Montreal, McGill University Press

with their harvested grain. Afterwards, they were herded into ships that would exile them to places they had never seen before, among people that were totally different from them in faith, culture and language.

The migration of the Acadians continued till the 1820's. Historians described their story as a remarkable demonstration of human will in the face of cruelty.⁶¹ The reason given for this action against the Acadians was that they insisted on being neutral in the wars between the English and the French. Most of them were content to live under either regime as long as they were left alone to live in peace.⁶² The British took it as a stubborn refusal to promise to fight for the king of Britain. Others thought of the Acadians as "traitors" although all they really wanted was the right to live in peace.

As England and France rushed into another war on December 8th that year, a convoy slipped into the Bay of Fundy and the ships were loaded with a human cargo of Acadians. One vessel was west bound for Boston, two for Connecticut and still another for New York. The rest continued further down to South Carolina.

⁶¹ Article by James H. Marsh, published Sept 4, 2013 in The Canadian Encyclopedia. See also: John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme. The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland* (2006); E. Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian* (2005); Dean Jobb, *The Acadians. A People's Story of Exile and Triumph* (2005); Christopher Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora: An Eighteenth-Century History* (2012);

⁶² Peter Doll (2000) *Revolution Religion and National Identity: Imperial Anglicanism in Britain 1745-1795* London, Associated University Press p. 35

This event was recorded in history books as *Le Grand Derangement*, the Great Expulsion or the Great Upheaval, that happened in 1755 on the shores of the Bay of Fundy.⁶³ Others have called it the Acadian Holocaust, an act of genocide since more than 10,000 men women and children were reported to have been uprooted from their homes and farms at gunpoint and then forcibly sent into exile. This continued till the end of the Seven Years War in 1763 between Great Britain and France.⁶⁴ (Faragher 2005:xviii).

The farms that nurtured them for four generations were confiscated along with their livestock. Many died from disease, others were shipwrecked on the way to their destinations. Acadians were scattered along the east coast of North America, although there were stories of others who found their way back to England and France. Some sought refuge in the jungles of South America. There were some who reached as far as the Falklands near Argentina.

⁶³ Christopher Hodson (2012) compares this forced migration to expulsion of thousands of indigenous people in Spanish Peru, the exile of about 200,000 Huguenots in 1685 and the close to 12 million West African captives in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. *The Acadian Diaspora, An Eighteenth Century History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p.17

⁶⁴ J.A. Faragher (2005) *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland*, New York, Norton & Co., xviii

Acadians of Grand Pre had established good relationship with the indigenous Mik'maq.⁶⁵ The most famous community was Grand Pre, which translates into English as “The Great Meadow”. In Grand Pre, the Acadians grew and flourished, from a few hundred in 1650 they became about 15,000 a century later.

The British and the French fought over Acadia. The British captured Port Royal and then returned it to France but as history goes, it finally got ceded to Britain and the Acadians became the French speaking majority under British rule. In 1755 at the brink of another war, the Acadians found themselves “at the wrong place at the wrong time”.

A reign of terror under Lt Col Charles Lawrence resulted in about 1000 Acadians being shipped to England as prisoners of war. Others were sent to Guyana, the Caribbean and the Falklands. Some ended in the bayous of Southern Louisiana by way of the Mississippi , where Acadian transformed into “Cajun”, as migrants adapted to a culture that was so different from what they were used to back home.⁶⁶

History books say that “Acadie was destroyed but the Acadians lived on”. Today there are an estimated three million people around the world who trace their roots to the Acadians. It is a story about the triumph of resilience against adversity, immortalized in verse by Henry

⁶⁵ Laxer, p. 2

⁶⁶ Carl Brasseux (1992) , *Acadian to Cajun: Transformation of a people 1803-1877* London: University Press of Mississippi

Wadsworth Longfellow in his epic poem: *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* . Grand Pre has become the memorial site for the forced migrations of Acadians.

The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 ceded Port Royal and Acadie to the British while Ile Saint Jean (Prince Edward Island) and Ile Royale (Cape Breton) remained with the French. Nova Scotia then turned out to become a British enclave surrounded by French Territories.

The Acadians who migrated to Louisiana adapted very quickly to the weather and the land. Their resourcefulness and resilience skills were honed in exile. They grew wheat, barley and oats. In places where they did not grow well, they switched to growing corn. They learned to plant cotton and spun it for clothing. Handmade hats and wooden shoes offered protection from the heat.

Okra, a vegetable brought in by slaves, became part of their diet in soups and eventually in dishes like *gumbo* which eventually became trademark Cajun cuisine. Families started growing orchards and soon there were peaches and grapes and figs. By the 1800s , the records indicate that the average Acadian had 125 head of cattle in their *vacherie* (ranch).

Despite hardship and disease and floods, Louisiana turned out to be their “promised land”. The Acadians never wavered in their faith during exile, but they continued their distrust of catholic priests imported from France. There are stories of men bringing wives and children to church but smoking during the sermon and just coming back for communion as an act of protest.

A century after deportation however they learned to reassert their identity as a people. Although Acadia was not quite as described by Longfellow's *Evangeline*⁶⁷ when it was translated to French, it validated their stories of oppression. A weekly paper called *L'Evangeline* rolled off the presses as the newspaper for Nova Scotia's Acadians. And soon Acadians emerged from their exile to join mainstream Canadian Society supported by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In spite of this, it took a long while for the House of Commons in Canada to accept that a tragedy had indeed occurred and that the least that can be done centuries later was for the Canadian Government to ask the Queen to apologize for the wrongs done to the Acadian people. Some want the deportation forgotten, others are still asking for evidence to show that it did happen. And behind the scenes are government agencies discussing the possible implications of acknowledging that harm was inflicted on the Acadians because of the deportation.

Some were fearful that any statement made in support of this oppression may prompt other communities in Canada to ask for a similar statement on their behalf. Some feared legal action against the crown by the descendants of those who were deported. Finally in December 2003, a document was drafted which said "We hope that the Acadian people can turn the page on this dark chapter of their history".

⁶⁷ Robert Tallant (2000) , *Evangeline and the Acadians*, Gretna, Pelican Publishing Co, p.14

The Queen made it clear that the authority of the British Crown is now vested in Canada and that her proclamation “does not constitute a recognition of legal or financial responsibility”. July 28th became the day of remembrance of the deportation and it was marked for the first time in 2005. This closed a centuries old debate on whether the deportations were justified or not, but in the end, no one apologized for anything. To this day the story of the Acadians is a Canadian and North American narrative of great significance.⁶⁸

In the next section of this paper, we will examine yet another group of migrants whose story continues to this day: The Mennonites

3.2.5. The Mennonites as Migrants

Mennonites and other groups that grew out of the Anabaptist movement in Europe have scattered to many places in the world for migration and mission. One well documented case is the migration of Mennonites to the Chaco region in Paraguay

The Chaco lies on Paraguay’s remote western region near Bolivia and Argentina and is home to a diverse mix of Mennonite, Spanish, Brazilian, and indigenous Guarani communities. The approximately 60,000 to 80,000 Mennonites in Paraguay who live in large communities, or “colonies,” are the visible majority.

⁶⁸ Laxer, p.8

The migration of Mennonites in Paraguay started with Russian Mennonites of Germanic descent who emigrated from the former Soviet Union in the late 1920s and early 1930s to avoid persecution under Stalin. Other Mennonite communities migrated to Paraguay between 1929 and 1932 from Canada, Germany, and the United States.

The Mennonites started migrating to the Chaco in 1927 under a unique law (Law 514) that was passed by the Paraguayan Parliament in 1921 for Mennonite immigration. This was the first law in Latin America dealing with people who refused to join the army and the military draft. Mennonites in the Chaco originally came as migrant-refugees from Canada and political refugees from Russia. They came to this wilderness region, west of the Paraguay river, partly because it was far from the reach of state authorities. They settled in contested territory between Bolivia and Paraguay, which was owned legally by a Spanish Argentinean corporation called *Casado* but was historically the habitat of the Enlhit native people, who were not even aware that several other groups had claimed ownership of their territory.

The relatively friendly welcome that the Enlhit tribe offered to the Mennonite migrants (even showing a willingness to learn Low German), the openness of many migrant Mennonites to learning the Enlhit language, the exchange of experiences, and the help that the Enlhit gave the new migrants gave birth to a unique relationship of mutual friendship and hospitality. This relationship was intensified during the Chaco war with Bolivia (1932-1935), when the Enlhit

were considered spies and were hunted like animals by both fronts, the Paraguayan and the Bolivian. Occasionally they were hidden and protected by the newly arrived Mennonite immigrants.

The Mennonites' arrival in the Chaco coincided with a conflict between Paraguay and its neighboring country, Bolivia. One of the motivations of the Paraguayan government was to invite the Mennonites to populate the Chaco to show that it belongs to them.⁶⁹ Eager to solidify the country's hold on the sparsely populated region, the government of Paraguay granted large parcels of Chaco land to the Mennonites in the 1930's on condition that they establish a permanent settlement there.

The Bolivians, who also wanted the Chaco for its oil-producing potential invaded it in 1932 and fought the three-year Chaco War with Paraguay. More than 80,000 Bolivians and 50,000 Paraguayans died in that conflict. At the end of it, Paraguay won.

⁶⁹ Lorenzo Canas Bottos (2008) , *Old Colony Mennonites in Argentina and Bolivia: Nation Making Religious Conflict and Imagination of the Future*, Leiden, Brill Publishing

It is in the Chaco that Mennonite migrants struggled to survive in the 1930s and 40s in the midst of an inhospitable, semi-arid environment. They called it *el inferno verde* (a green hell due to heat, humidity and forest).⁷⁰ The scarcity of rainfall and poor soil made life very difficult for the first settlers who cultivated the land.

Mennonite cooperatives (*cooperativas*) are among Paraguay's largest enterprises today. Closely affiliated with the local Mennonite Church, they manage the colonies' commercial interests using highly efficient operations and logistics networks. They provide farmers with enriched animal feed, transport raw milk from farms to dairy plants, transform milk into dairy products, process foodstuffs, and ship finished goods to market on gravel roads that they themselves maintain.

The cooperatives also operated service businesses, including hotels, restaurants, gas stations, hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, and shopping centers that cater to the Mennonite communities.

Mennonite migration to Paraguay was driven by a desire for a place of refuge, to "hide away from the world" and again become the "*Stillen im Lande*." The Chaco began without any roads or connections to the rest of Paraguay. But when another wave of German Mennonite migrants arrived during World War II, expelled by Germany and Great Britain, they soon realized that in order to carry out their mission they would have to move toward populated areas. Some of them decided to moved out of the Chaco and

⁷⁰ Bottos, p.66

things began to change once again. The story is not over since the Mennonites continue to flourish in Paraguay to this day. We now come to the last migrant group: The Africans who came to the Americas as part of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

3.2.6. The Africans of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

In the 360 years between 1500 and the the abolition of the slave trade in the 1860's at least 12 million Africans were forcibly taken from their homes in Angola and areas north of Senegal to the Americas, or what was then referred to by European colonialists and settlers as "The New World". Some say that the number of Africans taken from their homelands and forcibly transplanted to the Americas may never be known. Conservative estimates range from 14 to 20 million.

The Trans-atlantic slave trade is considered by some scholars today as the biggest instance of forced labor migration in human history. Others see it as the most monstrous crime ever committed against humanity.⁷¹ Half of them ended up in North America. Most of them entered through Charleston, South Carolina, the center of the U.S. slave trade back then. The rest went to South America and the Caribbean. In the mid 1600s records show that Africans outnumbered Europeans in places like Mexico City and Havana. The first African-American migrants to California came from Mexico. Many slaves who escaped from the North were welcome in Spanish Florida where they were freed. An all black settlement was built north of St. Augustine in 1738. Up north, an "underground railroad" brought slaves across the border to Canada.

⁷¹ Oliver Ransford, (1971) *Slave Trade: Story of Trans-Atlantic Slavery*, London, Cox and Wyman

Slave labor became even more in demand when cotton plantation spread in the deep South. By 1850, the southern states supplied 2/3 of the cotton in the world. When the cotton economy floundered after World War II, African Americans migrated to the cities in the North. Reverse migration happened in the 60's and 70's when another wave of migrants returned to their homes in the south. By 2010, Atlanta surpassed Chicago as having the largest African American population next only to New York.

The story of the slave trade was funded by a biblical/religious narrative supplied by slave-owners and traders. The story as interpreted by them was that Noah cursed his son Ham with blackness and slavery for looking at him when he was drunk and naked and exposing him to two of his other sons.

African religion survived in adverse conditions giving freedom to people to practice their faith in their own way. When former slaves converted to Christianity, the Catholic Church frowned on the mixing of Catholicism with African traditional religious beliefs. These traditional African religious beliefs and practices however morphed into various forms: *Santería* in Cuba, *Vodou* in Haiti, *Obeah* in Jamaica and *Candomblé* in Brazil.

African slaves contributed much to the development of music, dance, cuisine and religion in American culture. The institution of slavery helped shape the history of religion in America. It was finally abolished after the civil war of 1865. White American Christians were forced to re-think their faith in light of slavery. Some church groups (eg Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians) split over the issue of slavery and the Bible. African American forms of Christian worship continued from the early days in the cottonfields.

Their African interpretation of the Christian faith was woven around themes of oppression, resistance and freedom. The spirit of "liberty and justice for all" did not extend

to African slaves. Their deeply held Christian faith adapted to their context and celebrated in sermon and song, became a source of hope for liberation. The issues that challenged American Christianity in the 19th century came to a head in the civil rights movement of the 50s and the 60s of the 20th century.

3.3. Analysis, Critique and Conclusion

3.3.1. Analysis of Structure and Agency

E.Wild-Wood (2013) suggests that missiological studies of migration have both widened our understanding of migrants as well as the complexities that surround the process of migration, then and now.

I will now analyse the narratives I have just presented using the social science concepts of “structure” and “agency”. Sewell (1992) defines agency as “being capable of exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree.” I will argue that even in cases where migration was involuntary or forced as was the case for all of the migrant groups studied in this chapter, agency was never lost.

A choice always presented itself as to how migrants will adapt to changes in their new homeland. As powerless as some migrants may be, they found ways to exercise power over the new circumstances that were thrust upon them. Puritans influenced relations of power in Elizabethan England, and Acadians found creative ways to work with the land, even after they were exiled to the remotest regions of Nova Scotia. Later in Louisiana when they found they could not grow flax, they turned to cotton instead. Huguenots managed to survive by creating their communities around worship wherever they happened to be, in spite of being an oppressed religious minority. And the Mennonites, both Russian and

German, through faith and hard work transformed the Chaco, and made it into what it is today.

Giddens (1984) has an interesting theory where he argues that agency leads to structures that appear to have a dual nature: they are both the ‘medium’ as well as the ‘outcome’ of the social actions of agents in any given context. Hence, colonization and biblical interpretation became the medium for the social practice of slavery. Colonization produced slavery and at the same time slavery’s outcome was to enable colonization to multiply into more colonies.

The structure we call “Globalization” requires migration but migration is also an outcome of globalization. A king converting to Catholicism, an edict like Nantes or a council like Chalcedon, a people caught in the middle between the French and the English, the forced migration of millions of West African to supply the need for labor in the New World are examples of structures that impacted the agency of migrant groups we surveyed here.

What social structures might explain why the Huguenots virtually disappeared in America while the Mennonites are still very much present in Paraguay? To what extent did the decision of English settlers bringing in slaves to the tobacco plantations in Virginia contribute to the institution of slavery in the United States and the racism that sparked that American Civil war, and later the Civil Rights Movement?

Sometimes, according to Sewell, a structure passes a threshold and transforms into something else. Would it be fair to say then that the human trafficking of today is a continuation of the slavery and indentured labor of yesterday? These structures play into

subsequent social interactions like the fact that labor migration is related to debt, as migrants pay huge sums of money to recruiters and human smugglers. As well there is the debt of nations to institutions like the International Money Fund and the World Bank that causes people from poorer countries to migrate to richer countries.

Structures sometimes get modified when it acquires properties not present in the old system as is the case with a new phenomenon of “unaccompanied children” from Central America crossing the U.S, border. Many of them are now in detention centers as the U.S. government deliberates on ways to handle a possible humanitarian crisis.

The debate continues as to whether all structures can be said to originate from human agency or whether some structures can be said to have a life of their own. In the six narratives presented here, migrants exercised agency by defining and pursuing their purpose as they worked with the new structures they encountered during the migration process. They exercised agency by working with those who had the power to impact their lives.

The Mennonite Central Committee takes credit for getting Mennonites from Canada to the Chaco. They worked with both the governments of Canada and Paraguay and they did it well. English businessmen in London made it possible for the Winthrop expedition to sail to the New World. Nestorian migrants explained to the court of the Chinese Emperor christian concepts in terms of chinese culture. West African slaves eventually transformed the culture and religion of places like the Deep South and the West Indies. Wherever migrants succeeded in integrating structure and agency in both their countries of origin and destination, positive outcomes came about.

Regardless of where they came from and where they went, migrants' faith and culture were inextricably intertwined. History reminds us of a time when church and state, civilization and Christianity were one and the same thing.

From reading the six narratives in this paper we learn that migration is much more than a change of location, from one country or place to another. Part of the reason that migration has become a site for missiological reflection is because of the many layers of meaning that can be found in the migration experience. Migration undermines established notions about national sovereignty, security and safety, stability and permanence. It recovers themes of exile, dislocation and marginality that are found in both Hebrew and Christian scriptures. One of the biggest missiological issues it raises is how to honor migrant justice and human rights in an age of Empire. As explained by Hardt and Negri (2000:xi), the concept of Empire is fundamentally characterized by a lack of boundaries. Empire's rule does not recognize limits.⁷²

The narratives I have presented here of six groups of migrants, support the view that there are many different ways of being Christian in the world. It reminds us that Christian identity is ultimately not found in individual ethnicities, Syrian, English, French, German or African, but in our being "in Christ". This is what makes these narratives theologically and missiologically significant as we look back at them from a different moment in history. The history of one people group is connected with all other groups and there is a sense in which we can say that it is all part of the one story of the Mission of God in the world.

⁷² Hard and Negri, (2000) *Empire* Boston, Harvard University Press

When we read about the first Nestorian Christians coming to Xi'an in Tang China as early as the 7th century, it started an entire history of Christianity in China. The story presented here is only a snapshot that does not include what happened afterwards in the work of others like Marco Polo during the Mongol period or Giovanni de Montecorvino who built the first catholic church in China in 1299 or the migrant missionaries in the 17th century who settled in Beijing with the Jesuit Matteo Ricci.

Some readers will be surprised to know that the founder of the first Chinese Republic, Sun Yat Sen was a Christian from Guandong province. The people who followed him like Chiang Kai-shek and his wife were Christians as well, but they lost out to the communists after a long civil war where Mao Tse Tung declared himself as "The Messiah of the Working Class", and Christianity in China became a relic of the past.

Today there are reports that indicate that some of China's leaders seem to recognize Christianity as one of the strengths of the West. They have studied the history of Western Civilization and are aware that it was Christianity that led to the emergence of capitalism and western democracy.

Niall Ferguson (2011) suggests that there could be as many as 130 Million Christians in China today. The number of practicing Christians in China are bigger than those in Europe. Churches are being built at a faster rate in China than anywhere in the world. Soon Christians in China can account for 20-30% of the entire population and who can say if someday Christianity may be allowed as an official religion in mainland China? However the tides of history turn, it will always go back to that day when a small group of migrant Nestorians from the Church of the East reached Chang'an.

Telling and reflecting on the narratives of people who have migrated is a way of doing missiology. It is possible to go through every stage of human history and the history of Christianity and find people moving from one place to another sometimes for the same reasons or for different reasons from those who came before. As a collective human activity within a complex system where many interacting factors like politics, economics, geography and religion play out, it is difficult to predict where or when the next great migration will be or what forces will trigger it. It is another one of those things where the past does not necessarily predict the future.

From this study, certain patterns present themselves for consideration. Today as in the past many people migrate as refugees fleeing from many zones of conflict. There are those who continue to “seek the warmth of other suns” not so much for themselves but for their children. Border controls and migration laws notwithstanding, migrants continue to move across fences and walls, rivers and mountains in search of work and a better life for their families. Migration scholars continue to use various models and data sets to delve deeper into the determinants behind these migratory movements.

Civilizations and nations are also complex systems and as such they exhibit characteristics from the natural world. This includes the tendency of some things happening for no apparent reason. Migration has taken the history of Christianity in a new direction and made it into a global religion. There may be a wise providence here that exceeds our ability to understand how and why things happen the way they did.

The set of narratives I chose about Nestorians, Huguenots, Puritans, Acadians, and Mennonites and West African Slaves comes to us weighted with ambivalence inscribed into them by the diverse interpretations these events have received from different researchers across disciplines.

The above discussion shows how the Christianity travelled across the ocean and crossed borders of territory, culture and geography. It found itself in places where it had never been before. As a result different understandings of Christianity came to expression and the gospel was translated into other cultures. The plurality of Christian faith expressions in the world today can be traced back to migration and the many different inculturations of the gospel brought about by it. When people migrate they not just carry their religious beliefs and practices. They also carry language, culture worldview, skills, resources and relationships.

The largest Christian group in today's Middle East started out as migrants. The Arabic-speaking Egyptian Copts, reside mainly in Egypt, but are connected to other communities in Israel, Cyprus, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, the Sudan and Tunisia. The second largest Christian group in the Middle East are Arabic-speaking Lebanese Maronites. These Christians are mostly adherents of the Greek Orthodox Church and Protestant converts. They suffer both ethnic and religious persecution.

Today the biggest Middle Eastern Greek community resides in Cyprus and they constitute the only Christian majority state in the Middle East. Many millions of Middle Eastern Christians currently live in the diaspora, elsewhere in the world from Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Europe. To this we have to add several million Christian foreign

workers in the Gulf area, mostly from the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Migration within Christianity has not stopped. It continues to move wherever Spirit leads.

3.3.2. Critique of Cultural Politics

Nina Glick-Schiller (1997) described cultural politics as “processes through which relations of power are asserted, accepted, contested and subverted by means of ideas, values, symbols and daily practices.” Inside the six narratives what processes would indicate relations of power?

Nestorius was condemned by the Council of Chalcedon because of a powerful lobby led by Cyril of Alexandria, the deportations of Acadia were made possible because of the desire of British Army Colonel Charles Lawrence “to rid the territory of French vermin”, the Huguenots were forced out of France by the Catholic monarch Henry IV and the Edict of Nantes, the Puritans because of Charles I and the dissolution of the English Parliament and Mennonites fled Russia primarily because of Stalin and the Soviets. The colonial project created the need for the Slave trade from West Africa to the Americas.

All the migrant narratives presented here are inscribed with “relations of power”. They contain processes of cultural politics in the field of religion. Since these happened before the idea of “separation of church and state” became popular, it is difficult to distinguish the role played by these institutions.

The ideas, values, symbols and practices of the past that required the use of power to make them part of the economic, political and cultural worldviews of today. Against this background, we saw church councils that had other agenda beyond getting a consensus on

doctrinal matters, how slavery was supported by biblical warrants and how the impulse for colonization came with papal approval through the “Doctrine of Discovery”. Documents like the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights all use religious language.

Acadians and Huguenots were not given the right to vote or take up jobs as civil servants primarily because they did not share the religion of their colonizers. It is an irony of history that Puritans who fled because of persecution in Old England ended up persecuting Quakers in New England. Religion as can be seen from the narrative was often used to legitimate “unequal relations” between groups. Preaching the gospel was co-opted in some instances as a way to pacify the natives. Mennonites who practiced “community of goods” were also charged with exploiting the Guaranis and the Brasiguayanos while accumulating vast amounts of capital that allowed them to control key industries in Paraguay to this day.

Analysis of these narratives are therefore made difficult by the fact that they were written from the perspective of the colonizer and not of the colonized. Hence we are given very little information regarding the Mikmaq , the Guaranis, the Brasiguayanos , the American Indians and the Slaves from West Africa, but a lot of data about the contributions of Huguenots, Puritans, Acadians and Mennonites in the colonization of the Americas. To this day, very little information is available on the Nestorians and the Church of the East. There is also very little mention of the contribution of women in any of these narratives.

When oppression is clothed in religious vestments and presents itself under the guise of mission, it becomes much more difficult to distinguish true and false motives. What do we make of the Puritan biblical vision of being “a city on a hill” ? What happens

when some of those same sentiments later translate into doctrines like “Manifest Destiny”?

What happens when the Biblical Narrative about Noah and Ham and his descendants is compromised by a particular reading that is used to justify the institution of slavery?

Reading the narratives using cultural politics as a lens reveals and brings to light many of the issues associated with the narrative itself. The dominant discourse never talks about itself and does not see the need to. This is what gives it so much power, because even without asserting itself, its ideas become normalized as truth. In these six narratives, one does not know nor can one see or tell for sure who is speaking and whose interests are being served by having these stories told this way.

What is known is that stories are never neutral. Historical narratives, including the biblical narrative, are written from a particular point of view that is invariably determined by the worldviews, languages and cultures of the time. Historians, scholars, storytellers, theologians and researchers (myself included) always interpret from a particular social/cultural location and point of view.

Any analysis then that can identify who the dominant actors are in the production of the narrative helps in understanding why events were made to look a certain way, why some details may have been omitted, and some data suppressed. Unfortunately there is no black box that will reveal what really happened to Acadians at the Bay of Fundy or what happened to Native American Indians after the Mayflower carrying the Pilgrims landed in Plymouth, or how the Mennonites accumulated wealth in the Chaco or the other historical/religious factors associated with the trans-atlantic slave trade.

The history of colonization suggests that ultimate victory is won not when one has conquered the people and occupied the land, but when one is able to control the symbolic

universe from which people dream and think and talk. This might explain why the Acadians insisted on keeping French as their language and the Mennonites insisted on keeping German instead of English as their medium of instruction. Language is what we use to construct our worlds. There is a sense that as Wittgenstein said “the limits of our language are the limits of our world”.

We are told that when the first black migrants from West Africa came to the colonies, the first thing the white settlers did was to destroy any traces of their indigenous religions. The records indicate that these religious practices as in the case of the Slaves of West Africa did not die but simply transformed into something else.

Bringing these to light is important because it opens the way for counter-narratives to be written and strategies of resistance to be re-worked. It suggests that ethno-religious differences remain central in interactions that involve people of migrant backgrounds. It gives us tools to talk back at the narratives so that they are not passed on uncritically to future generations. It interrupts stories like that of Christopher Columbus “discovering” America or the Pilgrims on the Mayflower and the origins of Thanksgiving Day, or the story of Noah and the cursing of Ham, by asking a different set of questions. Whatever religious language and symbols were used to tell the story needs to be problematized if only because those symbols continue to be used today. How the story is told also matters because it influences the conclusions that people make.

3.3.3. Summary and Conclusions

The foregoing analysis showed how using social science concepts like “structure” and “agency” can be helpful in the study of religion and migration. Even if migration scholars have not yet come up with a coherent theory of migration, there is agreement that

migration is a universal human experience and that there are observable patterns across history that can tell us what happens when people migrate and what their lived experience of religion might be like.

Concepts like “structure” and “agency” help find answers to questions like: Why do people migrate from A to B? Why do some people migrate and others do not? Why do they move now and not then? Why do they move to B and not to C? Because the theory is still evolving, it is possible that future analysis of these same six narratives may arrive at very different conclusions.

These narratives show that migration was enacted by migrant groups in very ambivalent circumstances. Hence, every truth claim regarding these groups needs to be tested further using new theories born out of new evidence across the disciplines.

The six stories of migration were gathered from diverse secondary sources. They were then processed in order to look for significant patterns, after which the results were further analysed for similarities and differences. Cultural politics was used as a framework for critiquing the narratives and shaping new conclusions.

No one theory is adequate to explain why people migrate, but whatever theory is chosen will need to consider the context of a particular migration. Since recent data indicates that the majority of migrants in the world today are either Christian or Muslim, then the role of faith and religious belief needs to be considered in analysing migration narratives.

“Structure” and “Agency” was used to read the story of migration from the Nestorians in the seventh century to the cultural politics between Protestants and

Catholics in Western Europe and the New World and the significance of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in the history of religion in the Americas.

The narratives showed how migration was enabled by both Papacy and Monarchy, the development of shipbuilding, the contribution of cartographers and explorers, financing from business groups, the offer of land grants by new nation-states to those who risked the journey. The significance of the institution of slavery itself was shown to be integral in the history of migration and religion in the Americas.

These migrations served the purposes of the western church and the nation-states in power at the time. Their actions were driven by religious reasons and supported by biblical interpretation. Some were totally convinced that they were “doing the right thing” and “following the will of God”. Years later, when these narratives of mission and colonization were revisited, their historical consequences, intended and unintended became known.

New narratives were written based on new data that showed how christian colonizers were prone to hegemonic ambitions and violent force was used to further these ends. Roger Stark (2003:233) agrees with Adam Smith’s observation that religion becomes dangerous to society when it is represented by only one sect,⁷³ and it becomes worse when two or three compete for religious control of society. Things get better as sects multiply and engage each other in dialogue in order to come to agreement.

The conflicts and competition between Protestants and Catholics were political and they were also ecclesial. The sins of the christian church and its complicity with

⁷³ Rodney Stark (2003) *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism led to Reformations, Science, Witchhunts and the End of Slavery*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, p.233

violence during the Crusades and the Inquisition and the colonization of the Americas have been the subject of many studies by historians. Ecclesial and state apologies in recent years have opened new doors towards forgiveness and reconciliation.

This chapter showed faith perspectives that were imbricated in the structures and processes of religion and migration in human history. In the next chapter, we look at more narratives of migrants and migration, this time from the Hebrew Scriptures.

CHAPTER 4

MIGRANTS AND MIGRATION IN THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

4.1. Biblical Studies and Missiological Reflection

The relation of Biblical Studies to missiological reflection is one of the most neglected fields of investigation in missiology (Van Engen, 2012) . This next chapter aims to use migration as a lens to re-read four biblical narratives. This is done to provide a theological/biblical grounding for missiological reflections and recommendations that will be offered in Chapter 7.

In this chapter, I re-read four migrant narratives from the Hebrew Bible: Joseph, Esther, Daniel and Ruth and listen for the faith perspectives of the narrators and the protagonists. This is done to determine what if anything can be learned about the Mission of God in these four narratives. What we are looking for here is not “proof” but insight into how God works with migrants in the narrative. The intention is not to authorize, support or impose one particular view of mission or migration, but to search and engage the missional in the migrant narrative itself.

I read all four narratives as “sacred story” handed down by faith communities who have narrated and performed the story through the ages. It is presupposed that these stories came from the creative imagination of writers and storytellers using metaphors of the time to communicate God’s intention to the people. Succeeding generations continued writing and re-telling these stories, grounded in what they considered to be meaningful in their

culture, tradition and context and at some point in their history the stories were “canonized” and became scripture.

In this chapter, I look for how these stories describe migrants’ experience of God in their life journey. I will look for examples of how migrants witness to God’s power and make known God’s purposes to others. In interpreting these stories, I make a missiological assumption: God has a design, a purpose and an intention for the world. God knows and has a plan for the hope and future of humanity (Jer 29:11) In the letter to the Ephesians, the writer calls it the *mysterion* : a plan for the fullness of time to gather all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth. (Eph 1:10).

At the end of this chapter, I identify five themes that I found in reading these stories. I will argue that these themes are woven across both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures in the first and second testaments. They are like what Gerald Anderson calls “footprints of God’s mighty acts in salvation history.”⁷⁴ Stephen Benin says that this anthropomorphic phrase coming from a translation (or mis-translation) of Job 11:7 speaks to tangible traces of transcendence in history. In the biblical narratives they are described as God “coming down” to reveal Godself. How this happens is understood differently in the Jewish and Christian traditions.⁷⁵

This chapter uses the four narratives as a biblical framework for understanding migration. It presents theological themes that are present in the narratives and the entire biblical record. After this, there is still another thing that needs to be done, according to Schreiter (2003). One needs to take a theo-ethical stance in regards to the narratives and the

⁷⁴ From Foreword to *Footprints of God: A Narrative Theology of Mission*, Van Engen, Thomas and Gallagher (eds), (1999) Oregon, Wipf and Stock, ix

⁷⁵ Stephen Benin (2012) *Footprints of God: The Divine Accommodation in Jewish and Christian Thought*. Albany, the State of New York Press p, xiii-xv

social realities they describe. I do this in the last chapter where I offer proposals for how the church can address the challenge of migration today.

4.1. 1. Migrant Narratives

The category “migrants” is used throughout this dissertation. Those who inhabit this category today include refugees, trafficked women, immigrants, asylum seekers, international students, migrant farm workers and the like. What they have in common is an experience that we refer to as “migration”. They move (sometimes willingly, sometimes by force of circumstances) from a place or country of origin to a place of destination. Some migrants eventually settle in these countries while some are deported back or choose to return to the countries where they came from.

I will be reading Joseph and Daniel, Ruth and Esther as “migrant narratives”: stories of people who moved from one place to another. Biblical scholars tell us that the texts were likely written in the context of exile and foreign domination when the people of God were uprooted and deported from their homelands to work for their captors. The four biblical narratives are a commentary on migration and mission.

4.1.2 The Bible as the Story of God

The canonical materials in the First and Second Testaments taken together provide a paradigm about the oneness or the integrity of God. They are a way of affirming who God is as interpreted by the people at that time. The Bible as canon is best understood according to Sanders as a paradigm that speaks to the “integrity of reality,”⁷⁶ (Sanders 1987:5). It provides a comprehensive way of looking at the world based on the covenant

⁷⁶ James Sanders (1987) *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text: Canon as Paradigm* Eugene , Wipf and Stock, p.5

between God in the Hebrew Bible, the God we know in Jesus and the lived-experience of humanity as it evolves through history.

I am reading these texts as “sacred story” or “scripture”. What this means, in practical terms, is that I read everything that is spoken of in these narratives as in some referring the reader back to God. The four stories in their received form are read in the context of the whole story, the entire story of God as written in these scriptures.

4.1.3. The Biblical Doctrine of Providence

In reading these stories, I found it helpful to begin with the question of “how God acts”. This discourse about how God acts has traditionally been spoken of in christianity as “The Doctrine of Providence”. This biblical doctrine in its received form has undergone many revisions and reconstructions. It is present in both testaments as well as in writings during the intertestamental period.

One way it is interpreted is that God makes provisions beforehand to accomplish God’s purposes. There is a special providence for those who put their entire trust in God. God’s healing and deliverance, strength, protection and blessing will be available to all who believe. Providence is how God loves and so there is nothing in creation that can separate us from it. (Rom 8:37-39).

Its adequacy as doctrine as well as its function in the biblical narrative and communities of faith is currently being reassessed. I am hoping that a critical reading of the four narratives might lead us to an alternative construct for how God engages people and the everyday world we inhabit. I also intend to explore the doctrine’s claim that God provides for all of creation using people and events that serve God’s intention

I begin by presenting my critical reading of the narratives of Joseph, Esther Daniel and Ruth as “migrant narratives”. I then show biblical themes that emerged from my reading these narratives. I close the chapter with my reflections on migration as a metaphor for the journey of faith and the pilgrimage of life. Here I will be using some ideas from Ricoeur’s work on narrative, symbols and metaphor.

These are neither complete nor final readings of these texts. They are done here to lay the foundations for a missiology of migration. I do this by searching for the missiological significance of the texts themselves. I look for faith perspectives in these stories. These stories from the biblical narrative provide the context for a deeper understanding of the experience of migration and how migrant workers describe their experience of God, which is the subject of this dissertation.

I propose that all movements of individuals and peoples in these narratives are “providential”. They are not random events, but have a purpose and occur under God’s direction. These stories just like other stories of origin (Deut 26:5) speaks of God leading people through events, following a plan that is already present in the heart of God. Inside this view, Adam and Eve are sent out of the garden by God to bless the world. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia all become instruments for God’s purposes. (Jer 25:9-12). God directs events not just for Israel, but for other people as well outside its borders. (Amos 9:7). God’s spirit is poured out on all creation, not just the church, in the narrative-event we call Pentecost. These are all expressions of the freedom of God. (Dan 4:35)

Today the Spirit of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ and the people of God move *en conjunto* (together) through migration to carry God’s purpose “to the ends of the earth”. And as always, God’s grace precedes every missionary action. In these stories, people

move because God calls and sends them. How might migration, whether forced or free, be a God given way to spread the good news to the nations and reconcile the world to God? Can it be that God's redemptive mission is being enacted in the lives of migrants? How is God's dream for the nations being fulfilled through migration?

If mission is an integral part of the way history unfolds, can migrants then and now be vessels of blessing and bearers of God's mission to the nations? These are the questions that frame the discussion of the four narratives in this chapter.

4.2. Four Migrant Narratives

4.2.1. The Joseph Story (Genesis 37-50)

The Joseph Story is found in the last fourteen chapters that end the Book of Genesis. In it we find the story of Joseph, the youngest son of Jacob. The story begins with a collective memory of the household of Jacob, honoring the ancestors by constructing a family history that traces the lineage of Jacob, his wives and daughters and his eleven sons. In some ways since Jacob is Israel this also shows the ancestral history of the nation for the post-exilic community. The editors of Genesis used genealogy as a way of telling the story of how the people of God came to be. Niehoff suggests that we do not just read the story and what happens in it, but also pay attention to the perspective from which and the way the story is being told.⁷⁷

The narrative describes how Jacob favored his youngest son, Joseph. Joseph had dreams of greatness which he shared with his brothers. This became a cause for jealousy among the brothers. They seized him and sold him off as a slave to migrant traders, named in the narrative as Midianites and Ishmaelites (37:25) who will sell him to Potiphar.

⁷⁷ Niehoff M. (1992) *The Figure of Joseph in Post Biblical Jewish Literature*, Leiden, Brill p.8

The brothers go home and tell their father that Joseph was killed by a wild animal. One way of reading the story of Joseph is to see it as a hero's tale. It contains many of the motifs that can be found in stories of this genre. The hero goes on a journey, meets obstacles along the way, comes home to bring a message back to his community. An analysis of this narrative will show patterns and themes similar to other stories in the literature of the Ancient Near East that use the same literary device.

Another way to read the story is to see it as an explanation of how somebody comes to power or how political authority gets transferred from one leader to another. It also speaks to the role of the deity in the process of election. Yet another way to read the Joseph story is see it as a way that readers then were being persuaded as to why a person deserves to be in a position of power and what qualities God looks for and gives to leaders that he has chosen.

In many court legends there is reference made to the role of the Providence of God, or how God chooses people to serve and lead. God acts to ensure that the hero succeeds in the end. The hero's courage and faithfulness is tested and then rewarded. All these elements are ways that the writer uses to show how God works through people and events.

The narrator of the story of Joseph uses a common formula. The story begins with introducing a hero, the hero has a patron, there is a threat, the hero goes into exile, he experiences the sufferings and trials of exile, receives help from a deity, overcomes the threat and returns back to be reconciled with his community. In the Joseph story, the hero is portrayed as someone who uses power to help the people.

The role of a deity who functions as divine helper is explicit in the Joseph story. The narrator suggests to the reader that whatever happens to Joseph is because of the

deity's providence. It is God who helps the hero succeed. The hero is aware that he is being led and does not set out on his return journey until he receives a message from the divine helper.

If we read the Joseph story as a "migrant narrative" we can say that the character "Joseph" stands for all migrants and migrant communities and their experiences. It is a story of how God delivers people from danger and leads them to a better place that God has prepared for them.

At the heart of the people's stories of their origins are descriptions of who God is and what God does. The Joseph story portrays God as someone who cares for the oppressed and one who is able to turn into good what is meant for harm. The Joseph story as written was part of another story, the story of Jacob.

When one reads that Jacob story the same patterns emerge. Jacob also goes to exile as a migrant, struggles with Laban, is given success by a divine helper, struggles with an opponent in the River Jabbok, gets his name changed to *Ish-ra-el* and returns to his family and is reconciled with them.

Other stories like that of Moses and the Pharaoh or David and Goliath show the same pattern at work. In every case, the threats are overcome, and in every case it was with the help of a deity. God is portrayed as someone who is actively involved in the people's struggle for freedom.

These narratives taken together show how God provides by blessing the people of God. The blessing to Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 is a blessing that goes far beyond his family and extends to all the nations, all "the families of the world". The words of blessing in the Hebrew view of reality, is able to release power to the world. "Blessing" describes the way

God acts towards the world. God's blessing includes everybody, even those who may be outside the line of blessing. "I will bless those who bless you". What the stories teach is that God's providence embraces all that God creates, redeems and sustains.

In the Joseph story we see this blessing falling upon Potiphar and his household, the jailer, the Pharaoh and ultimately all the people. The narrator shows how blessings come to the other characters in the story. The blessing of Pharaoh by Jacob (47:7-10), the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh (48:8-22), the blessing of the twelve tribes (49:1-27). The narrative in many places makes it clear that God blesses the house for Joseph's sake.

In the case of Potiphar the text says "And God was with Joseph. He gave him grace in the eyes of the captain of the guard house... because God was with him, and whatever he did God made it prosper." (39:7-23) Joseph is described by Pharaoh as a man "with the spirit of God in him" (41:37-45) Joseph recognizes God's presence in Potiphar's bedroom when he says "How can I do this and sin against God?"

In prison Joseph prospers because God made him prosper. Joseph is aware that God is with him, but still asks the butler to put in a good word for him. It is also clear in the narrative that it was God that was interpreting the dreams and passing on the information to Joseph. One message that keeps coming back in the narrative is that God was with Joseph. God is named as someone who faithfully companions the hero during his most challenging moments.

The Joseph Story places Jacob in the wilderness of Beersheba. (Gen. 46:1) and from this point of origin he will migrate to an unknown and un-named place. In 46:1-4 his journey is seen as a permanent move and there is a provision of blessing as he goes to Egypt as a "wandering Aramean" but later in the story he will ask to be buried in Hebron.

The narrative says that it was not just Jacob and his sons, wives, children, grandchildren and cattle who migrated to Egypt but “all the nations”. They came to Egypt to buy grain because there was famine in the land. Aside from the famine however, Jacob had a personal reason: “I will go down to see him (Joseph) before I die.” The author repeats this theme when Joseph reveals himself to his brothers “I am Joseph. Is my father alive?” (45:25-28).

It is in here where the narrator also indicates the role played by providence of God: “It was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.” And in 50:20, we read a clear witness to God’s action: “what you intended for harm, God intended for the good: to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

Good things came to Joseph’s household when they were re-united in Egypt and were allowed to settle in Goshen, one of the most fertile lands in the Nile delta. Ephraim and Manasseh will migrate to establish the northern kingdom. Joseph whom Jacob set apart from his brothers and who although he was youngest was treated as first-born is given Shechem as a gift from Jacob.

The narrative suggests that God sent Joseph so he can save Jacob’s family from destruction. God arranged the circumstances so that little by little God’s purpose becomes clear to all. The story begins with blessing. Jacob blesses Joseph and ends with blessing. Good comes out of intended harm. This describes the way God works in our lives. It points to many other events which brought together, opens the way for God to act, to bless and accomplish the mission of God.

The brothers’ desire to get rid of Joseph speaks to how people resist God’s purpose. They wanted to kill the dream before it becomes true. There are other instances in scripture

(e.g. Herod and the murder of the innocents) where killing happens as a way to prevent a prophecy from coming true. Joseph tells the dream anyway in a culture where people believed that the telling of a dream increases its power to manifest. As a result of one person's dream an entire family becomes conflicted and they begin to turn on each other. And then in the end, they are reconciled once again.

When called by the Pharaoh to interpret his dreams, Joseph humbly admits that it is not him but God who will give Pharaoh the answers he is looking for. God's wisdom will come to him through Joseph who will speak that word at the right time. Joseph is simply the interpreter, an agent of God who will speak the words on God's behalf. He is only a witness to *ruah elohim* the Spirit of God that is in him. The wisdom that comes through Joseph is not the result of any special training or study, it comes from God.

As dreams and their interpretation are included in this narrative and the Daniel story which is included in this chapter, I will make a brief comment on the subject. Hillel Millgram (2012:21) maintains that dreams served a decisive function in Egyptian society.⁷⁸ The Egyptians studied their dreams for direction and had highly trained dream interpreters. Dreams played an important role not just in their personal lives but even in matters of state.

One question that can be asked of this story is "What does God have to do with it?" or "What does what is going on here got to do with God?" The way we answer this question will reveal how we think and talk about God in relation to God's work in the world. How are we to relate this migrant story to our reading of migration as part of God's mission?

⁷⁸ Millgram, H. (2012) *The Joseph Paradox: A Radical Reading of Genesis 37-50*, North Carolina, McFarland and Co.

In Gen 37:17-20, when the stranger asked Joseph what he was looking for, he said “I am looking for my brothers”. Many migrants today can say the same thing. They are looking for their kin, or are rejoining family who have gone ahead of them in another country. The text however also says that they saw him from afar. Millgram (2012) suggests that the work *mirahok* suggests that the distance was not just physical but emotional as well. They no longer saw him as a brother, He had become an “other” to them. They can therefore proceed and plot to kill him. The same is true today. Migrants workers are treated unfairly because society has constructed them as “other”.

In the Joseph story (Gen. 39:2) the narrator affirms that the reason for Joseph’s success is because God was with him. When he lands in prison, the narrator repeats that assertion (Gen 39:21).

The biblical witness also suggests that providence is present even when things do not turn out in our favor. God’s protection does not mean that we are invulnerable or invincible. We know that Joseph was vulnerable to his brothers’ intentions, and to seduction by Potiphar’s wife. He came through and passed the test with God’s help.

Providence does not mean that everything will always work out as we expect. What it affirms is that regardless of the outcome, and regardless of how it looks like on the surface, God’s faithfulness is always present. God is directing creation towards God’s intention. And even when humanity *resists* God’s vision, it is not defeated by human action. God’s wisdom prevails.

God acts in and through God’s creation of which humans are a part. God continues to provide in whatever is going on. God continues to reveal Godself to all who “seek God’s

face”. And it is within this frame that one can affirm that in the Joseph story God uses a migrant to carry out God’s intention for the people.

Providence proposes that everything that happens in our reality happens under the gaze of a loving God. And even when what happens in the world cannot be said to be *caused* by God alone, but by a complex set of factors, both seen and unseen, faith communities through the ages witnessed to the hand of God directing their lives.

People in antiquity were aware that there are forces acting in the world that are totally opposed to God’s intention. They admitted to how sometimes it is difficult to discern what happens by God’s power and what happens because of the agency of “principalities and the powers”. We certainly have not found a definite answer to how God is able to honor human freedom at the same time how the world is being directed towards God’s purpose.

In the dominant social constructions of Western Christianity much emphasis has been given to God as being “almighty” and “all powerful”. God is portrayed as always being “in charge” and “in control” of whatever happens. There is however another way of looking at sovereignty and power: whatever happens is held in love by a God who is the source of every blessing. In this view, it is God’s love that is “sovereign”.

In the Joseph story this love of God is described as a well and a shade, a source of life and comfort. This love like the character Joseph in the story has branches that extend beyond walls. Providence is about God’s love having no conditions, no boundaries and open to all. The narrator pictures God love through Joseph as climbing over the wall.(Gen 49:22)

One story cannot possibly capture everything about God's sovereign love expressed as providence for God's people. But having read the Joseph story and the sub-narratives contained in it, what are we to remember? What is the story trying to teach? What does the narrator intend by telling a story of a God who rescues a boy from his brothers, companions him as a migrant through a long journey to a foreign country, arranges the circumstances so he gets to be in a position of authority, reconciles him with his family, and then uses him to further God's intention as a leader of his people?

Towards the end of the narrative it is Egypt that blesses Joseph. The Pharaoh blesses Joseph's family with many gifts and offered them the best of the land near the Nile River for them to grow their crops and their livestock. The place of blessing was called *Goshen*. They settle there until the time that God will deliver them from Egypt during the Exodus. (Gen 47:5-12). Chapters 37-50 tell the story of the family in the context of the wider family of humanity. It transitions from family history to national history, told from the perspective of what came later: the reigns of David and Solomon.⁷⁹

Joseph continues on to manage the production and distribution of food in the empire. He fulfils God's promise to Abraham and becomes a "blessing to the nations" (Gen 12:3). He named his firstborn *Manasseh* because "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house. He named his second son *Ephraim*, because "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.". He asks that he be taken out of Egypt and be buried home.

These are faith perspectives that Joseph gained in his lived experience as a migrant in Egypt. His testimony towards the end of the narrative: "What you intended for harm,

⁷⁹ Westermann, C. (1996) *Joseph: the Joseph Story in Genesis*, Minneapolis, Augsburg Fortress p.ix

God intended for good.” (Gen 50:20) affirms that the God he worshipped was someone who intends the good of all. The writers portray the Joseph story as a narrative of divine providence.⁸⁰ The climax of the story happening in Chapter 45 with an elaborate account of Jacob blessing his sons, the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel.⁸¹

The promise of blessing would not be realized if Jacob and the rest of Joseph’s brothers did not decide to migrate to Egypt and died instead because of the famine. One finds in the narrative the biblical origins of a theology of Providence⁸². The narrator in the Joseph story suggests that God achieves God’s purposes in the interplay of people, events and history. It makes the claim that the substance of God’s purpose is for life (50:20-21) and the plans of God are sure (50:25-32)⁸³

This view is shared by the authors of Ruth, Esther and Daniel. In the Joseph narrative, it finds support in statements like “..God sent me before you to preserve life..it was not you who sent me here, but God.” (Gen 45:5,8) The Joseph story must have resonated with a people who have experienced captivity and exile in Babylon and more suffering after their return to Jerusalem.⁸⁴ This after all is a story about the land: it begins in Canaan and ends in Egypt.⁸⁵

This insight into Providence does not deny the free agency of human actors. It acknowledges that there is no certainty how things will play out or where it will end up, except for the fact that God can be depended on to fulfil God’s promises. The writer of

⁸⁰ Longacre, R (2003) *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: a text-theoretical and text linguistic analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns

⁸¹ Armstrong K. (1996) *In the Beginning: A new interpretation of Genesis* NY, Random House

⁸² Milgram H.(2012) *The Joseph Paradox: A radical reading of Genesis 37-50*. Jeffereson: McFarland & Co.

⁸³ Brueggemann, W. (1982) *Genesis* Louisville: WJK Pres

⁸⁴ James Kugel (1990), *In Potiphar’s House: the interpretation of Biblical Texts*, San Francisco Harper p.81.

⁸⁵ Baucham, V. (2013) *Joseph: The Gospel of many colors: Reading an Old Story in a New Way*, Wheaton: Crossway

Joseph leaves it to the reader to decide whether or not to accept this view of God's providence. Yet another story of God's blessing and God's deliverance is told in the book called Esther.

4.2.2. The Esther Story

There are scholars that will argue that the Book of Esther does not qualify as a biblical book. It does not mention the word for "God" and it seems to even advocate the killing of one's enemies since towards the end of the story the ten sons of the villain Haman and 800 of his supporters were killed the same day he was hanged. Some read it as a theology of possibility, a willingness to gace history open to the possibility of providence even when history seems to weigh against it.⁸⁶

In the story of Esther we are presented the origins of the joyful Jewish Festival of Purim. It recalls how Esther the Queen of Persia and the King, Xerxes I (*Ahasuerus* in Hebrew) and her uncle Mordechai save the Jewish people from the threat of genocide by a royal minister referred to as Haman. Esther is portrayed as the only person who had the power to do something about the situation and to avert the death that threatens her people and herself. Mordechai tells her "Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14)

While there is theological difficulty over the fact that the narrative does not mention the word "God" directly, the text is considered as scripture for Judaism and Protestant Christianity. Esther is considered a prophet of God in Judaism. The text can be read as a story of deliverance, not just as an act of God, but as a result of the collective actions of

⁸⁶ Fox M (1991) *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*. Columbia, University of Spouth Carolina Press p.247

Esther and her allies. In light of the Jewish diaspora and the Shoah others read this story as the memory of how “Gentiles” like new Hamans seek to exterminate the Jewish people.

Some readers ask whether it can also be read as a story of how “God fails to act”, or an instance where God appears to be absent in the narrative but humans are given agency to assume responsibility for overcoming evil in the world. While there is no direct mention of “God”, one can argue that there are hints of divinity written in the actions of those who act on behalf of God’s people. We are cautioned however that reading God into this story may violate the integrity of the message it is seeking to convey. One such message could be that God does not always act in the face of evil. There are times when God chooses *not* to act or act in unexpected ways. Some link this apparent hiddenness of God to Esther’s name, as in “I will surely *astir* (hide) my face on that day....” (Deut 31:18)

The story begins with Queen Vashti entering the limelight, having been asked by the King to join his party and refusing to do so. The King is urged by Persia’s seven nobles to banish Vashti. They saw her refusal as a challenge to patriarchy and were concerned that if other women did the same thing at home with their husbands there will be chaos in the land. (1:17-18). They recommended that a law be written and that Vashti be punished (executed according to traditional Jewish accounts) for her refusal to submit to the King’s authority. Some interpret the use of *dat* (law) in this instance to be an absurdity, making the King a laughing-stock.

As the story unfolds, there is a selection process that happens and Esther is chosen to replace Vashti as Queen of Persia. The Book of Esther tells a story of liberation that came not as an “act of God” but as the result of the agency of human actors. This however does not preclude the possibility that God works through human actors. Another way of

reading the story is that its writer wants to say that the presence of God may not always be felt or evident in the way that events play out. There is therefore an obligation for human beings when this happens to step forward during these moments of seeming absence. There is always a Haman in every stage of human history.

This is where Esther can serve as a counter-narrative to the usual narrative that “God will always be there” to punish the wicked and protect the vulnerable at all times. It is a call for human responsibility to confront evil and speak truth to power. Esther as a migrant becomes a role model for migrants doing things for each other because no one else can be expected to help them if they are unwilling to help themselves. It also points to the need for migrants to join the movement for human rights that benefits the entire human community.

Tradition has it that the *Megillat Esther* (the Esther scroll) was read during the festival of Purim, when the Jewish people fasted and rejoiced as they celebrated God’s deliverance. The story reaffirms that Biblical Israel’s strength is not found in military power, but in the Lord. Their victory comes when they look to no other but keep their eyes on the Lord through prayer and fasting. It echoes Zechariah’s witness “‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” (Zech 4:6)

The Esther story can be read as a migration narrative that describes those who populate the underside of society. To be a Jew after 587 BCE was to be unhomed. Timothy Beal argues that Jewish identity in Esther is already dispersed and displaced.⁸⁷ They are referred to using words like *dal*, *ebyon*, *anu*, *ras* and *yatom*. Theologically, the word *anaw*

⁸⁷ Beal, Timothy *The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity Assimilation and Esther*, London and New York, Routledge 1997 p.33

as an adjective refers to “the moral and spiritual condition of the godly...the suffering life”.⁸⁸ It refers to those who are oppressed by society. This is so because God’s household is built on hospitality and justice. God is lovingkindness and faithfulness. (Ps 97:2) From Egypt to Sinai and from Sinai to the plains of Moab, God had clear instructions for how the migration process was going to unfold. The story portrays God as coming from “on high” (Sinai, the Mountain of God) to migrate with the people on the ground (the deserts, the Tent of Meeting).

Common threads can be found in the instructions given while migrating towards Sinai (Exodus 1-18) and then migration after Sinai (Numbers 10:11-36:13). The biblical witness offers a theology that uses the metaphor of migration (journey) to express the fact that God has a plan (ie. the Mission of God) for humanity.

In the Hebrew Bible, this plan is contained in the covenant whose primary expression is the liberation of people. The ten utterances at Sinai were a kind of roadmap for how they can grow into becoming the People of the Covenant. The author of the letter to the Ephesians likewise speaks of a *mysterion*: a plan for the fullness of time to gather all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth. (Eph 1:10)

After the covenant is cut between God and God’s people, we read narratives of faithfulness and unfaithfulness, of obedience and idolatry. It is a theology that indicates the intention for why God would free the people from oppression. It shows the role of Israel as a people set apart, a “holy” nation, to stand like priests before the world on behalf of God and to stand before God on behalf of the world (Ex 19:3-6) .

⁸⁸ Coppes, Leonard J., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Chicago, The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago), 1980, p. 682

Covenant-making prepares the people for the journey. The covenant given on the mountain prepared the rules of engagement with the Migrant God (*El Dios Migrante*) on the ground. And this becomes a much bigger story when all the nations of the world (*pan tha ethne*) which includes aliens (*parokoi*), citizens (*politao*) and foreigners (*xenoi*) gather in towards God and when the Church : *Ecclesia semper migranda* (Bedford) , journeys towards the Kingdom of God.

Perhaps the Book of Esther should belong to the genre of books on migrant resistance movements. Vashti and Mordecai both take a principled stand and disobey royal decrees. They both refuse to do what they were told. The difference is that Vashti was punished but Mordecai was not.

Silence is also form of resistance in Esther as it is in Joseph and in Daniel. Esther deconstructs the authority of the ruler and uses rare cunning to expose and defeat Haman. Vashti also had her own way of challenging patriarchy and it cost her dearly. From a migration standpoint, Joseph may not be the most appropriate role model because he was completely assimilated.

Some say that in the context of the Second Temple Period, Daniel's symbolic resistance makes him a better role model. In the narrative, he resisted acculturation by refusing to eat "foreign food". The perspective of the writers indicate that how society and its laws constructs migrants can sometimes be unpredictable and inconsistent.⁸⁹ (Slivniak 2004:142-3). One wonders whether there is also a subtle message in the narrative that in

⁸⁹ Dmitri Slivniak, (2004) *The Book of Esther: the making and unmaking of Jewish theology* in Yvonne Sherwood (ed) *Derrida's Bible (Reading a page of Scripture with a little help from Derrida)* NY Palgrave Macmillan 142-3

order to survive in captivity and exile, migrants need to collaborate with the wishes of the state and do what they are told.

4.2.2.1. A Comparison of the Esther and Joseph stories

What might happen if these two stories were read together? Did somebody take the story of Joseph and transform it into a new narrative, with a woman as lead actor? Koller believes that the author of Esther was modeled the narrative on the story of Joseph.⁹⁰ On the one hand we see Esther before the court of the King of Persia and on the other we see Joseph standing inside the court of the Egyptian Pharaoh. On the one hand, Mordecai (Est 3:1-5) refuses to prostrate himself before Haman and on the other hand there is Joseph refusing to go to bed with Potiphar's wife. (Gen 39:7) Joseph gets a prison sentence while Mordechai is forced to assimilate. Mordechai is promoted in the court of a foreign King, and Joseph occupies one of the most important positions in the Egyptian bureaucracy. Both of them will be publicly recognized for their courage and integrity. They both receive the king's signet ring. (Esther 2:7 and Gen 39:6).

Esther is caught and brought to the King's harem while Joseph is arrested on the sole testimony of Potiphar's wife and sent to prison. Esther becomes Queen of Persia while Joseph is second only to the Pharaoh of Egypt. In both stories, the lead actors, identified as Esther and Joseph use their position in service of a people's struggle for liberation.

4.2.3. The Daniel Story

The Daniel story is a court story just like Esther. Lawrence Wills describes this as a popular genre that reflects the orientation of the entrepreneurial class and probably "does

⁹⁰ Aaron Koller (2014) *Esther in Ancient Jewish Thought*, NY Cambridge University Press p.81

not extend to the lower classes”.⁹¹ (Wills:1990, 197) Daniel Smith Christopher on the other hand classifies it as resistance literature⁹² judging by the unflattering way they describe the gentile kings Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and even Darius.

Like the Joseph story, there is also mention of a “divine helper”. Daniel with God’s help is able to read dreams and is spoken of as “the only one who can interpret its meaning”. In the same way that Joseph knew that his knowledge alone was inadequate, Daniel also knows when holding Nebuchadnezzar’s dream that he needed God’s help. Daniel and his friends were seen as conduits of “the God of Heaven” and “The Most High God” who gives Daniel and his friends their victory.⁹³

Daniel like Joseph is He is described as “having the spirit of God with him”, and is “assisted by an angel” in the task of interpretation. Van der Toorn describes the protagonist as a “deported Jew who makes a career as a scholar and administrator at court, serving under various Babylonian and Persian Kings.”⁹⁴

The Babylonian invasion has been anticipated for years. Jeremiah had prophesied about it earlier. It finally happened when the Babylonian army plundered the temple and deported thousands into exile leaving only the very poor. Daniel stays in Babylon for some 70 years following the instructions of Jeremiah.

One of the first things that happens to the four migrant young men of as they were forced into exile was their names were changed by their captors. They were chosen for

⁹¹ L.M.Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion, Minneapolis:Fortress, 1990. P.197

⁹² D.L. Christopher-Smith, “The Book of Daniel” in L Keck (general editor) *The New Interpreter’s Bible* Nashville Abindon Press 1996,

⁹³ Newsom, C. *Daniel: A Commentary* (2014) Louisville: WJK Press, p.33

⁹⁴ Karel Van Der Toorn, “*Scholars at the Oriental Court: The Figure of Daniel against its Mesopotamian background*” in *The Book of Daniel*, Collin and Flint (eds)

special training so they can serve in the court.⁹⁵ Daniel becomes *Beltheshazzar*, Hananiah becomes *Shadrack*, Mishaël becomes *Meschach* and Azarah become *Abednego*. This was a way of adopting them into the Babylonian court and its culture. The change of name is a way of telling them to break with their past, renounce their former beliefs and practices, and transfer their allegiance to the God of their captors. The situation reflects circumstances during the Persian Period.⁹⁶

Their allegiance now has to be with the culture of their country of exile. Daniel which in Hebrew means “God is my judge” becomes *Beltheshazzar*, patron saint of Babylon who was identified with Marduk, head of the Babylonian Pantheon. Hananiah which means “God is gracious” is transformed into *Shedrach* “illuminated by the sun god”. Mishaël which in Hebrew meant “Who is like God”? is changed to *Meshchak* “Who is like Venus?” (or Ishtar). Azariah which meant “The Lord is my helper” becomes *Abednego*, servant worshipper of Nego, god of wisdom.

The author of Daniel expresses resistance to this subjugation. It shows his opposition to Hellenization and its negative impact of the Jewish tradition.⁹⁷ Although their names were changed the four young men remained faithful to who they were. They refused to forget their faith or change their God and this confrontation of cultures comes to a head during the incident regarding eating meat from idols.

The text says that Daniel “purposed in his heart”, decided that he would not defile himself with a portion of the king’s meat nor with his wine. Sharing the King’s food means

⁹⁵ Stefanovic Z (2007) *Daniel: Wisdom of the Wise : Commentary on the Book of Daniel* Nampa: Pacific Press, p.53

⁹⁶ Collins J (1992) *Book of Daniel* in Anchor Bible Commentary Vol 2 : New Haven, Yale University Press p.126

⁹⁷ D.S. Russell. (1981) *Daniel*, Louisville, WJK Press, p 23-4 talks about the significance of name changing in the biblical narrative. Other relevant examples is the change from *Hadassah* to Esther and Joseph taking on an Egyptian name: *Zaphenath-paneah* (Gen 41:45) . To the Hebrew, the name signifies one’s entire being.

loyalty to him and eating food consecrated for idols would mean idol worship.⁹⁸ All the young men stood their ground and refused to compromise their faith. They asked for a vegetables and water instead and ten days later, according to the text, they looked better than all the others.

The witness of the three young men in the Daniel story is in their willingness to sacrifice their lives for their faith rather than compromise it through idolatry. They are prepared to die even if they are unsure if they will be rescued. This is contained in their answer to Nebuchadnezzar's question: "What god can deliver you from my hands?" .

They said: "We have no need to answer you in the matter, for there is a God whom we serve, who is able to deliver us...and he will deliver us out of your hands O King, we will not serve your god or worship the golden image that you have set up." (3, 12-14) The story affirms that the faithful ones will be saved, but also acknowledges that God might not choose to rescue them.⁹⁹

God gives knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom and Daniel has understanding in all visions and dreams. The Chaldean priests who were astrologers led the Babylonian religious establishment. And so when the king had a dream he called on them to get proof of their powers. (2:8-9) . As Daniel slept God gave him the same dream that he had given Nebuchadnezzar. In his testimony before the royal court, Daniel tells the king how powerless and incompetent the Chaldean priests were.

Daniel tells the king that the dream is given to show him "what shall come to pass". (2:29) He will prevail over his enemies and his city will be impregnable. The colossus in

⁹⁸ IVP Women's Bible Commentary, p.422

⁹⁹ John Collins (2001) "*Current Issues in the Study of Daniel*" in The Book of Daniel, Collins and Flint eds.

human form with head of gold and breasts of silver and thighs of brass will stand, but its feet will be cut by stone (2:35). What the symbol means is that another kingdom inferior to Babylon will rule it. The kingdom will be handed over to the Medes and the Persians and they are already marching towards the city.

After this, the King recognizes that nobody else can save the young men from the furnace. He affirms Daniel's God as "revealer of mysteries" "God of Gods" and "King of all Kings" (Dan 3:47-48). This repeats the narrator's earlier witness that there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries (Daniel 2:24-30). The King makes the migrant Daniel the ruler of the whole province of Babylon. Daniel 1:9 is similar to Esther 2:9 where "favor" is the key word for survival in a Gentile court.¹⁰⁰ He promises to protect them from those who would speak against their God. Throughout the story, Daniel's consistent allegiance to God counts him among those who definitely understood God's mission (Redford 2012).

The gift of interpretation goes beyond the reading of dreams. According to the narrator of Daniel, this is not an acquired skill but a gift of God. It affirms that God is the one who reveals the mysteries of God and that the whole of history is in God's hands. In the Daniel narrative, God controls not only history but also the end of history.

When religious faith is threatened by secularity, the narrator suggests that secularity can not have the final answers. In the story, no one else is able to interpret. In both the Joseph and Daniel stories, the narrator argues that secular answers cannot compare with the wisdom that comes from God.

¹⁰⁰Kroeger C, and Evans M.J. (2002) in *Book of Daniel*, Women's Bible Commentary. Downers Grove:InterVarsity Press

In the context of exile and Empire, another way of reading the Daniel stories is as instruction or teaching for an ethnic minority on how to renegotiate identity in diaspora.¹⁰¹ It is resistance literature written in parts during the reign on Antiochus IV.¹⁰² Forced to leave the familiarity of their own culture, persons and groups will try to make meaning of their world in the absence of information that is given in familiar terms.¹⁰³ It needs to be read against the social realities of threat, power and domination during the Second Temple period. In the diaspora, the Jewish tradition was under threat of destruction.

The narrator of Daniel was offering encouragement and hope. At the same time, Daniel and three young men are being held up as symbols of resistance to foreign culture and domination. Like them, they have to be prepared to suffer rather than conform. The narrator is telling the people that if they followed their example and remain faithful to their faith, God will deliver them and will give them the wisdom and strength to overcome. God's laws must be maintained by them and they will be rewarded when they do so.

If the story of Daniel is interpreted as a tale of someone who succeeded against all odds, Collins invites attention to what this means in this context. People reading the story can take "vicarious pride in the figure of an exile who rose to the highest position in the kingdom"¹⁰⁴ (Collins:1993,44). The story can be read as an optimistic narrative that says that migrants do have a chance to achieve greatness even in a foreign land. Care must be taken however that this story is not used to promote a "believe and prosper" gospel.

¹⁰¹ Smith Christopher, D. "Prayers and Dreams: Power and Diaspora Identities in the Social Setting of Daniel's Tales" in *The Book of Daniel Composition and Reception*. Collins and Flint (eds) Leiden, Brill 2001 p.271

¹⁰² Hartmann L and De Lella A (1977) *The Book of Daniel*, NY: Dell

¹⁰³ Daniel Christopher Smith, *Prayers and Dreams*, p.269

¹⁰⁴ J.J.Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* Hermeneia: Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993,p.45

From the story of Daniel and his three male friends we now turn to the story of three women in the Book of Ruth.

4.2.4. The Stories of Ruth, Orpah and Naomi

The narrative contains themes of marriage and childbirth, widows and orphans, experiences of being “other”, and women walking together inside structures of patriarchy. Reading this story through the lens of migration tells of powerlessness and vulnerability experienced by many migrants, often discriminated on the basis of gender or country of origin. As stated earlier, how Israel treats those who are strangers, widows and orphans is held up by the Torah as tests of their faithfulness as a people. This makes the Story of Ruth, like those of Joseph, Daniel and Esther helpful towards understanding the significance of “the migrant” in the Biblical Narrative.

The story of Ruth shows how human movement is directed by material, social and historical conditions under which the migrant exists. Understand the migrant requires interrogating the historical conditions that give rise to migration in the first place. It helps to know about the history of their culture and faiths and the societies they come from. These data are helping in examining the different forms of social organization that are created as migrants respond to the challenges they face.

The story opens with Naomi wanting to move to Bethlehem but her sons identified as Mahlon and Chilion wanted to stay in Moab. Mahlon and Chilion are married to Orpah and Ruth. In the next scene both sons die, leaving two more widows in addition to Naomi. And the journey begins for these three widowed women. It is described as a *lashuv* : journey of “return”. Naomi leaves “the place where she has been living ... to return to the land of Judah” (Ruth 1:7).

Naomi's return bears fruit in the son that would come from the union of Ruth and Boaz. Obed is described in the text as father of Jesse who was father of David, therefore an ancestor of David. He is described by the women of Bethlehem as one who will renew Naomi's life in her old age. Obed reminds me of children of migrants who "parent their parents", keeping familial bonds of culture alive in many households in foreign lands.

It is interesting that while some cultures elevate their Kings to describe the greatness of their pedigree, the writer of Ruth chooses to lift up the ordinariness of Obed, as someone born of a landed farmer and a commoner from Moab. Daniel Carroll suggests that we are Obed.¹⁰⁵

The greatest of Israel's kings is reported to have been descended from a migrant woman from Moab. Moabites were discriminated against, because they were remembered as a people who refused assistance to Israel. In this particular narrative however Ruth, the Moabite woman is offered "kindness to kin" by Boaz.

The politics of assimilation declared that Moabites were never welcome and are never to be included in the community. While their law stated that "Moabites shall never be admitted into the household of God because they did not help with food and water" (Deut 23:4-5) in the narrative Ruth experiences a more radical hospitality. Ruth herself is portrayed as a model migrant, familiar with symbolic meanings of loss and mourning.¹⁰⁶

In many ways the Book of Ruth can be described as a "Book of Hope" overcoming despair and destitution. The author of Ruth speaks to the reshaping of Jewish identity in the

¹⁰⁵ Daniel Carroll, *Ruth* IBMR Vol.39 No.4 October 2015 p.185-188

¹⁰⁶ Honig B. (1997) *Ruth the Model Émigré: Mourning and the Symbolic Politics of Immigration*, Political Theory Vol 25 No 1 pp,112-136

post-exilic period.¹⁰⁷ In this journey Naomi asks her friends to call her “*Mara*” (bitter) because she felt that God (Shaddai/Almighty) has laid a heavy hand on her. The hand of God has gone out against me (1:13) She is like the husk left after the kernel has been taken out (1:19).

Full and sweet when she left but empty and bitter when she returned. She is overwhelmed with grief as she returns home to Bethlehem in a journey described today as “reverse migration”. She returns home carrying back memories of what she feels is undeserved suffering.

For Ruth on the other hand, it was a journey of leaving everything to go to a place that she does not know, to embrace a people that was not her own. Naomi journeys back home, while Ruth finds a *new* home for herself. Upon Naomi’s suggestion, she asks Boaz to “spread his robe” over her, after he describes her as an “*eshet chayil*”: a woman of valor.

She forces a male relative to act as her redeemer (“*go-el*”) and give her a son. Boaz becomes her protector and under his wings, she finds refuge. Echoes of God as *Go-el Yisrael* (Redeemer of Israel) can be heard throughout the narrative. God as “agent” of a people’s redemption from oppression. God who deals death and gives life as well (Deut 32:39). God makes Ruth conceive (4:13) opening her womb to new life, by giving birth to *Obed*, (i.e. “him who serves”).

We are presented with a story of *reut* (Ruth:friendship) and also “redemption” following Jewish tradition of “*go-el*” and *chesed*, the kindness of God that does not fail us. From another point of view, Ruth and Naomi and Orpah by “walking together” (*ki itakh*

¹⁰⁷ Chan L. (2014) *The Hebrew Bible and Discourse on Migration* in Asian Horizon, Vol 8.No.4 p.675

nashuv “we will return with you”) were also redeeming each other as they were constructing a different way of being “family”.

Migration is in many ways a communal act of a people. Often this journey is made by people with no community of record, what we today call “stateless persons”. They are unsure about being accepted in the places they are going to and they run into countries where they are not welcome. What is encouraging in the Ruth story is the assurance that God will not leave us “without next of kin” (4:14).

There is irony in how the narrator constructs Bethlehem, (i.e. the “house of Bread”) as a place of famine, fear and panic. The theme of providence and blessing continues: Bethlehem becomes a place of blessing for Naomi and Ruth . Ruth and Orpah were blessings to Naomi and Naomi blessed her daughters-in- law because they have done *chesed* (covenant love) towards her. Boaz and Ruth are blest with a son: Obed.

For Ruth, clinging to Naomi was her way of honoring her dead husband Mahlon and fulfilling a “fever in the bones” by attaching herself to her husband’s mother, saying “only death can divide us”. She is described as better to Naomi “than seven sons”.

The scroll called “Ruth” is read as a celebration of *Shavout* (i.e. covenant) . It is how this text is used in many Jewish households. God’s *chesed* (covenant love) is mirrored in the actions of Boaz, Ruth and Orpah as well, even when she decided to not return with Naomi. Read “against the grain”, some scholars view Orpah as more faithful by choosing to stay with her family of origin, her “mother’s house.”

Orpah stands out as the one who chose to remain in *beit immah* (her mother’s home), continuing with the traditions of her ancestors. The mother’s house is prized in this culture as a place of wisdom and identity and security. One wonders why Orpah’s voice

seems to have been silenced in many commentaries on Ruth. It seems like she disappears from the scene almost as soon as the story opens.

All we are shown as readers is “the back of her neck” (i.e. Orpah). How is it that Orpah is often portrayed as inferior to Ruth? Is there a subliminal suggestion here that it is better to assimilate than stick to one’s own traditions? It has been said that those migrants who are exiled from their homelands speak the truth differently from those who remain at home. This could be because migration has been known to change the way people perceive reality.

The theme of blessing we read about in previous stories continues in this book: Ruth blesses Naomi by promising to go where she goes, Orpah blesses his mother’s house by staying to preserve it, Boaz blesses Ruth for her integrity.

God and People together in covenant

The relation between God and Israel is sealed by *shavout* (“covenant”). In Judaism what this means is that the God and people, the divine and the human, work hand in hand. They are bonded together by a covenant that is forever. Human cooperation is needed to fulfil God’s divine purposes in history. Welcoming the “stranger, widow and orphan” is a way of partnering with the poor whom God loves.

Those that were redeemed from slavery in the land of Egypt are required to perform the ceremonies (Lev 19:34). to remember the giving of the Torah, the symbol of God’s covenant with the people. It celebrates their memories of God’s blessing and God’s deliverance.

Susanna Snyder (2012:163) reads Ruth as a narrative “produced by those inhabiting an ecology of faith” calling people to be “open, welcoming and compassionate ...

encouraging the recognition and embrace of the stranger as a life-bringer.”¹⁰⁸ She argues that the narrative sees the outsider not simply as one who requires help, but also as one who brings new and God-given life.¹⁰⁹ Peter Lau sees it as resistance literature, a protest against the ethnocentrism that was central to Israel’s identity.¹¹⁰

4.3. Biblical Themes in Migration Narratives

Paul Ricoeur in his work on *Time and Narrative* , emphasizes the importance of the storyline or the plot in making meaning out of a narrative. The plot is that discernible sequence we see in stories: from setting, actors, conflict, climax and resolution.

It is where we see how everything that happens contributes to the narrative as a whole. And ultimately, according to Ricoeur, it is plot that mediates the discourse into the lived experience of the reader. Hence, his emphasis on plot before characters.

In reading a story then, we discover the narrator’s “way of knowing”. We are able to com-prehend, (i.e.pull together) various pieces from the material to figure out what the narrator might be wanting to tell us. If we read it well then we are able to discern a situation and a *phronesis* a wisdom that leads to practical action towards life. As far as Ricoeur is concerned, the task of interpretation is completed, only when the meaning proposed by the narrative is actualized and acted upon by the reader. The understanding of the part leads to a new and better understanding of the whole.

A narrative understanding according to Ricoeur is one that leads to greater knowledge of the self. This results through a re-description or a re-construction of one’s

¹⁰⁸ Susanna Snyder,(2012) *Asylum Seeking, Migration and Church*, Burlington VT. Ashgate Publishing Co.

¹⁰⁹ Snyder, p.167

¹¹⁰ Lau, P. (2011) *Identity and Ethics in the Book of Ruth: A Social Identity Approach* Berlin: Hubert and Co.

“narrative identity”. Every narrative has the capacity to open us up to new possibilities for practical action.

Ricoeur makes the claim that we cannot live, our own lives “directly”. We can only do so through the mediation of signs, symbols and narratives. Narrative identity is that which answers the question “Who did this?” and “Who is the one of acts?”. One understands the self only in relation to other selves. In this sense, we can say that all narratives are “relational”: they connect us to the wholeness. They complete the hermeneutic circle.

Themes refer to concrete images that reoccur in more than one story and that help connect and inform the reading of the stories¹¹¹. (Alter:1981,95) What common themes can be discerned from reading these four narratives ? What faith perspectives were expressed by the migrants in the story and by the plot of the narratives themselves? What themes emerge that describe how reality or God might look like from the point of view of the migrant?

These narratives can be read in any number of ways. They can be interpreted as stories of family and kinship, law and ritual, gender and class, xenophobia and ethnocentrism, land and covenant, inclusion and exclusion. Of the many possible themes, five are chosen here for discussion in relation to the topic of this dissertation: Blessing and Promise, Vulnerability and Adversity, Transformation, Exile and Famine, Dreams and Interpretation.

4.3.1. Blessing and Promise

¹¹¹ Robert Alter, (1981) *Art of Biblical Narrative*, New York: Basic Books p.95

This theme goes back to the original blessing which God promises to Abraham. (Gen. 12,3) In that blessing, a promise is made to Abraham of land and descendants. The blessing however extends beyond him and his descendants to all the nations, all the families of the earth. The blessing comes with a promise of protection from harm : Those who curse you, I will curse. God's response in the four migrant stories takes the form of protection. God helps them (Joseph, Esther, Daniel, Ruth) by protecting them. With God's protection, the migrants are able to overcome what gets in the way of the blessing being fulfilled in them.

The actors in these stories affirmed their identities as believers in whose lives God's blessing was made visible. They confessed God's providence as being the reason for their "redemption/liberation". Their stories show the diversity of ways that the God acts in history on behalf of God's people. Narratives are sometimes deliberately written to be read and heard in more than one way. Overall, the narratives tell the story of how the promise of blessing to Abraham and all the families of the earth is fulfilled.

God accompanies the people of God on their journey across deserts and rivers, famine (Ruth) and fiery furnaces (Daniel), jail (Joseph) and gallows (Esther), because they are God's own. It is with the help of other people that God enters into their lives: Joseph's jailer, Daniel's handler, Esther's King and her uncle Mordecai, Ruth's husband Boaz and mother-in-law Naomi.

4.3.2. Vulnerability and Adversity

Joseph is almost killed, was sold as a slave, falsely accused and goes to jail. Esther faces a threat to her life and death of her people. Ruth and Naomi and Orpah are widowed at a time when there was famine in the land and Daniel faces torture in a fiery furnace. The

four narratives include life threatening situations (eg famine in Ruth, persecution in Esther) often accompanied by loss , (eg. death of husbands in Ruth, exile in Joseph and Daniel).

In the four stories, vulnerability is what makes the migrants totally dependent on God's providence and protection. In the story of Israel, there are special names given to the vulnerable beyond widows and orphans. The character Ruth declares herself as a *nokriya*, a transient with no rights as opposed to a *ger* who was considered a resident-alien. It has to be remember that the Hebrews traced their ancestry to another migrant Jacob, described in the sacres texts as "a wandering Aramean". The strong mandate to show kindness to sojourners, strangers, widows and orphans comes from within the tradition. Among the vulnerable, their powerlessness becomes the path to faithfulness. In all the stories, God is shown as someone who stands on the side of the weak and the powerless against the strong and the powerful.

Daniel Carroll (2013) describes what it is like to be a migrant back then. With no government or safety nets,with no kin to turn to in case of need and no right to own land in an agrarian economy, migrants soon became the most vulnerable people in society. Israel's own history of migration and oppression led them to create laws to protect migrants along with the poor, the widows and the orphans. There were laws that made sure that the migrant was paid a fair wage, treated fairly, and allowed to participate in Jewish festivals.

Adversity and setback appear to be part of the plot of every narrative. Each of the characters are tried and tested through adversity. Joseph was thrown into the well, rescued and then sold as a slave. Esther was in constant threat because of her ethnicity. She and Mordecai suffer from Haman's cruel plans. Daniel along with his three friends was dragged into exile and his friends were thrown into the furnace. Ruth was forced to migrate with

Naomi in search of food and land. In all the narratives the migrants go through adversity before they are rewarded with honor. They learn from their setbacks and are tested in their resolve. The migrants are assured of God's blessing throughout the journey.

The narratives portray the migrants as having to face complex ethical situations that require practical wisdom : Joseph being seduced by Potiphar's wife, Daniel and his friends being required to eat meat for idols, Ruth having to lie down at Boaz feet, Esther faced with a threat created by Haman. John Barton (2000) suggests that stories like these "disclose possibilities and problems of being human in God's world". God teaches the heroes how to navigate difficult situations. The heroes on the other hand acknowledge God's sovereign power and pray to God for guidance

4.3.3. Transformation.

As is the case in many hero stories, the hero in the narrative is transformed by events that happen, even if some are not of their choosing. Joseph is transformed from shepherd to official, the brothers are transformed after Joseph reveals himself to them, the nation (Egypt and the Pharaoh) itself is transformed when Joseph was put in charge. Nebuchadnezzar is transformed by the interpretation of his dreams, Daniel and the three young men were transformed by their exile into Babylon. This transformation is alluded to in the narrative when it describes them as being given new names. Ruth is transformed from daughter-in-law to lifelong companion for Naomi and wife to Boaz and mother to Obed. Orpah is transformed by her decision to go back to her mother's house. Esther is transformed when she becomes Queen of Persia and she steps up to confront Haman and convince King Asahuerus to save the Jews from annihilation.

The lead characters in the narratives all find a way to adapt themselves into the new culture. Joseph takes on an Egyptian name: *Zaphenath-Paneah*, marries an Egyptian woman and gives their children Egyptian names: *Manasseh and Ephraim*. Ruth, a foreigner from Moab is married to Boaz and becomes a Jewish convert. Esther was so Persian they could not recognize her true Jewish ethnicity. She becomes the Queen of Persia. Daniel became part of the royal court of Nebuchadnezzar and served many years under a succession of rulers.

The migrants encounter with a new culture, the challenges that came from migration, and their experience of God as migrants becomes transformative. Many of the texts themselves according to Biblical scholars were written when Israel itself was undergoing deep transformation. This is attested to in the scriptures and in texts written during the inter-testamental period.

The stories of Joseph and Esther, Daniel and Ruth show how people were transformed by migratory experiences. All of the stories can be read as stories of transformation and as calls to action.

4.3.4. Exile and Famine

The theme of exile is in some way present in all the narratives. The debate continues on whether exile was a historical event or a mythopoetic construct. There are those who argue that there are no direct evidence of exile in the biblical record, although there are hints of it in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Second Isaiah and Psalms 79 and 137. There are also varied views on what exile is: one view is that it is “punishment for sin”, another is that exile was the common practice among warring tribes who kill or capture their enemies

and use them as slaves. The experience of exile like similar events in the Old Testament narrative, begins in suffering and ends in victory.

Exile is how the people came to understand the God who walked ahead of them. Joseph goes to exile in Egypt, Esther and Mordechai and the Jewish people are exiles in Persia, and Daniel and his three friends along with many others were taken to Babylon. According to biblical scholars, two of the narratives (Esther and Daniel) are written in the context of the Diaspora, and the stories are addressed to people living under domination by foreign empires.

People are forced to move by both exile and famine with both events resulting in migration to a new place. The plot of the story of Ruth begins with famine and the death of their husbands. It ends in harvest in Bethlehem and the birth of the boy Obed that will become the ancestor of Israel's greatest king: David. The transition from "the days of the judges" to the establishment of the monarchy comes through the agency of a migrant woman from the plains of Moab, an outsider to Israel. The story of Joseph says that famine is the reason the brothers migrated to Egypt. This was a difficult decision because leaving the land compromised the intention of God which they thought was confined to the border of the land of Canaan.¹¹² God saves Egypt and "all the nations" from famine through Joseph's leadership.

4.3.5. Dreams and Interpretation

In Joseph and Daniel we read about dreams that require interpretation. Both of them depend on a "divine helper" whom they acknowledge as the source of their ability to read the language of dreams. The ability to read dreams brought both of them to positions of

¹¹² John Beck, (2008) *God as Storyteller: Seeking Meaning in the Biblical Narrative*, St Louise, MO Chalice Press.

power. In the culture of the Ancient Near East, dreams are one of the languages that the deities use to communicate messages to humans. In the stories they were used as a way of affirming divine sovereignty. The narrator asserts that dreams come from God and only God can interpret dreams. Interpretation is not an acquired human skill but a gift from God. Interpretation in the narratives go beyond reading dreams. It was also about seeing what lies beyond appearances and trust in the God that is able to reveal the mysteries of life. The migrants in the narratives witness to this in the way they lived their faith journey.

The texts invite its reader to interpret the narrative based on the symbols that are found there. There are symbolic names of characters like Esther, Naomi, Elimelech, Obed and Daniel, Mahlon and Chilion. There are symbolic names of places: Bethlehem and Moab and Goshen and symbolic material objects like signet rings (Joseph and Haman), the fiery furnace in Daniel, the threshing floor in Ruth, and Joseph's coat of many colors.

Symbols according to Ricoeur have a literal meaning and a secondary deeper meaning. He suggests that one can only get to the second by going through the first. Ruth migrates from Moab to Bethlehem. What is the significance of Bethlehem beyond its literal meaning of "House of Bread"? What is the significance of opening the story with *Elimelech* (God is my King) and the genealogy at the end that points to Israel's greatest king: David? Why is it that the child born of Ruth and Boaz was named "Obed" (servant) who will be the ancestor of a King named David?

4.4. Migrant Narratives and Missiology

These themes repeat themselves in the entire narrative of scripture. Van Engen (1996) describes it as a "Tapestry of Scripture" where God has woven the various vertical

threads (i.e. themes and motifs) in many different cultural contexts and where the horizontal threads represent the ways we interpret them.¹¹³

All of the stories describe how God is faithful to the promise and pours blessing upon blessing in the midst of vulnerability and adversity. The migrants are transformed in the midst of experience of exile and famine. They interpret these events and recognize the hand of God present in all of them. The compassion of God normed their behavior as a migrant people to act in compassionate ways. They became known for their ethic of welcoming the strangers and offering hospitality towards migrants.

The four migrant narratives speak to how God's mission is enacted in a diversity of ways using human actors. Each story including Esther which had no direct mention of God can be read as stories of how God blesses the people. Boaz acting as *go-el* on Ruth's behalf is an image of the God who redeems. In this case, the person being redeemed was a Moabite, a person who did not belong but was chosen by God. She becomes the mother to *Obed* (servant of God) an ancestor of Israel's greatest King: David.

The stories as told and interpreted by their narrators speak to the many ways that God comes to migrants in the story, all of whom share experiences of displacement and uprooting, vulnerability and adversity. The experiences of exile, famine and migration cause them to depend on God all the more. In the process they understand themselves and God in new ways.

Those who read and hear the stories are being invited to include themselves in the story. The choice of how and where is left to them to decide. While there seems to be a diversity of storylines, there is a thread in all of them that leads to God.

¹¹³ Charles Van Engen, (1996) *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books

A deeper reading of the narratives will reveal this unity of intention that gathers all of Joseph and Esther, Daniel and Ruth in service of God's mission. All of them hear God's word, all act upon it and all experience God's blessing and share that blessing with others.

Migration narratives provide a biblical and missiological framework for engaging the issue of migration in the world today. The migrations and migrants then are arguably not the same as migration and globalization as experienced today. There are nuances that need to be honored and naïve literal parallels that need to be avoided. The present context of migration and globalization needs to be acknowledged.

These four migrant narratives speak to what can happen to men and women who migrate. Joseph, Daniel, Esther and Ruth were faced with the decision of whether to assimilate the norms and conform to the expectations of the secular culture. Today the choice of whether to assimilate or not is a decision that every migrant needs to make. In the narratives, sometimes they assimilated and at other times they refused to comply when doing so meant being unfaithful to their God. (eg. the three young men in the Daniel story).

At various times in their history as a people, Israel constructed its identity through a narrative of exile (i.e. forced migration). They perceived themselves as bearers of suffering and salvation for other people. They found inspiration in the image of the suffering servant in Isaiah that became a light to the nations. They portrayed their God as someone who intervened on their behalf when they were being taken advantage of by their oppressors.

Biblical scholarship suggests that the Old Testament in its canonical form came about as storytellers gathered narratives of a people responding to the trauma of exile. Migrants forced into exile in Babylon asked questions of tradition, religion and homeland. Their experience of exile called them back to God. At first they named their experience as

a punishment from God but later they saw it as a blessing. The same pattern can be seen in texts where the story begins with lament (Psalm 137) and at the end turns into praise. (Second Isaiah).

The same experience of displacement and disorientation in the biblical narratives are also present in the stories of today's migrants. They too are confronted with oppression, unequal relations of power, racial and gender discrimination, changing norms and shifting family dynamics. They remember all the things they did back home and their homesickness sometimes makes it difficult for them to function in the new places they live in.

Uprooted from the places they were born and the places they called home, they feel a need to create new worlds of meaning around their old stories. They begin to re-describe their world to themselves as a way of acquiring new narrative identities (Ricoeur 1988:247) They realize that it is possible to weave their stories in a different way.¹¹⁴

For Ricoeur, the great value of theological hermeneutics is the concept of "the world of the text". When text becomes autonomous of the one who wrote the text (author) the one who receives the text (the reader) and that to which the text refers to (the referent)¹¹⁵ then only the text remains. The text of migration and God's mission addresses the world today and seeks a response. Interpretation according to Ricoeur is not complete until there is that response.

Migration understood as narrative is a place where we can locate God's mission in the world today. It is a place where the church is being summoned not just to be present but

¹¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, (1988) *Time and Narrative III*, translated by K. Blamey and D. Pellamer Chicago, University of Chicago Press p. 248

¹¹⁵ Emmanuel Falque, (2016) *Crossing the Rubicon*, Reuben Shanks (trans). NY Fordham University Press, p.33

to take a stand. As Christianity moves from Western Europe and North America to the Global South, the old texts are being transformed. Migrants are changing the story and a great transformation is happening “from sea to sea”.¹¹⁶

The Christianity that was carried by migrants from Jerusalem to Antioch and travellers from Cyprus and Cyrene, and Greek speaking Jewish god-fearers (i.e. gentiles who attended the synagogue), now continues to be transported by migrants elsewhere around the world. Migration has become a contemporary site for missiological reflection (Bevans 2010) as we seek to discover its significance in light of God’s revelation.

Does the study of narratives of migration in human history and the history of Christianity and the Biblical texts have implications for our understanding of Missiology and the Mission of God? Narrative as Paul Ricoeur theorized is what gives shape to time and makes it human.¹¹⁷

Reading migrant narratives like Joseph, Esther Daniel and Ruth tells us something about who we are. The thing that defines their narrative identity is their attitude towards what was happening to them. Their faith perspectives were *envuelto* (wrapped) in the narrative of a God who provides. What can missiologists learn about God from the experiences of people who have been displaced and those forcibly uprooted from their homes?

¹¹⁶ “From sea to sea” a phrase from Psalm 72 became the official motto of Canada in 1921. Recently as a gesture of inclusion for First Nations in the Northern Territories and the significance of the Arctic in geopolitics, the motto in use is “from sea to sea to sea”. What is often missed is the message of the rest of the psalm: they shall deliver the needy when they call, the poor, the weak and those who have no helper. (Ps 72:12)

¹¹⁷ Kevin Van Hooser (1990) *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p.191

Can the Daniel and Esther narratives be read as stories of migrants resisting idolatry (eg globalization) and patriarchy? Can the character Joseph be an example of how migrants can be co-opted by the dominant culture? Should we be looking at Ruth who migrated with Naomi or should we be holding up Orpah instead, as the truly faithful person, the one who stayed behind in her country of origin? Particular readings of history and the biblical texts allow for different interpretations depending on context.

The narratives of Joseph and Daniel, Esther and Ruth speak to the experience of marginality experienced by people in diaspora. They reflect the trauma of those who are forced to flee their homelands for reasons of famine, war or environmental disasters. All these experiences have significant impacts on the migrants health and well-being.

These themes are present in the biblical narrative and in the new narratives that migrants across the world are writing today with their lives. If migration is to become the optic for understanding the Mission of God in the world, there is need to study migration more deeply. Is it possible to create a “new ecclesiological construct” from the perspective of migration?¹¹⁸ (Espin 2006:47)

There is no one narrative of migrants and migration that can be universalized as true for all migrants everywhere. In a globalized world, what we are seeing is an infinite irreducibility of discourse. The experiences of one set of migrants are different from and sometimes cannot be compared with another. Missiology needs to be reframed in order to make it more open to engaging these differences.

¹¹⁸ Orlando Espin, *Immigration and Theology: Reflections of an Implicated Theologian*, Perspectivas : Occasional Papers Fall 2006, p.47

At some point a clear theo-ethical stance needs to be made, because migration is a contentious issue especially as it touches matters regarding inclusion/exclusion, belonging/non belonging and the important matter of human rights. Skeggs (2004:49) argues that mobility and control over mobility reflect and reinforce power. Mobility is a resource to which not everyone has an equal relationship.

Those who are able to travel at will are privileged that they can do so. Many other people in the world do not share the same freedom of movement that others enjoy. Not everyone who wants to migrate is able to do so given the constraints imposed by nation-states and not everyone who has migrated is able to come home again. Some have no homes to go back to. Many migrants are still looking for their “promised land” and realize that this is a “perilous journey” (Campese and Groody, 2008)

The narratives included in this study are part of a faith tradition. As part of a bigger narrative about God’s relationship with the world, these stories were told and re-told, recalled and recited, represented in art and liturgy through the centuries. Many tools have been developed to bring new understandings and do more adequate readings of these stories. It is interesting to note for example how a particular genre like “apocalyptic” literature (eg Daniel) frames suffering. In the prayer of Daniel, he takes on and repents for the sins of his people.

The other thing this type of literature does is it holds oppressors accountable to God. This genre speaks of hope when it declares that the present reality is not all there is. God has planned something better for each of us and all of us and God’s compassion knows no boundaries. We are told that most apocalyptic literature was written during a time of national crisis and political upheaval.

The apocalyptic tradition according to Boring (2012:105) is pervasive in the New Testament and it is difficult to appreciate it without reading it from within this context.¹¹⁹ This genre also presents people as exiled and migrating to return to their new home. They are in this sense “resident aliens”. (Hauerwas and Willimon, 1989) Here as in the Old Testament, we see writers working to make sense of God’s providence in human history. They proclaim that no one can claim sovereignty or finality but God who alone knows what is at the end of the journey.

4.5. Summary and Conclusions

I have done a critical reading of the four narratives paying particular attention to the faith perspectives of the narrator as expressed by the characters and the way the stories were structured. I related to the characters as migrants who were met by God at some point in their life-journeys. This encounter with God transformed their lives completely and changed its trajectory not just for them but for the people they were with. The hermeneutic I employed focused on the final form of the text and the stories were read in the context of the entire biblical narrative.

I engaged the texts as “word of God” received and celebrated, passed on and handed down by faith communities through the centuries. I tested my theology against the narrative itself approaching the narrative as theology.

I am aware that there are those who argue for the western canon and the ways of thinking and believing that are based on it, and there are others who reject the canon as “colonial hegemony”. There are others who want to create a post-modern canon that includes the continuing revelation of God for our time.

¹¹⁹ M. Eugene Boring (2012) *Introduction to the New Testament: History, Literature, Theology*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press p.105

In the new anthropology there is no “thing” or “things” out there that is the object of our interpretation. What is there is a discourse and discourse is not a “thing” but a process that we are all engaged in. No single hermeneutical lens is able to exhaust the manifold layers of meaning that can be found in these texts. None of the characters in the four narratives are described “objectively” by a narrator. The text and the narrators are coming from a social location that we can only guess. They have reasons why they told the story in a certain way. The way God is represented in the stories are constructions by the narrator and the community.

Central to post-colonial readings of the Bible is a critique of whose voices are included and/or excluded from these writings. There is also the question of who benefits from reading these sacred stories in a certain way and not another. The assumption is that the writers were not just reporting or recording but were also trying to persuade others to accept a certain point of view. For example, do the narratives of Joseph, Daniel and Esther support the view that in order to survive one has to cooperate with the captors? Are Mordechai and Vashti presented as role models for civil disobedience to royal decrees?

While it may be true that these texts were a “social construction” of the writers influenced by the dominant theologies of the time, what is also evident in my reading of the texts is a certain coherence in the way that the four stories witnessed to the people’s experience of God as helper, healer, companion and protector.

I have chosen to read the four narratives as migrant narratives. Other readings using other approaches may interpret these narratives differently. I stand by the view that the biblical texts are not just “stories” but also “scripture” understood as living and active texts that were reflected upon and prayed with and celebrated by communities of faith.

These stories were written and performed to celebrate, inspire, encourage, explain and persuade. When we pray these scriptures as they did, we experience the love of God that is inscribed in the narrative. In Mayan theology, this is described as the moment when Heart of Heaven and Heart of Earth meet in us.¹²⁰

My interest as a student of mission and migration goes beyond how the texts were written, performed, heard and interpreted. I am persuaded that the Bible has the ability to interpret itself and that one part of the story can help explain another part. I continue to search these scriptures for the ways that people are met by God and how they interpreted their experience of God. The faith perspectives of the narrator are reflected not just in what the actors say but also in the way the entire narrative is constructed. As we have seen, there are moments when one story seems to echo another story, as was the case between Joseph and Esther.

I argued that there was a narrative of Providence that run through all the stories. They asserted that there is no evil that God cannot redeem (Joseph), there will be times when God seems absent (Esther), God redeems us through others (Ruth) and God helps us interpret what goes on (Joseph and Daniel). The stories witness to the need for prayer in order to interpret the ways of God. As Daniel prays, the angel appears and prepares him to interpret the handwriting on the wall or the Pharaoh's dreams in the case of Joseph. In every story, the lead character devises a strategy to deal with the challenge and God helps to bring it to completion.

From another perspective, the four stories are all about God and they demonstrate how God engages human beings in service of God's purpose. It shows how nobody is able

¹²⁰ See *Heart of Heaven, Heart of Earth* by Sexton and Bizarro (1999) Smithsonian Institution Press for stories about Ruc'ux Caj and Ruc 'ux Uleep among the Mayans of Tzutuhil.

to predict what God does and how the mission of God will be realized. All the stories affirm that the providence of God is experienced as blessing, and that it comes through other people even from those who do not believe. They are given not to be owned and kept but to be shared with others. People are blessed so that they in turn can become God's blessing to others.

CHAPTER 5

MIGRANT WORKERS' FAITH IN THEIR OWN WORDS

*Who says theology has to be ideas and concepts? Who has decided that theology has to be doctrines, axioms, propositions? God is not concept, God is story. God is not an idea, God is presence. God is not hypothesis, God is experience. God is not principle, God is life.*¹²¹ - C.S. Song

¹²¹ C S Song, (2011) *In the Beginning were stories, not texts : Story Theology* Eugene , Wipf and Stock p.6

See Jesus Christ work in mysterious ways and once he plant that seed in your head, then you is you. You got that thing. You can't be nobody else. That's why this name, migrant worker, stands tall."¹²² – Daniel Rothenberg

In this chapter, I will present narratives of how Mexican migrant farm workers I interviewed expressed their faith perspectives in their own words. All of the names as well as identifying characteristics of people and places have been changed to protect the identity of informants.

These narratives are based on what I heard the migrant workers tell me. They are taken from fieldnotes, participant observation and verbatim transcripts of interviews with migrant workers in Southwestern Ontario. I write the actual Spanish word or expression in italics where appropriate and provide an English translation to help the reader. I present the narratives here *sin comentario* (without comment) and without analysis.

Antonio

He told me how back home in Salvatierra, he was a *conductor de autobus* (bus driver). That was a year after he was employed as a *taxista* (taxi-driver) in Mexico City. Some nights he would come home really tired with a back ache. He goes to sleep and would dream of bad things that might happen to him on the road. He has heard stories of buses being held up by *ladrones* (thieves) at night, and sometimes even in broad daylight. These thieves are not scared because they have made friends with the local police.

He said that one day he got into a very bad accident and after that he became very

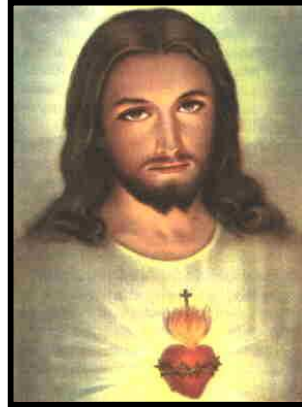
¹²² Daniel Rothenberg, *With these hands: The hidden World of Migrant Farmworkers today*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press 1998 p.3

asustado (fearful) for his life. When a friend told him about an opportunity to go to Canada, he was immediately interested. He got even more excited when he learnt from his wife that she had a cousin in Mexico City who knew people who can help facilitate his acceptance into the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) of the Canadian Government.

Figure 1-1



When I showed him the photograph Figure 1-1 of an *altarcito* (home altar) he said that his family has something similar back home. There were not as many images and *santos* (saints) as the ones shown in the picture. His wife has pasted religious pictures on the walls of their living room, the biggest being a framed poster of the Virgin of Guadalupe, whom she referred to as *madrecita* (beloved mother) . The image was prominently displayed so that everyone who came to the house can see it. *Madrecita* can also see everyone and watches over everything in the house. She protects them, keeps them safe and brings them *buena suerte* (good luck).

Figure 1-2

His devotion of choice however, is to the *Sagrado Corazon de Jesus* (Sacred Heart of Jesus). He showed me this prayer card Figure 1-2 that had the image of a radiant Jesus figure with long hair, an exposed heart surrounded by a crown of thorns with flames and a small cross on top. The figure is illuminated at the back of the head and around the heart area. He said that when he prayed he liked the way Jesus seemed to be looking straight back at him.

He shared how everyday he opens his *cartera* (wallet) and does the sign of the cross before he starts driving his bus. This image was given to him by his parish priest and he prays to it for good luck and good health for himself and his family. In his prayers he includes *nuestros vecinos, familiares y amigos* (our neighbors, relatives and friends). He has complete *confianza* (trust) in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

His wife always makes sure to light the *veladora* (votive candle) on the home altar every night for an hour before dinner. He had installed a small red light near the candle just in case they run out and they are not able to replace it immediately. He reminds his wife to light the candle and is upset when she forgets. Her wife goes to a nearby shrine barefoot

once a year and moves *de rodillas* (on her knees) on the middle aisle from the door of the church to the shrine.

She goes to Mass every Sunday with his two daughters. She follows the priest's advice to go to confession and communion regularly. When I asked him whether he goes with them, he said "*de vez en cuando*" (sometimes). He does not go regularly because he finds going to church on Sunday a waste of time and the masses tend to be boring and repetitive. His wife says he must have many sins because he does not go to confession.

If in Salvatierra, he would go to church once every two months, in Canada he goes to church every Sunday without fail. He says the *misa para los migrantes* (Mass for the Migrants) that he attends in the Catholic church he goes to on Sunday nights are *mas alegre* (more happy). He showed me pictures he took with his cellphone of the yellow school buses rented by the local Catholic church that goes around the farms to pick up migrant workers to bring them to the evening mass that starts at 7:00 pm. These are the same buses that pick them up to do shopping and errands on Thursday and Friday nights from 5:00 till 9:00 pm. He sent copies of these photos to his family back home. This time around he is not the bus driver but a passenger.

Father Jack who is a *hispanohablante* (spanish speaking) Canadian priest has been serving migrants since 1992 and is well known among the local residents. Even now that he is retired, he continues to say Mass for the migrant workers from April to September every year. He says that the men at church describe him as *una maravilla de sacerdote* (a wonderful priest) and *un hombre muy amable* (a very kind man). They all look up to him and are happy that he is around to say Mass for them at 7 pm on Sunday evenings. It was

on one of these Sunday evenings that I introduced myself to Antonio who was standing in front of the church waiting for Father Jack to arrive.

Figure 1-3



When I showed him Figure 1-3, he recalled the many occasions that he and his family had fun around the dining table. He remembers having a *quinceañera*¹²³ for both of his daughters. There are times even after all these years of coming to Canada when he misses home and family. Sometimes he would buy Mexican food from the food trucks in the church parking lot just to feel like he was back home. The food trucks set up a *tiendita* (small shop) and sell tacos, tamales, and burritos to the Mexican migrant workers who are brought to church by the buses. He says it is one of the reasons he likes going to church in Canada. It reminds him of home.

He also enjoys being with his *companeros* (friends), some of them working in other farms, all of whom call Mexico home. He enjoys being with them even if he does not

¹²³ The *fiesta de quince años* (also *fiesta de quinceañera*, *quince años* and *quince*) is a celebration of a girl's fifteenth birthday with cultural roots in Latin America but celebrated throughout the Americas.

consider himself very sociable. He also uses Sunday evenings as an opportunity to avail of the service provided by a parish nurse. The Sunday before I interviewed him, the nurse told him she needed to have his teeth fixed and take medication for his *alta presion* (high blood pressure). When he heard this he once again prayed and sought help and protection from *Sagrado Corazon*. He does not have money to buy medication but gets free samples from the parish nurse.

He repeats how important it is for a migrant worker to stay in good health. If one gets sick, one cannot work. Without work, there will not be any money to send home. Some workers who get sick are fired and sent home by their employers or are not called back for the next season. This may be the reason why migrant workers rarely discuss their medical condition with each other. Employers tend to look for young, healthy strong men, who have a valid driver's license and can speak good basic English. Antonio worries about the fact that he is not young and he has not learned to speak English, but he says he still has *brazos fuertes* (strong arms). More importantly, he has a good work attitude and does not make trouble.

He said he has heard about workers in a nearby farm getting sick because of exposure to pesticides and fertilizers in the farm. He pays attention to any new pain or changes in his body when he gets up in the morning. He also makes sure he buys healthy food like fresh meat, and vegetables, fruit and milk even if he has to spend about \$80 for groceries every week.

He showed me his hands and says that his calloused hands are his biggest treasures. He works with his hands. He does not know what he would do without them. When he feels sick he takes out his image of *Sagrado Corazon*, and holds it over his heart and while

he prays for healing. He says it is a simple ritual that works for him. He expects his body to be strong and healthy for many more seasons. He is now 52 years old. He has been a migrant worker for twenty two years now.

He prays everyday for good health, but realizes that anything can happen and life can be unpredictable sometimes. In closing he said that he considers working as a seasonal migrant farm worker in Canada as *mi destino* (my fate). He wants to be able to come back every year until he is no longer able to. He has left everything “...*alegrias, angustias, esperanzas y dudas...*” (joys, sufferings, hopes and doubts) in God’s hands.

Alberto

We met at a store called Food Basics. It is a chain of supermarkets with stores across the province. We started talking while he was waiting in line at the check-out counter where he was the 22nd in a line-up of about thirty migrant workers. He says the line is long but not as long as the *fila en el aeropuerto* (the lineup at the airport). He prefers to come to Food Basics because other stores are *inhospita* (unhospitable). Some add security guards on days when migrant workers shop for their groceries and supplies. He says the presence of security guards makes migrant workers feel like they are *ladrones* (thieves) and they steal stuff.

Twice a week, on Thursday and Friday nights the migrant workers come to town in big buses which park in front of the Food Basics store from 5:00 pm – 9:00 pm. It waits there while the workers do their shopping, send money home through Western Union and other providers, and have some recreation around the restaurants in the area. We walked to one of the local bars to do the interview.

He says where he comes from the people have a strong devotion to the *Nuestra Senora de San Juan de Lagos*. (Our Lady of Saint John of the Lakes). He describes her as “*muy pequena pero muy milagrosa*” (very small but very miraculous).¹²⁴

Figure 1-4



His mother introduced him to her when he was about ten years old and got very sick with asthma. She prayed to *la Virgen* (the Virgin) and promised to make a pilgrimage to the Basilica, if she would make him well. It was his first visit to the shrine. He did not understand why there were so many people there. It was December 8 and many people from the neighboring towns came for the *feria* (market fair). It was the feastday of *la Virgen* in the Catholic liturgical calendar. Her mother told him about the many miracles that have happened because of her powerful intercession. Unlike the more popular Virgin of Guadalupe who is brown, this image of *Nuestra Senora* has white skin.

¹²⁴ The original statue is about 20 inches (50 cm) tall, and is believed to have been made by the Purépecha Indians of the state of Michoacán using an indigenous technique called *titzingueni*, in which a frame of wood is covered by a paste of corn pith and orchid juice, and then coated with gesso and painted.

He sees his faith as rooted in his experiences as a small boy growing up in a small town in the highlands. He describes *altenos* (natives of Los Altos) as gentle and simple folks. His family owns some land they inherited from his grandfather who was a *ranchero* (cattle-raiser). His grandfather told him that he and his *abuelita* (grandmother) worked for another landowner in Jalisco who gave them cash and maize in exchange for working a piece of land. He says his grandfather had vivid memories of the Cristero Rebellion in the 1920's when so many people abandoned their homes and farms to relocate to other towns elsewhere. Eventually his grandfather became an *agrarista* (agrarian) who benefited from the federal land reform program. He was given land and then earned enough to buy some cattle. That was when life got a little better. The land they now till in Mexico is an *herencia* (inheritance) from his father.

His grandfather told him many stories about how *Nuestra Senora* that protected the town during the rebellion. He showed me Figure 1-3, an old *estampita* (prayer card) of her which he brought with him to Canada. He feels a very strong emotional connection with her when he prays for protection, not just for himself but for all his loved ones back home. He says he can pray to her from anywhere. Distance is not a problem, even if she is back there and he is in Canada.

She is able to help people who send her *mandas* (prayer requests) even if they do it by mail. Some of them have never been to San Juan de Lagos and others do not even know where his town is on the map. La Virgen helps everyone. He has many stories of how he and his family have been helped by her. He says he *escribe cartas a mano* (writes letters by hand to her) to thank her for her favors and send them to the Basilica.

When he goes home after his contract ends in October, he will make sure he goes for a pilgrimage to fulfil his *promesa* (promise) to her for answering his prayers. He will bring his entire family with him so that together they can offer *acciones de gracias* (acts of thanksgiving) to her at the basilica. He will go back to the same Basilica where he first met her and where she has been venerated for centuries by his ancestors.

He is happy that he will be home on December 8. His wife, like most other women in their town, also has a deep devotion to her. The devotion was passed on to her by her mother who also learned it from her mother.

He remembers how her mother says she prayed very hard during her difficult pregnancy with their first child. At that time there were no doctors nearby to go to and so they relied on the native *partera* (midwife). The delivery was painful but successful. It was also *Nuestra Senora* that healed her mother's gallbladder so she did not have to undergo an operation.

The *sanjuanenses* (people from San Juan) believe that *Nuestra Senora* can cure what the doctors say is incurable. He himself feels that it is best to pray, use whatever home remedies are available and also listen to what the doctors say. His contract requires that he undergo a medical exam and submit a current medical certificate everytime he comes to Canada attesting to his good health.

Some migrants come home defeated, while others come home as heroes. He looks forward to coming home as a hero in October. He plans to bring home small appliances and consumer goods (ie. clothes and toys) from Canada although he notices that many of them say "Made in China."

When he goes back he will *pasar tiempo* (spend time) telling his family, neighbors, friends and relatives about his first contract in Canada. He will show them pictures of the farm and of the tobacco he helped plant, cultivate and harvest. He hopes to come back again and again for many years to come.

Eduardo

We met at a workshop on the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA). He says he decided to attend to learn more about *la ley* (the law) as it applied to *trabajadores agricolas* (agricultural workers). He wanted to know more about policies and procedures regarding *la salud y la seguridad en el trabajo* (health and safety at work). He said he learned from the workshop that he has the right to refuse to perform work he considers to be unsafe. He has been advised by his fellow workers, especially those who have been long on the job, to just do what he is told. Complaining or refusing to do what one is told can have serious consequences. They told him that what is in the law about being protected against *represalias* (retaliation) is on paper only. Filing a *denuncia* (complaint) with the Ontario Labor Relations Board (OLRB) is a waste of time and energy.

When I showed him Figure 1-6, Eduardo talked a lot about how the demanding work and living conditions in the farm can affect one's health. He said it was very important to stay healthy. He does not want to get sick. He is doing everything to be in good health by eating well, having a good restful sleep at night, avoiding accident through safe work practices and maintaining *buen animo* (a positive attitude). It all contributes to *bienestar* (well-being). He says he feels healthier when he is in Canada than when he is back home in Mexico City. He likes the air in Canada. It feels *muy limpio* (very clean). He

also likes the quiet countryside where the farm is. He refers to *el silencio* (the silence) as *uno de los placeres* (one of the pleasures) of living in the farm.

Health is important because if he gets sick, he may be sent home. The same thing can happen is he gets into an accident at work. When he receives news that a member of his family gets sick, he feels very sad because there is really nothing he can do from far away, except to pray and wish that they recover soon.

When I showed him Figure 1-1, he says he also prays to the saints for good health. Back home he also goes to *curanderos* (native healers) that people trust. They are gifted with special abilities and are able to bring healing energies to those who need them. Doctors in Mexico apart from being expensive are also not available in the rural areas. They very often prescribe expensive medicines and you can spend a lot of money on them but many times they do not really cure the sickness. There are times you may even feel worse after you take the medicine because it has side effects.

He has some herbal ointments and other *remedios caseros* (home remedies) he brought with him for his body aches. They help him after a long day out in the fields. He says that he hurt his back once moving heavy equipment and even now *me duele la espalda* (my back hurts). Occasionally he takes some Tylenol. There are many times during the season that he has problems with his back and knees.

Every time he prays he asks for good health. He asks that his back pain will go away. He does his best to take care of his body and doing the *estiramiento* (stretching exercises) suggested by the health promoter. Without a good job along with good health, he does not know what will happen to his family. He believes this is just the way things

are. *Asi es la vida* (that is life). He hopes to be in good health until he dies, or as he says “*hasta que conocimos a Dios*” (until we know God).

Figure 1-5



When I showed him Figure 1-5, he says that he has a copy of the *Santa Biblia* (Holy Bible) by his bedside. It is an old *Reina Valera*.¹²⁵ He likes reading the *relatos* (narratives) of people in the Bible and the *enseñanzas* (teachings) of Jesus.

He can relate to *la lucha* (the struggle) of people like Job and Moses and Jeremiah. He reads the Bible because he appreciates the *sabiduria* (wisdom) he finds in the text. He feels like there is a personal message that is being conveyed to him by God when he reads, even if it has only been a few years since he started reading the Bible. Actually, it coincided with his first trip to Canada.

He is not sure he is reading the text correctly. He understands that people interpret the Bible in many different ways. He has more time to read now. There is always electric light in the bunkhouse and it is *gratuito* (free). He does not have to pay for it. Every time he reads, he feels like something happens to him. He says he cannot explain this but he just

¹²⁵ A Spanish translation of the Bible originally published in 1602 by Cipriano de Valera who revised an earlier version done by Casiodoro de Reina in 1569.

wants me to know. He makes it a practice to read everyday, even if it is just a line or two. Reading the Bible is one of *las primeras cosas* (the first things) he does when he wakes up in the morning.

He remembers one time when he was really worried about problems at home, he read random parts of the Bible and heard a message in his heart that said *no temas* (do not be afraid). And then after that *te fortalecere* (I will strengthen you), *te ayudare* (I will help you) *te proteger* (I will protect you) *te sustiendere* (I will sustain you) and it went on throughout the day and the night. It was like someone was talking to him directly trying to bring him comfort.

Coming to Canada was a major transition in his life. It was confusing at first because he really could not decide whether he wanted to go or not. He was not sure he wanted to be separated from his family just for better pay. He has not quite adjusted to the changes even if it has been many years now. He believes that *todo tiene su tiempo* (everything has its time). What he does is to *entrega todo al Senor* (turn over everything to God). And then just leave it to God who will *dispone todos las cosas para el bien* (dispose all things for the good).

He sends almost everything he makes to his family. He keeps very little for himself for *los gastos diarios* (everyday expenses). He is saving up in order to *compra tierra* (buy land). He hopes that eventually this will help his family *salir de la pobreza* (get out of poverty). His wife has some ideas about how to use some of the money she has saved from *las remesias* (the remittances) to *empezar un negocio* (start a business). This year he also needs to do some renovations to *mejorar la casa* (improve the house).

Agustin

I asked him if it was alright if we did the *entrevista* (interview) under *los arboles* (the trees). There were giant maple and oak trees close to the farm houses where he worked. It provided a good shade from the summer sun and a gentle wind. He says he feels *avergonzado* (embarrassed) that he only knows a few words in English. He has been trying to learn it but has not been very successful. I assured him that it would not be a problem. He says he is happy to help me with my *proyecto* (project).

He was unhappy that he could not go home to attend his daughter's graduation. He wouldn't ask for permission from the owner because he is afraid he might lose his job and be unable to come back next year. He is not about to risk something that he has worked so hard for. He does not like the feeling of being away from home during these special occasions. He remembers not being able to go home even for the funeral of his mother about five years ago. He is not the only one who feels this way. One of his co-workers could not be home with his wife for the birth of their first born. He says that the migrant workers he lives and works with all know the feeling. They also know they need to keep their jobs and hold on to it as long as possible. So many people back home depend on him. He has been *en otros lugares* (in other places) to look for work before he came to Canada. He prefers Canada and most especially Ontario to the other places he has been. What the government TV ad says is true: *Las cosas buenas crecen en Ontario* (Good things grow in Ontario).

He notices how the presence of migrant workers in the town has also helped local business. There are many more businesses now that when he first came. Now there is a Giant Tiger retail discount store and a Kentucky Fried Chicken fastfood restaurant and a Shoppers' Drug Mart. People say there might be a McDonald's next time. Some stores say that their sales go up every time the migrants are in town. Many stores extend their usual hours of business

when the migrant workers are around on Thursday and Friday nights. Many stores, even hardware stores and beauty salons are now selling tortillas and phonecards, even if it is not their line of business.

A small shop has a big TV set where passersby can watch some live or previously recorded games of World Cup Soccer from the sidewalk. The last time he was in town, he said he heard live music with someone singing *Yo no soy marinero, soy capitán, soy capitán*. (I am not a mariner, I am a captain, a captain) At about the time they leave in October, some electronic shops and small appliance stores say it is like Christmas. In one of their conversations, somebody commented that there would not be a fruit and vegetable industry in Ontario if it were not for the migrant farm workers.

In the region, where he lives in Mexico many people are used to coming and going to look for seasonal work. They go to other parts of Mexico. Some cross the border to find work and/or reunite with family members in the US. He did not want to be considered among the *ilegales* (illegals) and so decided to work in Canada instead. It was a long and expensive process. He remembers all the times he had to travel to Mexico City which is a twelve hour trip from where he lives, just to follow up with the paperwork until it was completed.

His wife, Aurora is now fifty years old. She knows everyone in the village. She has severe arthritis and is unable to use her hands much. She is very strict with her daughters and she keeps reminding their son to stay out of trouble.

One time his son got very drunk, got into a fight, was arrested and had to stay in jail overnight. He says that there are men in their village who are drunk all day. His son Geraldo is more responsible now that he knows his father is away. He has also started

learning English after he told him how he has better chances of finding a job abroad if he could speak English.

When I showed him Figure 1-1, he says he has no special devotions or *oraciones* (prayers). He just goes to church *de vez en cuando* (occasionally). He remembers to pray for strength especially during moments when he feels weak, afraid and powerless. He feels that prayer gives him *el poder* (the power) to cope with his anxiety and the challenges of working away from home. He has lived *la vida sencilla* (the simple life). He is *un hombre ordinario* (an ordinary man) just doing *las tareas cotidianos* (the daily tasks). Back home he cultivates *cana de azucar, maiz y frijoles*. (sugar cane, maize and beans) in their family *chacra* (farm). He could not find a job in the companies he applied to. And *eran pocas las ocupaciones que podía desempeñar* (there were few jobs that he could perform). Farming is what he likes and does best.

Miguel

He said he came to Canada *para cambiar mi destino* (to change my fate) during a “*mal momento*” (bad moment) in his life. He had just broken up with his girlfriend and he could not find a job for many months. He tried everything from working in a carwash to fastfood restaurants. He sometimes went hungry because almost all his money went to paying his rent and he did not have much left to buy food. He remembers walking around like a *cachorra desnutrida* (an undernourished dog). He felt like he was *no calzaba para nada* (not fit for nothing).

He was born to a Catholic family. His mother was able to complete a degree in Education at the University of Guadalajara and wanted him to go to university as well.

He is an only son. His day was *solo a la escuela o la mercado* (only to school or the market) and then back home from *dia a dia* (day to day) except weekends.

When he hears the word *fe*, he thinks about “*la practica o sea la practica religiosa*” (practice, or religious practice). It is about our “*relacion con Dios*” (relationship with God). He says faith helps us answer questions about “*de donde venimos, a donde vamos, y para que estamos aqui*” (Where we came from, where we are going, and why we are here). At one time his mother wanted him to enter seminary and become a priest. She said the church needs more priests who can serve in the rural areas.

Later on, he described his own personal view of faith as “*de conocer a Dios*” (knowing God) in a deep way. He says he realizes that this can take “*toda la vida*”. (an entire lifetime). What he does not understand is why God would send him *mala suerte* (bad luck) when all the time he has been trying to follow *el camino de Jesucristo* (the way of Jesus Christ).

He went through a lot just to become a migrant worker in Canada. His mother had to sell off some property and they had to borrow money from relatives to finance his trip. He does not know how long it will be until he can pay off all of his debts. He feels bad that his aging mother had to do all this for him. She says he loves him dearly and is the only one she has. At a very early age, she taught him *las buenas maneras* (good manners). His father left them when he was two years old. She is a *devoto apinado* (pious devotee) of Santa Lucia whom she says cured her grandmother of her blindness. He prays to San Martin Caballero, the patron saint of his town but her mother insists *no cura ciegos como Santa Lucia* (he does not cure the blind like Santa Lucia). She suggests he pray to Santa Lucia instead. His father is going blind because of his diabetes.

“Para mi es de esas cosas que Dios ya tiene en tu destino” (For me, it is about those things which God already has in your destiny). He believes that God already has a plan for him and that coming to Canada is part of God’s plan. *“Si tu te entregas a Dios tienes que dejar que el decida por ti en todo”* (If you give yourself to God, you have to let him decide for you in everything). He says he has given him life over.

After everything he has been through, coming to Canada was the best thing that God has done for him. He is hoping that this is his destiny and that he can be employed in Canada for many more seasons. He wishes there is a way that he can bring her mother to Canada so they can stay and live together.

When I showed him Figure 1-5, he said he started in one church and then after a few months transferred to a new one because the priest was much younger than the one in his previous church. He liked this church better *“porque era mas grande, como mas bonito, mas acogedor y venia mas gente.”* (because it was bigger, more beautiful, more welcoming and more people came). There are not many choices of churches that offer masses in Spanish. Most of the few spanish-speaking priests have to be brought in from somewhere else. Sometimes there is nobody available and therefore masses have to be cancelled.

He wishes that there was Mass every Sunday because he cannot thank God enough for this breakthrough in his life. Back home he remembers working the night shift *“de once de la noche a siete de la manana”* (from 11 at night to seven in the morning) including Sundays.

That was why he quit his last job. He could not adjust to the schedule. He just wanted a normal day job with Sundays off so he can go to Mass. Sometimes he and his

mother go together. He is very grateful that the owner of the farm he works in is an elder at the local Dutch Reformed Church and would not allow people to work on Sundays.

He wishes that someone in the church he goes to could organize a *grupo de oracion* (prayer group), that can perhaps meet before mass since the migrant workers can usually come early but have to leave immediately afterwards. He says a prayer group is important because “*la gente necesita conocer otras personas, compartir con otras personas, no sentirse solo*” (people need to meet other people, to share with other people and not feel alone.) He feels alone even when he comes to church. There are ten of them in the bunkhouse, but only two of them go to church.

He is so happy to have found a Catholic Church that they can walk to. On other days, they ride the bicycle to church. “*Y a mi me gusta mucho. Me encanta esto ya; me di cuenta que realmente esto es lo mio.*” (And I like very much. I love this already. I realized that this is mine.” He sees “*la mano de Dios*” (the hand of God) at work, when he looks back at all the events that led to his finding work in Canada.

Diego

I met him at the Ria money exchange. He was sending some money home. The poster at the store had a picture of a young woman and the ad says “*Ella ya recibio su dinero con Ria*” (She has already received her money with Ria). The ad contains a promotional code that offers a fifty percent *descuento* (discount) on the *tarifa de envio* (transmittal fee) to new clients. It promises that the person in Mexico will receive the funds in ten minutes or less. The transaction can also be done online anytime. Ria claims that it

has over 8000 payout locations including 4,600 Walmart locations in the USA. The poster of Ria Financial ends with the company's tagline "Trusted by Millions" and "*Te damos mas*" (We give you more). I asked Diego if it was possible to have a few minutes of his time after he has finished his business with Ria. He graciously agreed.

His first job in Canada was in British Columbia. It was only three years ago that he transferred to Ontario. He came with three others from Oaxaca. They were hired to harvest strawberries, cucumbers, asparagus and tomatoes.

He described how difficult life was back home. He has eight children. Two of them died when they were very young. They are very, very poor. He did not know where else to go. They only had enough money for food and nothing else. That is when somebody told him about the SAWP in Canada. He has been coming back from April to October every year, for ten years now.

He and his wife are discussing the possibility of selling their old house and buying a new one next year, but maybe not in **Río Venado**. They want to live somewhere else. He hopes to find a better place to work and raise a family. They want a place where the children can also have good jobs when they grow up. He has a brother in Mexicali and another in Oregon. Both have offered to help to get them started. His brothers are better off because they have more permanent jobs. On the other hand, farm work is all he knows. He wants a job that pays more money but for now this is all he has. He feels he has no choice. Having this job is better than anything that he can find back home. He does not dream of being *riquísimo* (very rich) like Carlos Slim who owns most companies in Mexico. All he wants is *una vida digna para mis hijos* (a dignified life for my children).

At the camp house he shares with nine other workers, each worker does his own cooking. They each have their own space in the kitchen cabinets and refrigerator. They also wash their own clothes. There is a washer-dryer but he prefers to dry his clothes *a la luz del sol* (in sunlight). He only has four sets of pants and shirts. Sometimes it gets very busy in the morning when all of them are rushing to get to the fields.

It is hard sharing the bathroom with so many others who want to use it at the same time. He wakes up earlier, sometimes as early as five in the morning, in order to be first in the showers. Sometimes he showers at night to avoid the line-up the morning. He feels that it is important to bathe often to wash off all the pesticides his body comes in contact with while working in the field. He has heard of migrant workers becoming very sick because of pesticides.

The health promoter gave him a pamphlet that told him to *lave su ropa cada dia* (wash his clothes everyday) after working with pesticides. It is his practice along with his co-workers to run his clothes twice with detergents in the washer to remove residues of potentially harmful chemicals from their clothes. Some of them *seque la ropa al aire libre a la luz del sol* (dry clothes outdoors in sunlight) believing that the sun helps keep the clothes clean, while the electric dryer destroys their clothes.

He has heard of some workers who *desmayar* (pass out) because of the summer heat. One of them actually died from complications. It used to be that he would drink beer after a hard day at work. In one of the meetings he attended, however, the *promotora de salud* (health promoter) from the Ministry of Health said that people who work under the heat, should avoid drinks that had alcohol, caffeine or lots of sugar.

She told them that the body is *como las baterias que dan energia* (like batteries that give energy) for what they need to do every day. What they should do is to *descansar y tomar agua* (rest and drink water) to stay hydrated while they were out in the field. They should drink lots of water *antes y despues* (before and after) they work in the sun. She also said that working under the sun *sea mas peligroso* (can be more dangerous) during the summer months when it becomes *demasiado caliente* (very hot). They should *ten más cuidado* (be more careful) to *recargue su energia* (recharge their energy) by taking short breaks. They should also wear *un sombrero de ala ancha* (a wide brimmed hat) or *una cachucha con pañuelito* (a cap with a kerchief). He says he *aprendi mucho* (I learned much) about what to do and what not to do at work in that one afternoon session with the health workers.

He does not want to change from job to job or go from place to place. He hopes he can just stay where he is now. He says that some workers start in one farm and never leave. He works hard so that the owner will be impressed with him and ask for him again next season.

Figure 1-6



When I showed him Figure 1-6, he described life as a migrant worker as “*trabajando duro todos los dias*” (working hard every day). He also does his best to stay out of trouble. One time he almost got into a fight in a local restaurant when somebody referred to Oaxacans¹²⁶ as being “short and stupid.”

He describes the owner of the farm he works at as *muy simpatico* (very nice) and he likes working for him. He says *nos llevamos bien* (we get along well). His wife cares for the workers and treats them as family. They are a *hollandes* (Dutch) christian couple and they encourage everyone in the farm to attend worship on Sundays and pray for a successful harvest. He feels that they *entienden muy bien el sentir de los trabajadores*. (they understand very well the feeling of the workers). They are getting old and soon their oldest son will be managing all the operations in the farm. He hopes that the son will be just as caring as his parents.

He is proud to say that one of his sons is learning how to be an auto mechanic and one of his daughters is studying to be a pharmacist. He hopes that they both do well in their chosen careers. His two other daughters died because they had become *muy enfermo* (very sick) and they had no money for medicine or doctors.

He says he was converted to Christianity and was baptized by Franciscan missionaries. He is a *catolico* (catholic). He describes himself as not just a catholic by name, because he practices his faith. *Voy a la iglesia los domingos*. (I go to Mass on

¹²⁶ The Indigenous people of Oaxaca are descendants of the inhabitants of what is now the state of Oaxaca in Mexico, who were present before the Spanish invasion. Several cultures flourished in the ancient region of Oaxaca from as far back as 2000 BC. Many people from the towns travel as day laborers or migrant workers to the big cities.

Sundays). While he is in church, he kneels down before the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe to lift up everyone in his family in prayer. It is at this time that he feels how painful it is to be separated from them. He is not able to be with the children as they are growing up and this is a big concern for him.

He resents it when he hears people describe what migrant farmers do as “unskilled labor”. He says that many of the people who say this have probably never been to a farm and do not know what goes on. Many skills are required at work. These comments makes migrant workers feel that their work is not valuable. This is not true either, since they are working with food. They produce the fruit and vegetables that goes to supermarkets and family tables across the country. It is unfortunate that people do not really bother to know where their food comes from.

He knows almost every job in the farm. He has had to learn all of it *poco a poco* (little by little). He knows how to drive and he can speak a little English and expects to expand his vocabulary by reading English newspapers and watching TV. He is proud of Oaxaca. He may be short, he says, but he is not *estúpido* (stupid). He says he does not know very much about the indigenous people of Canada, but he has heard that they suffer from discrimination as well.

That is why when he goes to town *prefiero ir con mis amigos* (I prefer to go with my friends). They look after each other and one of them speaks very good English. They all want to *ganar mas dinero* (to earn more money), but the rates are the same wherever they go. In the summer of 2017, it is at \$11.43 per hour. Everybody earns the same no matter how many years they have been on the job.

This figure is before all the deductions for taxes, workmen's compensation, employment insurance and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan. And there is another deduction for administrative fees when they have to send it home.

Lately he is worried because *me duele el dentie* (my tooth aches). He just drinks Tylenol because he does not know where he can go to see a dentist. He has been told that there are free clinics in town on Friday nights from 5:00-8:30 pm from June to October. And that all *trabajadores agricolas* (farmworkers) are welcome there. What is good about it is *no necesita hacer cita* (no need to make an appointment) and *traduccion disponible* (translation is available).

Joaquin

He grew up in as a *testigo de Jehova* (Jehova witness) and was *renació en Jesucristo* (born again in Jesus Christ) ten years ago in Veracruz. He described himself as a *cristiano renacido* (a "born again" Christian). He is grateful to his sisters and brothers at the *Iglesia Apostolica de la Fe en Cristo Jesus* (Apostolic Church of Faith in Jesus Christ) who worked for his salvation. He has accepted the Lord and now he is happy. He is happier still that the Lord brought him to Canada. It was during a revival service that he experienced being baptized in the spirit. A visiting American evangelist laid hands on him and he felt something like electricity running through his body.

Some of his friends told him it was all in his head, but he says he really felt it. He still remembers the first time he felt his body filled with *el poder de Espiritu Santo* (the power of the Holy Spirit) many years after. He is very sure that the Holy Spirit came to him that night. He still

has a vivid memory of how he *cayo arrodillado* (fell down on his knees) and then onto the floor and he just *llore* (wept). And he became a new person after that. That night changed him completely. He was never the same again.

Before he was “born again”, there was so much conflict in his life. His marriage was breaking apart and his teenage children were also having a rough time with their lives. He got into trouble with his neighbors because he always defended his children even when they were at fault. He described his former life as living in sin, doing drugs and alcohol and sex and gambling. Evil spirits lived inside him. At some point he thought he was going crazy. In his confusion and desperation, he even thought of taking his own life. It is all different now. He has seen the error of his ways. He has asked and received forgiveness for his sins.

Before his conversion, he was always *muy enojado y disgustado* (very angry and upset). Now it is *todo bien* (all good). He is safe and secure. All of his *recuerdos* (memories) of his past life have been washed away and healed. He says he was healed through the power of the Holy Spirit and through prayer, lots of prayer from many people, his wife most especially. He has given *testimonios* (testimonies) of his experience in many church gatherings. He shares the story of his conversion with some, although not all, of his co-workers.

He joined a group that prayed every week for the healing of others. He believes that everything can be healed by prayer because he has witnessed many of these healings himself. He believes because he has experienced *la unción* (the anointing) in his own life. He repeats a phrase from a traditional hymn: *Yo me rindo a El* (I surrender to him). He has

entragarlo todo (given over everything to him), since he accepted Jesus as his *Senor y Salvador* (Lord and Savior).

He summarizes his faith using words from another *himno* (hymn). *En este vida esperamos la victoria, la que el Senor el mismo nos dara. Despues iremos a estar con el en gloria, donde se goza de plena libertad* (In this life, we await the victory which the Lord himself will give us. Then we shall go to be with him in glory, there to enjoy full liberty.)

He is happy and feels so refreshed and thankful that *El Senor* (The Lord) brought him to Canada with a new job where he can begin life *de nuevo* (again). He smiled and lifted his arms to say: *Alaba al Senor!* (Praise the Lord!) His son who got married two years ago says that his wife is having a baby soon. He looks forward to being a grandfather. He told me his grandmother had thirteen children.

Marcos

He said that he has this tattoo of *Santa Muerte* (Saint Death) Figure 1-6 in his arm, so that she can be with him wherever he goes. She is *mi fuerza, mi protector de dia y de noche* (my force, my protector by day and by night). Life in the farm can be lonely, but he says that when she prays to Santa Muerte, she *llena mi alma de gozo* (fills my soul with joy). She feels understood by her.

Figure 1 -7



The tattoo is an image of a skeletal lady with a veil and a crown. Her eyes are empty and her face is a skull. Underneath are the words “*pulvis et umbra sumus*” (Latin: we are dust and shadows).

He comes from Tepito, a barrio in Colonia Morelos in Mexico City. He describes it as one of the roughest *vecindades* (neighborhoods) to grow up in. There is easy money to be made selling counterfeit and stolen merchandise and drugs. She says that Santa Muerte is the patroness of Tepito. She takes care of the poor, *los nadies* (the nobodies): drug addicts, sex workers and *los olvidados* (the forgotten) like people in jail. Santa Muerte does not judge anyone, she loves everyone is open to all who come to her for help in the daily struggles. People come to her for anything: to pray to get a visa, to pass an exam, have a new baby or attract more customers to one’s business.

He says he has good reason for why he believes and continue to be a devotee of Santa Muerte. He just cannot put it all into words. He believes that his being accepted for this migrant worker job is a *regalito* (gift) from La Muerte. He also gives her gifts,

sometimes a bag of apples or a pack of cigarettes. It is comforting to know that he carries her in his arm and she is with him wherever he goes.

He has asked her for good health and he has never been sick. He pays into the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) but he has never availed of the benefits, because he has been healthy all along.

Back home his wife is seeking employment in Mexico City because their son is already grown up. His parents tell him to talk to his wife and stop her from being *tan ambiciosa* (so ambitious). His other brother lives in Texas and now considers himself as a *tejano* (Texan). He rarely comes to visit Tepito anymore.

He hopes that after two or three years he will have saved up enough money *para salir de deudas* (to get out of debts). He may even have enough money to partner with his sister who has a small *tienda* (shop) in San Martin de Hidalgo. He wants to be able to leave Tepito someday and start a new life elsewhere, like his brother. He does not want to stay in Tepito forever. After he devoted himself to Santa Muerte, he has had less *mala suerte* (bad luck) in his life. She helped her through the bad times and he has had a lot of bad times. He was reluctant to explain this further.

Even when he does not get what he asks for, he does not doubt. He does not lose faith but just keeps on believing. He cannot explain the feelings he experiences when he receives favors from Santa Muerte. All he knows is that praying to her is efficacious. That is the experience of members of his own family and many other people in Tepito.

He only went as far as Grade 6 and then dropped out of school because his father got very sick. He has crossed *la frontera* (the border) a few times and has worked as an undocumented worker in El Paso. In Canada, he has papers. He is not illegal and not afraid

of being arrested or deported. It is a very different feeling compared to hiding out in El Paso.

He works as many hours as he can. Ten to thirteen hours a day is not uncommon. It is the only way to have more money left after deductions and taxes. Migrant workers are supposed to have a day of rest for every six days of work, but he does not care and he does not complain. He has never been absent from work and although premiums get deducted from every pay cheque, he has never had to submit a claim through Employment Insurance (EI).

He does not go to church because to him it does not matter. It does not matter to Santa Muerte either. Praying in church, according to him, is not more effective than praying elsewhere. Santa Muerte understands that. He also does not say prayers everyday. He knows that Santa Muerte is available anytime he needs her. She is his spiritual companion. She will protect him when no one else will.

The closest he got to facing death was when his brother in law was shot in the head *sin piedad* (without mercy) by a *sicario* (hitman) . The family never got to know why. Things like this happen regularly because of feuds between the cartels that operate around an area in Tepito called *La Fortaleza* (The Fortress). The local people have learned to just take things as they come and not ask too many questions. The reason for his brother's death continues to be a mystery.

He says that there are many more things in this life that are *desconocido* (unknown), and unpredictable things happen like his brother's murder. There is one thing he knows for sure: *todos vamos a morir* . (we are all going to die). Every time he looks at his arm he feels grateful for all the good things that came to him through Santa Muerte.

When he first came to Canada, there were some who *quieren salir* (wanted to leave) after two weeks of working in the fields. They came because they were told they could make more than *dos mil dolares* (two thousand dollars) a month. It is really very challenging to leave home and then come to a country where you do not know anyone. When he came *no conozco nadie* (I do not know anyone). Now he has made some friends with other *paisanos* (countrymen) in neighboring farms that he meets at church. He is staying because *queda mucho por hacer* (much left to do) for his family back home.

He wishes that he has the power to *comunicar con los muertos* (communicate with the dead). He wants to asks his father for his *consejo* (counsel). His father died of liver cancer some years abck. *Tenia problemas con la bebida* (He had a drinking problem). He *aparecia y desaparecia* (appeared and disappeared) from his life. He never really got to know him. He taught him nothing and *dice nada sobre la religion* (said nothing about religion). Like his father he tried alcohol too. He just wanted to have *la sensación de estar borracha* (the feeling of being drunk). He believes that God *ha fijado el momento exacto* (has fixed the exact moment) when people will die.

He has heard of people tell extraordinary stories of how their lives have been changed by keeping faith with Santa Muerte. *Sus testimonios me animaban muchísimo* (Their testimonies encouraged me a lot). He is now even more determined *para seguir luchando* (to continue fighting). When he tells Santa Muerte of his challenges, she tells him *no te rindas* (do not give up), *te ayudaré* (I will help you).

Because she has *salvo mi vida* (saved my life) many times, she trusts her word completely. When things *iba de mal en peor* (went from bad to worse), she delivered him from sure death. He wishes he could leave his neighborhood. It is so *lleno de violencia y*

miseria (full of violence and misery). The police who are supposed to protect the people are *completamente corrompido* (completely corrupted).

Ignacio

Crossing the border to *el Norte* (The North) was his rite of passage as a young man. He comes from Guanajito, in a town called Matamoros. He was born to a single mom who had two children. He was the eldest and he has a sisters who is five years younger than him. At a very early age, he became the *jefe de la casa* (head of the household). *Lo hizo solo* (I did it alone). He dropped out of school and to find work, since the three of them needed to survive. His first job was in a *panaderia* (bakery). He knows a lot about *todas clases de pan Mexicana* (all kinds of Mexican bread). Life then was *mas o menos bien* (more or less good).

When he came to Canada he had very little experience working in a farm. There were twelve workers in the three bedroom house where he lived and all twelve of them have to share only two bathrooms. The farm he was working in closed down after a year. He got “named” again the next year by there were new owners. He got along well with them. He never had problem with any of his employers. *Gracias a Dios y a el le doy la gloria* (Thanks to God and I give him the glory).

His wife was always in the hospital with *muchas complicaciones* (many complications). Eventually she died. For a while he thought he would be “*solo el resto de mi vida*” (alone for the rest of my life). He has since remarried to a *buena mujer* (a good woman) from Durango whose father in a pastor in an *iglesita* (little church) called *Nueva Esperanza* (New Hope).When he is with his father in law, they *platicar de la Biblia* (talk about the Bible a lot). With his mentoring, he felt himself *creciendo mas espiritualmente*

(growing more spiritually). It is a big change from the days when he was telling God *si tu existes, dame una prueba* (If you exist, give me proof).

Now he believes that it is not *los sabios e intelectuales* (the learned and intellectuals) that truly understand, but *los pequenitos* (the little ones). He never went to confession because he did not believe that the priest can forgive sin. Although his parish priest himself told him that he is wrong in thinking that way. The priest told him *el que perdona es Dios* (It is God who forgives.) He goes to mass *dos veces al ano* (Two times a year). Now in Canada he goes to attend services in a Baptist church every Sunday *sin faltar* (without missing).

He believes that it is the Bible that makes someone a true Christian. It was because of him that he learned more and more about the Bible. Before this he was a *catolico ignorante* (an ignorant catholic). He is a true *cristiano* (Christian) now, different from the Catholics. He has seen *un cambio total* (a total change) in the way he looks at religion. He believes that the Holy Spirit is at work *en cada uno de nosotros* (in each one of us). One of the first things he did when he first arrived in Canada was *preguntando en que iglesia daban servicio en espanol* (asking in what church they had service in Spanish). They pointed him to a Baptist church in town. He was ready to go to any church on Sunday to participate in *ritos religiosos* (religious rites), He is even to prepared to join the Catholics with their *miriados santos* (many saints).

Before he came to Canada he talked with other Mexican migrant workers. They compared different places and discussed which areas were better in terms of wages and working conditions. They agreed that Ontario was the best. He likes it except for the cold weather in October. The family joins in these conversations. *Asi es que nos vamos trayendo*

uno al otro (This is the way we bring one another). One family member helps recruit and prepare the next one for the job. It is like *una cadenita* (a little chain). Family members think about the possibilities *que acaban de escuchar* (they have heard) about Canada and then decide whether it is for them. He tells them that Canada is *un mundo completamente diferente* (a completely different world).

He observes that Canadians are always working and never seem to have time to relax and have some fun. He looks forward to going home in October and is starting to shop little by little for things to bring home to family and friends. He says one can tell who the *migratorios* (migrant workers) are in his town because they have the bigger homes with the latest appliances and their children have better clothes. With money to spend, he looks forward to having a wonderful Christmas.

His teenage son asked him to bring home a laptop with *con pantalla táctil* (touchscreen). He does not know how to use a computer so he is asking around from people who know. This will be his gift to him when he goes back. He teaches his son to be resourceful. He hopes that the computer will help him do better in school. He repeats this *dicho* (proverb) to his son often *a quien madruga, Dios le ayuda* (God helps those who wake up early).

Lorenzo

I met him at a Health Fair for migrant workers sponsored by the county. The fair happens once a year in July . It was established to support migrant workers in identifying their concerns and meeting their needs. There are presentations on a wide range of health issues.

Government, Non-Profit groups and businesses are provided a table to display their materials. The majority of workers in the area do not get Sundays off, and so the fair was scheduled on a Friday night instead. There was food, entertainment including games and a raffle. We were able to talk *frente a frente* (face to face) across a cafeteria table.

He said he was a *jornalero* (a day laborer) growing maize¹²⁷ in his hometown of Buenavista, about 120 miles north of the Mexico-Guatamela border. He tells stories about how Mexicans are known as *los ninos del maiz* (the children of maize). He said that after NAFTA cheap American corn flooded the market and reduced the price of maize so much it made it difficult for small local farmers to sell their crops. Many people from his hometown decided to look for alternative employment. For a while, he worked as a construction worker in San Cristobal de las Casas. Their ancestral home is still in Buenavista. They still have the clay oven and the family stove where they made *tortillas*¹²⁸ everyday.

¹²⁷ For Mexicans, maize is not just a crop. It is a cultural symbol. Many indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica: Maya, Aztec, Toltec, Zapotec, Mixtec, Olmec and others depended on the cultivation of corn for their daily diet for thousands of years. They consider it as a gift from the gods. Stories of origin contain accounts of how the gods mixed their own blood with corn flour to create humankind.

¹²⁸ A soft, thin flatbread made from finely ground wheat flour from Mexico. The wheat flour tortilla was originally derived from the corn tortilla, a bread of maize which predates the arrival of Europeans to the Americas.

Figure 1-8



When he saw Figure 1-8, he says that the scene is typical of the way people pray during festivals. He says that in Canada it seems like the country is “*muy abierta*” (very open) about people having many different religions. He does not understand why people change religions or churches. “*Muchas gentes se cambian de iglesia, y yo me hacer eso pregunta por que se cambian de iglesia: eran catolicos y se vuelven cristianos, pentecostales, evangelicos, metodistas.*” (Many people change their church, and I ask myself why they change their church: they were Catholics and they became christians, pentecostals, evangelical, methodists) . He has stayed catholic all his life. He describes Mexico “*uno los paises mas catolicos*”. (one of the more catholic countries).

He understands that there are “*formas de pensar diferente*” (different ways of thinking), but he prefers to just stick to one. He does not want to judge others, He can accept that there are people who come to God “*por caminos diferentes*”(through different paths).

He loves music especially *musica nortena*¹²⁹ as performed by a band called *Los Tigres del Norte* (Tigers of the North). He says that some of the *corridos* (ballads) they sing are about the experiences of migrant workers.

His father introduced him to music when he was a little boy growing up in Zacatecas. He taught him how to play the accordion but he only learned a little bit. His father told him to study how to play it, since the music of the accordion *entra adentro del corazon* (enters right to the heart). Some of his friends are able to learn music just by listening. He says he does not have that gift. Music is a big part of the culture of Mexico. He remembers how musicians would come to their town to perform during special festivities.

Figure 1-9



When I showed him Figure 1-9, he said there are many restaurants with the name. There is also a very popular song in Mexico called *Cielito Lindo*¹³⁰. He says the line he

¹²⁹ A genre of popular regional Mexican music, some of them close to the US-Mexican border, which is why bands would attached the word “del Norte” to their name (e.g. Los Tigres del Norte).

likes best is the one that says “*ay, ay, ay, canta y no llores*” (ay, ay, ay, sing and don’t cry). When they go *al centro* (downtown) they would go to places that serve Mexican food. One of them stands out from the rest. He goes there when he has *antojos* (cravings). He especially likes their fish tacos. He also loves that they serve customers home made tortilla chips and very good red salsa even before they order. They have just about everything Mexican and there are so many choices of *gorditas, enchiladas, quesadillas*.

At their bunkhouse, all of them cook their own meals and they buy their own food. The kitchen is too small for all of them. It is a run-down house about ten minutes away from the farm. He has learned to eat frozen convenience foods, even it they are tasteless. Sometimes he is so tired he has *no tengo ganas* no appetite to eat. He just wants to sleep. They work *lloverá o hiciera sol* (rain or shine). On his day off, he would sleep *un poco mas* (a little more) so his body can rest a bit. He wakes up to do laundry and cook his meals. Sometimes when the washer / dryer does not work, he washed by hand and dries his work clothes in the sun. He only has four sets of clothes.

The migrant workers in the farm he works in are *todos Mexicanos* (all Mexicans), but they come from different places in Mexico. He meets other Mexicans from other farms when he goes down to town on Thursday and Friday nights to buy groceries and supplies at the supermarket, and go to send his remittances through Western Union. He says Western Union has better rates than the banks. He send almost all of the money home, leaving just a little for his own expenses. On Fridays he occasionally goes with other workers to drink

¹³⁰ Written in 1882 by Mexican Composer Quirino Mendoza y Cortez it tells a story of a lovely lady rescued from bandits in the Sierra Morena and then smuggled out from the hills.

cerveza (beer) at a local *cantina* (bar) called La Bamba. When I asked him what La Bamba means he said *quien sabe* (who knows). It's just the name for a popular dance.

He is amazed at how the town in Ontario close to where he works has changed since he first came. There are now new shops everywhere catering to the migrants. Most of them Mexican and Jamaicans. The residents tend to describe the Mexicans as being more polite than the Jamaicans. They also tend to be more family oriented. These kinds of comparisons tend to cause more tension between the Mexicans and the Jamaicans. The fact that Jamaicans are able to speak English while Mexicans do not is also an area of friction. He says that because he does not speak English, he feels out of place most of the time. He and his friends go as a group and they make sure they have at least one who is able to speak some English. On Friday nights, busloads of migrants arrived to fill the place.

He says that sometimes he finds time to *parar a pensar* (stop to think) and reflect on his life. He lies awake at night wondering what would happen if he died in Canada and never saw his wife and children again. Finally one night the answer came to him. It will be difficult but life has to go on. Maybe his wife will re-marry. She is still young, he really does not know how she will decide.

He remembers when he broke up with his first *novia* (girlfriend) who had such *ojos lindos* (beautiful eyes), she *echo todo a perder* (let it all go to ruin). It affected him as well because he lost interest in relationships for a while. When he met Alma, the woman who became his wife, he said it was as if he had reached *el cima de Everest* (the top of Mt. Everest).

When I showed him Figure 1-5, he said that he is the only one in the farm who has a Bible. He says he likes reading the stories of people in the Bible. Many of them had a

hard time. They had their own experience of *la lucha* (struggle) during *el exilio* (the exile). The stories contain so much *sabiduria* (wisdom). He reads it *para animar mi fe* (to enliven my faith).

When he reads the Bible he feels that there are spiritual beings that give him directions about what to do in any given situation. When he reads, some words take on a new meaning for him. He is not sure about what some verses mean but he can relate to stories. Sometimes after reading he feels better and stronger. It sets something in motion inside him. He cannot explain this further.

He understands that people read the Bible in different ways. He wants to *aprender mas* (learn more) about the Bible. He does not know if he is reading the text correctly. He just enjoys the stories. Now that he has more time alone, he is able to read. There are always bright fluorescent lights in the farm and they are free. This is something he does not enjoy in the town where he lives.

Reading the Bible helps him see things differently. He has learn some words from the Bible but he does not where to find them. He believes what the Bible says about *Dios dispone todas las cosas para el bien* (God arranges everything for the good). He has seen that happen in his own life *etapa por etapa* (stage by stage) as he reviewed them *una por una* (one by one). He opens the Bible everyday even if it means just reading a line or two.

When his daughter got sick, and she threw up *con un poco de sangre* (with a little blood) he heard in his heart a voice that said things like “Calmate... No temas...No te angusties.... Te sostendere....” *Ya no me senti triste* (I did not feel sad anymore) . It is through the daily reading of the Bible that *podemos andar con El* (we are able to walk with

him). It is *el mejor guia* (the best guide). Some days he is just *tiene sed* (thirsty) to hear a word of guidance or comfort.

When I showed him figure 1-10, he immediately said *Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe*.¹³¹

Figure 1-10



Prayer becomes even more important *cuando soy debil* (when I am weak). And there are *nubes oscuras* (dark clouds) in his life and he finds himself alone *en tineblas* (in the darkness). When I asked him what he prays for, he said he give thanks *por la vida, la familia, los amigos y familiares* (for life, family, friends and relatives) and to be *immune a todo dano* (free from all harm). Everyday when he wakes up he thanks *madrecita* (beloved mother) for *otro dia mas* (one more day). And she *me fortalece* (strengthens me). This gives him the courage to *empezar de nuevo* (begin again). The most painful thing he has observed with other migrants is *la ausencia de esperanza* (the absence of hope).

¹³¹ Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe is a religious cultural symbol. It is believed that the *la Virgen* (the Virgin Mary) appeared to an Aztec Indian Juan Diego in Tepeyac, near present day Mexico City in 1531.

Figure 1-11



When I showed him Figure 1-11, he says it reminds him of his first plane ride to Toronto on a big Air Canada Airbus 310. He prayed *antes de abordar el avion* (before boarding the plane). He used up almost all of his *ahorro* (savings) to pay for his share of the plane ticket. This was his first plane ride, his first time high up on the skies. He didn't realize how vast the skies are and how tiny the mountains are from above. He grew up *en la falda del monte* (on the mountainside). It was a long flight. He was *preocupado* (anxious) during the whole trip. *Me calmo cuando estabamos aterrizando* (I became calm when we were landing).

He says that someone once told him that one way to be happy is to always to be grateful. There is so much to be grateful for. One thing he is grateful for are the *buenas amistades* (good friendships) he has developed with other workers. Now he is the one telling other to *agradecidos* (grateful). Avoid those emotions that *nos roban el gozo* (rob us of joy).

So many people in Mexico want to come to Canada but are not able to for one reason or another. It is his good fortune to be here. He can not tell all the other good things

that have come to him and his family since coming to Canada. He cannot say it *en pocas palabras* (in a few words). He feels better *como nunca antes* (like never before).

He says he really does not know how to pray. He just says *Gracias a Dios*. (Thanks be to God!) a lot. He continues to just *orar de corazon*. (pray from the heart). He does not use too many words when he prays. He believes that "*Si tienes devoción, Dios vendrá a ti*". (If you have devotion God will come to you)

He wants *madrecita* (Beloved Mother) to know how grateful he is to her. He knows she will always be there to *ayudar* (help). He hopes that all will go well with him in the farm *bajo el cielo de Ontario* (under the sky of Ontario). If there is a *camino de santidad* (way of holiness), gratitude must be part of it. One must always remember to give thanks for everything.

Armando

When I met him at the food court at the mall, he was reading a translation called *Guia Alimentaria Canadiense* (Canada Food Guide). The booklet talked about *los cuatro grupos de alimentarios* (four food groups): *verduras y frutas* (vegetables and fruit), *cereales y derivados* (grains and derivatives) *leche y productos* (milk and alternative products) and *carnes y productos alternativos* (meats). He was studying *el numero de porciones* (the number of portions) that were recommended each day. He was not sure he understood it even after he read them. He has already been told by the health promoter to avoid foods *grasas, azucar y sal* (fat, sugar and salt).

He says that while his hometown is *muy lejos* (very far) but when he talks with his family through Skype it seems so close. He seems to be living in Ontario and Mexico at the same time. He is able to check in with his friends back home and share with them

photos of Canada through Facebook. He believes it is important to keep current with what is going on at home. Part of the way he practices his faith is by being *dispuesto siempre a ayudar a los amigos* (always available to help friends). It is amazing how God has arranged the circumstances to bring him to Canada. He thanks God and the saints and his relatives who helped him get to where he is. He teaches his children to always be grateful to those who *han dado su amor* (have given their love) to them. He just want *lo mejor* (the best) for his wife and children. He believes it will happen in five years *ojalá Dios quiera* (God willing).

He does not believe that God *es el responsable de la maldad y el sufrimiento* (is responsible for the evil and suffering) in the world. If God permits something to happen *lo es necesario* (it is necessary). There was a time in his life when he felt *descarriada* (lost). And then came *arrepentimiento* (repentance) and a time to *pedir perdon* (ask for forgiveness) for his *pecados* (sins).

Some have left Mexico for a while, other *talves para siempre* (perhaps forever). He wants to be able to always come home to his *pueblo querido* (beloved town). It makes him *muy triste* (very sad) to have to leave home to find work in a different country where everything: climate, language, culture, language is so different.

When he looks at his life, it seems that no matter how much he earns and how hard he works, *todo sigue igual* (everything remains the same). But he has to continue doing what he does. He has to keep coming back to Canada *por necesidad* (by necessity). Sometimes *me hace llorar* (it makes me cry). He describes a migrant worker's life as being as precarious as *una vela en el viento* (a candle in the wind).

In other farms, when it rains, they stop working. Where he works, they are in the fields rain or shine. One time he remembers getting some chemical spray into his eyes and he felt them burning. It gets very cold in October and he does not like the cold. Sometimes, it can also be extremely hot and humid and he does not like that either. He knows he just has to force himself to work regardless of the weather.

He says he does not understand why God makes poor people. He wants to be rich because being poor is so humiliating. He hopes it will be better in *la otra vida* (the other life). *Ojala que sea mas parejo* (I hope it is more equal). If he makes big money, his wife can stop being like other wives of migrant workers who are *mujereshombres* (women men) who have to be both father and mother to the children since their husbands are *siempre ausente* (always absent).

Since he is in Canada eight months a year, he actually spends more time here than in his hometown. If only they were not so poor, then he would not have to keep coming back. He sometimes finds life so frustrating. *No puedo llevar nada mas* (I cannot do anything more). He prefers to work in Mexico and enjoy his children and grandchildren as they grow up. He does not want to be *un extrano en su propia casa* (a stranger in his own house). Maybe it is just his *destino* (fate).

His two youngest children are now growing up. His wife sends him pictures of them *andando en bicicleta* (riding a bicycle). He sent them a picture of him riding a bicycle from the farm to the church . He got his bike from the local catholic church who did a fundraiser to buy second-hand bikes for the migrant workers. He will return it to the church at the end of the season.

When I showed him Figure 1-3, he said it reminds him of one *fiesta* (celebration) where he met his wife. It was during a fundraiser dance that was planned by the community to raise money for the church. That night they decided to *bailar sin pasar* (dance non-stop). His *ancianitos* (old people) say you should not marry girls you meet in dances. After three months he *pedi su mano* (asked her hand) and they got married. He remembers how they slaughtered a pig and his mother cooked her version of *chile colorado con papas*.¹³² (colored chile with potatoes) served in a giant *cazuela* (glazed terracotta serving dish).

He describes himself as *muy cerquita de mi madre* (very close to my mother). At the wedding which was held in a basketball court near his house, it was a great time for *los viejitos* (the old people) and *los jovencitos* (the young people) to celebrate together.

His mother's name is Guadalupe. She was born on December 12 the Virgin's feastday. She is now sixty years old but still leads the singing of *Salve Regina*¹³³ at church where she is one of the *cantoras* (singers) and a member of the parish choir.

When he arrived this year *ya llega la primavera* (spring has arrived). The migrant workers from Mexico came in time for the spring planting. They will leave after the harvest is done in October. He wants to *entender mas bien* (understand better) the laws of Canada as it applies to farm workers. He hope there is a way to become a permanent resident, because he really likes to live here.

His wife told him before he left Mexico that *El Senor cumplira todas sus promesas* (The Lord will fulfil all his promises). He believes *asi es* (it is so). He finds Canada to be *un hermoso pais* (a beautiful country). He is coming home happy. *Ahorita*

¹³² A traditional Mexican dish of cubed pork and potatoes in a smooth sauce from dried ancho chili peppers and then served with warm tortillas and lemon wedges.

¹³³ A traditional Catholic hymn in honor of the Virgin Mary that begins with "*Dios te salve, Maria*" (God save you Mary). It is also known as Hail Holy Queen and is usually sung after praying the Rosary.

tengo mas amigos (Now I have more friends). The experience has given his life *un nuevo rumbo* (a new direction). *Me siento mas cercita de Dios* (I feel closer to God)

Every year the story ends the same way at Toronto's Pearson International Airport. His employer *nos llevará al aeropuerto* (will take us to the airport) and he will shake his hand and say *gracias* (thanks). That is it, until the next time around.

Meanwhile members of his family and *familiares* (relatives) will be at the Aeropuerto Internacional Benito Juárez (Benito Juarez International Airport) in CDMX¹³⁴ to meet him. They will welcome him *como una estrella del rock* (like a rockstar).

Renato

We met at a *torneo de futbol* (football tournament) organized by the local Catholic church and Latino parishioners for migrant workers. Renato said he preferred not to be interviewed alone. He wanted his six friends to be with him. So we had the interview with seven men around a picnic table overlooking the soccer field. Renato said that it was always *un dia feliz* (a happy day) when they can leave the farms for some recreation and sports.

¹³⁴ CDMX stands for *Ciudad de Mexico*, (Mexico City) the new name for the capital of Mexico. It used to be known by many as DF (Distrito Federal) until President Enrique Pena Nieto changed it in January 2016.

When I showed them figure 1-1 they said they were familiar with all the *santos* (saints) in the photograph. One of the women who was the wife of the lead organizer for the event said that she recognized *San Judas* (St Jude Thaddeus), *Santo Nino de Misericordia* (Holy Child of Mercy) and *San Martin Caballero* (St Martin, the Horseman) and that she actually has an *oracion* (prayer) she uses to pray for this saint *para suerte, trabajo y dinero* (for luck, work and money).

Renato told me the story of the *Virgen Morena* (Brown Virgin). He said that *segun la leyenda* (according to legend), that the Virgin appeared to Juan Diego, a native, on a hill in Tepeyac. She told him she wanted to have a church built on the plains and that he needs to bring her message to the local bishop. The bishop did not take the word of Juan Diego seriously at first and asked for some proof. After the fourth apparition, Juan Diego came back to the bishop and gave him proof he wanted. Upon opening his *timla* (cloak), he showed the bishop an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe printed on it. The church was built and that was how the devotion began. Today the Virgin is the national *patrona* (patron saint) of Mexico.

Renato considers worship as an important part of his experience as a migrant worker. He repeats words he hears in the *canciones* (songs) and *oraciones* (prayers) during Mass. He remember phrases like *El Senor es mi fuerza* (The Lord is my strength) and makes it his own prayer for *el valor para la lucha* (courage for the struggle). He asks God for strength to face the many challenges of working far away from his loved ones. He can move forward *sin miedo* (without fear) because he has entrusted *el destino de mi vida al Senor* (the destiny of my life to the Lord).

He totally believes in *las promesas* (the promises) of God as found in the Bible. When asked about the ways that they think of *El Señor* (The Lord), the group said they sometime think of him as *El Sembrador*. This also happens to be how the Migrant Ministry Group is referred to in the church. Other titles that appeal to them are *creador*, *redentor*, *salvador*, *liberador*, *labrador*, *viñador*. (creator, redeemer, savior, liberator, farmer and wine-maker). This last one is significant since the place where Renato works is one of the wine growing regions in Canada.

When I showed them Figure 1-7, they said that this photo was about worship. When asked what they do during worship time in church, they said that it was time for *alabanza* (praise) and thanksgiving. They described the other things that happen in worship as *cantemos con alegría* (we sing with joy), *demostramos gracias a Señor* (we give thanks to the Lord), *aceptamos al Señor* (accept the Lord) and *presentamos ofrendas* (present our offerings). The group described Holy Communion as *fiesta celestial* (heavenly feast) and *banquete del amor* (a banquet of love). It is a time when the *pan y vino* (bread and wine) become *cuerpo y sangre de Cristo* (body and blood of Christ).

Renato describes worship as a time when he feels God as *dentro de mí* (inside me). He pleads with God to stay close and not leave him. Things can be a bit discouraging at times, but he does not lose heart. He hopes for *un nuevo día* (a new day). He looks forward to a time when things will be better for him and his family. He says it is important to keep going and not give up.

Sometimes when he does feel discouraged and *muy cansado* very tired, he tells God “*eres todo lo que tengo*” (You are all I have). He admits that *El Señor ha sido bueno conmigo* (the Lord has been good to me) and over the years he has seen many blessings.

The group often referred to God as *Dios de la Vida* (God of Life). They said that their faith teaches *no hay muerte, solo hay vida*. (There is no death, there is just life). Jesus said that he is *el camino, la verdad, and la vida*. (the way the truth and the life). Renato says that God *salvó mi vida* (saved my life) many times in the past. When he prays he feels more secure in spite of all the uncertainties of life. He feels *la presencia* (the presence) of God when he prays as he works quietly in the field.

He counts himself as blessed because he is allowed to continue to work in the farm even if he is now 52 years old. He is not as strong as he once was. He prays for *el corazón fuerte* (a strong heart). He says all he really wants is *una vida sencilla* (a simple life) enjoying it with his grandchildren and family. He has seen so much violence in his hometown. He wants to experience *un vida tranquila* (a peaceful life).

All he can do is to *entrega todos mis problemas a Señor* (surrender all my problems to the Lord). There are people who *olvidan de agradecer* (forget to thank) and there are some who lose their faith completely. For him gratitude is important and he thanks God when he wakes up for *un dia mas* (one more day).

When presented with the question “Que donde esta Dios?” Renato says that he believes God is everywhere and *Dios esta aquí* (God is here). God is *donde dos o tres* (where two or three) are gathered. He also says “*Dios esta en ti y Dios esta en mi*” (God is in you and God is in me)

He sometimes does not understand how God moves in his life but he is certain that God is with him in his *perigrinacion* (pilgrimage). *Es bueno asi sentir* (It is good to feel this way). One thing that coming to Canada did for him is it *abrió mis ojos* (opened my eyes).

Lazaro

He was the youngest migrant worker I interviewed. He said he was only 26. He came to Canada three years ago. When we met he was in a secluded corner of the church away from every one else. He was using the church's Wi-Fi signal to send messages to his wife on Facebook and to download *Despacito* (Slowly) , a hit song by Canadian pop artist Justin Bieber. He said it was really sexy.

After my initial *Oye, ¿cómo va?* (Hey, how's it going?) he invited me to sit with him. He called the spot *mi rincón* (my corner). He agreed to being interviewed as long as I did not ask personal questions. I told him he does not have to answer questions he was not comfortable answering. We did the interview sitting on the grass at the front lawn of the church.

He showed me the picture that his daughter posted on Instagram. It was a picture of the two of them together during her last birthday. The text said "*Mi papa es mi mejor amigo*" (My dad is my best friend). He has *dos ninas* (two daughters). *Una de cuatro y otra de seis anos* (One is four years old, and the other is six.)

He describes how he came from a very poor family. Even before they went to school, his parents were *nos enseñando con el ejemplo* (teaching us by example). *No teníamos mucho* (We didn't have much). In the *pequeño pueblo* (little town) he came from, they didn't have radio, TV or newspapers. He says he is *el segundo de ocho hijos* (the second of eight children). And they grew up *ayudandonos el uno al otro* (helping each other).

When I showed him Figure 1-1, he said he does not pray to any particular saint or virgin. He acknowledged that Mexico has *un monton de vírgenes* (a lot of virgins). He says he just prays to God most of the time. He says that sometimes he just recites the *Padre Nuestro* (Our Father) or the *Ave Maria* (Hail Mary), prayers that his mother taught him as a child. Sometimes he repeats them seven times.

For him, religión is about *la doctrina católica* (catholic doctrine) and practices. Where he comes from there is a group that calls themselves *La Luz del Mundo* (The light of the world). They talk against the catholic faith and its practices. They describe catholicism as a religión *de origen extranjero* (of foreign origin). Their temples do not have images, saints, crosses, because they consider these things as idolatry. They say that for *verdaderos creyentes* (true believers) , these things *tengan poca importancia* (have little importance).

They say their relationship with God is *directo* (direct) and *sin intermediarios* (without intermediaries) He says that one of the things he does is to thank God before he goes to sleep at night. He prays that God would help him keep his job because without his job, *no tengo nada* (I have nothing). Everything is in God's hands.

His parents put together some money five years ago to buy a piece of land. On it they were able to build a small house with some basic furniture. Now he is hoping that with his earnings he can help his parents make a bigger house. He is currently living with them along with his wife and two children. His wife also works in a *maquiladora* (assembly plant) so his mother has to take care of the children. Someday he is hoping that he and his wife can do what his parents did: buy a small lot and build a small house in it where they can raise their children until they are grown up, get married and start their own families.

Before he came to Canada he asked for the blessing of their *cura parocco* (parish priest). He blessed him with *agua bendita* (holy wáter) and told him *no tengas miedo. Vaya con Dios*. (Do not be afraid. Go with God). When trials come, he advised him *ofrecer sus sufrimientos a Dios* (to offer your sufferings to God). his He and his wife combined prayer and *ayuno* (fasting) as he was following up with his papers in Mexico City. It was expensive because he was told to come back many times. They prayed especially hard when it came time to have a medical exam. He has heard of stories of people who fail the medical and are therefore not accepted into the program and prevented from leaving the country. He has also heard of people who had to pay a bribe for someone to change their medical results, so they can be approved.

When I showed him Figure 1-3, he said that family is the most precious thing in the world. His wife and he had a small gathering for both of their families before he left this year. Once in a while they also have parties in the farm where he works. They put together some money to make their own grilled chicken and eat it along with their favorite beers. He says there are so many brands of beer in the Beer Store but most of the time he buys Budwesier because it is the cheapest and on sale most of the time.

During the last family gathering they had before he went back to Canada, her mother prepared for him some *birria de Jalisco*. It was made out of *carne de chivo* (goat meat) and was really delicious. She also made some *pozole* (hominy soup) which is a *comida tradicional* where he comes from. One of the reasons people come to this church on Sunday is because *al termino de los servicios dominicales* (after the Sunday services),

there are several food trucks that sell *antojitos*¹³⁵ like burritos, tacos, and tamales. He said that the migrant workers enjoy them because they are done exactly the same way as they do it in Mexico.

When I showed him Figure 1-10, he says his first flight to Canada was very memorable. His departure was a very emotional event. *No fue una decisión fácil* (It was not an easy decision). The decision was made *después de orar y pensarlo bien* (after praying and thinking it through). He had a lot of *sentimientos encontrados* (mixed feelings) that day.

His mother started crying and then his wife *segua llorando* (followed crying) and then the children cried with her. Eventually even if he tried to control it, he could feel *las lagrimas en mis ojos* (the tears in my eyes). He found himself crying as well while waiting to check-in at the gate. He could not describe how he felt. He said it was a mixture of sadness and happiness. The mixed feelings stayed with him for many days. Now in his third season, he says he is used to coming and leaving home *mas o menos* (more or less). And he has experienced *un sinfin de bendiciones* (endless blessings). As a result of working in Canada *nuestra vida cambio mucho*. (our life changed a lot). In many ways, Canada is like *la tierra prometida* (the promised land) for him.

When I showed him figure 1-8, he said that he rarely attends religious gatherings. He does not go to church regularly in Mexico. His wife prays a rosary for him every now and then. She is sometimes joined by her mother and the children. His father just sits but

¹³⁵ *Antojitos* (literally "little cravings"), is prepared by street vendors and at small traditional markets in Mexico. Most of them include corn as an ingredient. These street foods include tacos, tamales, gorditas, and quesadillas. Most are available in the morning and the evening, as mid-afternoon is the time for the main formal meal of the day. Some say Mexico has one of the most extensive street food cultures in Latin America.

does not pray with them. He lifts up his entire family on Sundays when he attends the *Misa en Espanol* (Mass in Spanish). He asks God to take care of them, and keep them all in good health. He also prays for good health for himself. He believes that God *nos brinda todo lo necesario* (provides us with everything that is necessary). He is *muy agradecido* (very grateful) for how things have been these last few years. *El Senor* (The Lord) *has escuchado mis oraciones* (has answered my prayers). He says that when he prays he thank God on behalf of his family *por todas las cosas que nos ha dado*.(for all the things he has given us). When I asked him what faith was about he said *obedecer a Dios y seguir sus consejos* (Obey God and follow his counsel).

Two years ago, his father was diagnosed with cáncer. It brought the entire family together. *Orabamos juntas al Senor y La Virgen* (We prayed hard to the Lord and the Virgin) They all prayed hard that his father would live longer. They prayed for God's help. *Le pedíamos que nos diera fuerzas para aguantar*. (We asked him to give us the strength to endure). His father died a year ago. His mother is now all alone, after *treinta y cinco anos de matrimonio* (35 years of marriage). After his father died, his mother *no esta bien de salud* (was not in good health). His sister who *tiene mas de treinta anos* (is over thirty years old) and who is *sigue soltera* (still single) now stays at home with his mother. The last advice he got from his father before he died was *mira al futuro sin olvidar el pasado* (look to the future without forgetting the past).

What he enjoys most when coming to *Santa Misa* (Holy Mass) was *las canciones* (the songs). He says it is because of the music that *tenia tantas ganas de venir hoy*. (I wanted so much to come today). One person plays the guitar and the other four are the singers.They singing *con gozo* (with joy) and he can see from their faces that they do it

con el corazón (with the heart) as they sing *los himnos y alabanzas* (hymns and praises). It is the one part of *nuestra adoracion* (our worship) that he likes the most. Everything about the singing, *la melodía* (the melody), *el ritmo* (the rhythm) y la letra de *los canciones* (the lyrics of the songs) was great. Sometimes he feels that it is what draws him to attend church. He admits he sometimes falls asleep during the *sermón*. Some of the priests talk *por encima de las cabezas* (above their heads), He continues to go to church because with all the other Mexican men around from the different farms, he feels *un sentimiento de pertenencia* (a feeling of belonging).

When I showed him Figure 1-11, he says that he admires the way that modern means of transportation and technology are able to bridge distances. It used to be that it was very difficult to get anywhere from their town. And then the government built the *carreteras* (highways). Suddenly it changed everything. They were able to make trips to the city. They started watching foreign films in the theaters. They were able to eat food from international foodservice chains like McDonald's. He and his family remember their first trip to McDonald's. They had a wonderful time. The children said that when they grew up they wanted to work in McDonalds. The roads changed the way of life in the village as more and more people wanted to live and work in the city instead.

Back then the people moved from the urban areas to other cities in Mexico. Today they are not just going out of the village or the city. They are going out of the country to work in places like the US and Canada. He says he prefers to work in Canada rather than the US although he had relatives working in Oregon. Working in Canada *me ha traído muchos bendiciones* (has brought me many blessings).

He does not spend too much money for himself. The first thing he bought when he came to Canada three years ago was a pair of original Levi's Silver Tab jeans. He says he takes very good care of it. He has washed it many times but it still looks new. He is proud to show it to his friends in Mexico. He says that most of the Levi's back home are *falsificados* (fake goods). They are *muy semejante* (very similar) and much cheaper. He tells his friends that what he has is the real Levi's and he paid \$40 for it from his first paycheck.

His brother was among the first in his family to migrate. He took the risk of paying a *coyote* (human trafficker) to take him across the Sonora desert to Temecula near San Diego. It was a dangerous journey but his brother was ready to risk everything just so he can get to *El Norte* (the North). He heard stories from his brother about how he made it, but others didn't. Some died in the desert. Others, like the women he was with, made it but were raped by the coyotes. He does not recommend that any other member of their family do what he did. He said that his brothers still have bad dreams that come back to him. There are still times he is still awakened at night by nightmares of his desert crossing. It was a gruelling thirteen days in the desert, walking day and night and avoiding being caught by the *migra* (border patrol).

Two years after, another brother decided to cross. However he had another strategy. He would find a woman who was a US Citizen and get married to her, so that eventually he could get a "green card"¹³⁶. He met a Mexican woman in church. They started to go out and get to know each other. She introduced him to a friend of hers, also

¹³⁶ The "green card" is an identity card that accredits migrants as U.S. Residents. At present, it is no longer green because it has been replaced by a pink laser-readable card as a security measure. The name "green card" however is still being used by many. Obtaining the green card is an important step towards legal status, employment security and mobility. After five years, green card holders are eligible to apply for citizenship.

Mexican. He got involved with her and she found them together. She left and refused to marry him. His brother was honest in telling the other woman that he was just looking to marry someone to get his papers. The woman understood. They remained together for several years and had one daughter. *No iba bien* (It did not go well). After another year, they divorced. His brother now lives in Oregon and has since remarried. He proudly tells others that he is among those Mexicans who *tener parientes en Estados Unidos* (have relatives in the US).

When I showed him Figure 1-5, he said he does not read the Bible. He has heard from others that it helps them in their life. It teaches many things and it is a good place to find prayers to God. All of it does not appeal to him. The only time he knows he reads it is in the Sunday bulletin when he follows the deacon who reads the *gospel* before the *sermón* during Mass on Sundays. The leader says “*La Palabra de Dios*” (The Word of God) and everybody responds by saying “*Gracias a Dios*”. (Thanks be to God).

The copies of “Our Daily Bread” they distribute in church are all in English. Now and again there are a few copies of the spanish versión *Nuestro Pan Diario* (Our Daily Bread) but they disappear quickly.

When they go to town on Friday nights, there are *Testigos de Jehova* (Jehovah’s witnesses) that have a kiosk with lots of *publicaciones religiosas* (religious publications). He remembers them as going *de casa en casa* (house to house) in Mexico. They gave him copies *La Atalaya* (The WatchTower). They are very friendly people. They stand at the street corner close to the *cantina* (bar) where he and his friends go to watch football while eating Mexican food prepared by Mexicans who now own restaurants in the area.

One night they invited him to attend *un reunión* (a meeting). He agreed because they said there would be a free dinner. Since he was early he *ayudaba en la cocina* (helped in the kitchen). He just listened to the preaching. He wondered whether someday he might also become a *predicador* (preacher), but he was not religious. And as much as he liked how the Jehovah's Witness made him feel special, he *no quiso dejar las tradiciones catolicas* (did not want to leave the catholic tradition).

He did not like the fact that they kept telling him that *la doctrina católica es una enseñanza falsa* (Catholic doctrine is false teaching). They said it was wrong of Catholics to call *el papa* (the Pope) as *Santo Padre* (Holy Father). There is only one holy father, and that is *Padre Celestial* (Heavenly Father). He who is *padre nuestro que está en los cielos* (our father who is in heaven). Eventually he stopped talking to them. They offered him a copy of their bible to take with him. He politely told them *no me interesaba* (I was not interested).

He said that the interview *ha sido un verdadero apoyo para mi*. (has been a real support to me). He had to leave to return to the yellow schoolbus that brought them to church. He shook my hand and said *hay mucho mas!* (There is much more!). I never saw him again.

Esteban

When I first met Esteban it was on at a health clinic on a rainy Friday afternoon. He said this was the first time he had been invited to participate in an interview. He was complaining about the muscle pain in his shoulders. Because of the pain, in the last week . he said *solo trabajaba tres horas por dia* (he only worked three hours a day). He has had an injury in that same place two years ago and it feels like it has come back.

He filed a claim for it with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), but his claim was denied. They told him it was not directly work-related. He missed a few days of work when it first happened and he did not get paid for those days. He said he was grateful that there are clinics around that are organized by the local health unit specifically to serve the needs of migrant farmworkers.

When I showed him Figure 1-1, he says that he is not very religious. He has attended services in different places. The last one he went to some years ago called themselves *Ministerios Rios de Vida* (River of Life Ministries). They told him that *alabanza abre las ventanas de bendicion* (praise opens the windows of blessing). They asked him to come and join them every Sunday in order to receive more blessings for himself and his family. God cannot give blessing, *Dios no puede hacerlo* (God cannot do it), if we don't allow him. They said they would teach him how to *alabar a Dios en cualquier situacion*. (praise God in any situation).

He told the person inviting him *no es tan simple* (it is not that simple). He believes the important thing is *sobrevivir las luchas que trae la vida* (survive the challenges that life brings) *dia con dia* (day by day). For him as a migrant worker, *no ha sido facil* (it has not been easy). He has been *a traves de una serie pruebas* (through a series of trials). What is important is *no perder la esperanza* (to not lose hope).

He said that what he is sharing with me is a *pequena historia de mi vida* (a small history of my life). He said that in spite of the many challenges of life, he has learned to *mantener la cabeza en alto y seguir adelante* (keep his head up high and move on).

Figure 1-12



When I showed him Figure 1-13, he said it reminds him of the bunkhouse where he lives with thirty other workers, all of them from Mexico. They are housed in five bunkhouses near the farm. It is all open dormitory style, everyone under one roof. A plastic curtain divides the dorm from the common room and beside it is the common kitchen where they cook their own meals.

Their kitchen has a cement floor, but the roof leaks when it rains. And lately it has been raining a lot. There is a separate building for bathrooms and laundry. At the common room in the bunkhouse, the TV is on all day even when no one is watching. Since everything is in English, he does not understand a word. He just sits on one of the beat up couches and looks at the screen. Some months ago, a snake was able to enter the recreation room. Some of the migrant workers said it was a *malaviso* (bad omen).

This is now his tenth year working as a migrant farm worker. Back in Mexico, he and his wife had no savings. *En tiempos de necesidad* (in times of necessity) they would run to his parents and close relatives to borrow money. They had no TV or newspapers, all they

had was the radio that they relied on for local and international news. Occasionally, their two daughters went hungry. This was very painful for him to see.

He had no fixed job so he just took whatever came. Eventually, they had to sell the land they were living on and rented their house from the new owners. His mother encouraged him to keep working hard. She encouraged him to *sólo se paciente* (just be patient). Someday *todo estara bien* (everything will be okay). When she first said that to him, he remembers how *las lagrimas comenzaron a correr por su mejilla* (the tears started to run down her cheeks). She was *una madre soltera* (a single mom) when she gave birth to him.

Things are better now. Since he is not home for most of the year, his wife and his mother take care of bringing up the children. That was the situation for many other women in their village. He describes his wife as *la mujer de mis sueños* (the woman of my dreams). She has been a great help through all their life together. He hopes that *que los caminos nunca nos separen* (they never part ways).

He communicates regularly with her eldest daughter Fatima on Facebook. He said they named her Fatima because she was born on May 13. *Es cuando a los tres niños en Portugal se les apareció la Virgen de Fátima*. (It is when the Virgin of Fatima appeared to the three children in Portugal). He hopes he can send her to university to fulfil her dream of being a pharmacist. He is saving up for that. In his last Facebook message to her, he told her something he read from a book: *nunca pierdas tu sonrisa. El mundo seria oscuro sin ella*. (Do not lose your laughter. The world will be dark without it.) He send her pictures of the seasons in Canada. He says he loves spring and fall . *El spring me encanta, el spring y el fall*. (I love the spring, spring and fall).

He says that a third of his salary goes to taxes and other deductions. He calls home every other day. He did not know anyone when he first came to Canada. When he came he told himself he would work in the program for just three years. If all goes well, he will be coming back again next spring for his eleventh year as a migrant farmworker. It took a while for him before he established friendship with other workers.

The major challenge for him up to now is that he is unable to communicate in English. He has to rely on others to translate. He remembers how on his first week at work his boots broke apart with the mud. He had to use duct tape to hold them together. It was embarrassing because it was the only pair he had. Eventually he had to get a new pair with his first pay.

That was a long time ago, he said. He repeated what he said earlier *las cosas están mucho mejor ahora* (things are much better now). When he comes home, it will be time for the *cosecha*, when they will reap the maize that will feed them for the next year. *Dios es bueno* (God is good).

At the health center where we met, he said that he was happy to see that there were *recursos* (resources) and *materiales en español* (materials in Spanish) that were *faciles de entender* (easy to understand). Better yet, all of them were *gratis* (free). The doctors and nurses and volunteers, some of whom doubled up as *promotores de salud* (health promoters) were all very friendly and kind to the workers. Today they gave him a *folleto* (brochure) that contained a course called *Nuestro Camino a la Buena Salud* (Our Path to Good Health). He said he was always very interested in reading materials *para mejorar la*

salud (to improve health) because he believes that health is so precious for migrant workers.

Figure 1-13



When I showed him Figure 1-13, he said that it looks similar to the greenhouses where he has worked in and the one where he works in now. There are two Mexican women who deliver food to the *invernaderos* (greenhouses) for \$5 a meal in a styrofoam box. They cook very good *mole poblano*.¹³⁷ They find that it is actually cheaper to buy prepared meals than cook their own food. These women cook much better than the men can cook *por si mismos* (for themselves). This is one of the happy moments of *la vida cotidiana* (daily life) at the greenhouses.

¹³⁷ *Moles* come in various flavors and ingredients, with chili peppers as the common factor. However, the classic version *mole poblano*, has a dark red or brown sauce served over meat. They say that the states with the best known moles are Puebla and Oaxaca, but other regions in Mexico also make their own versions of mole sauces.

When I showed him Figure 1-3, he said that on Friday nights they have a little time for some entertainment. There is a local bar that also has *un parilla* (a grill). That is where they *ir a divertimos un poco* (go to have some fun). He goes there for beer and *para disfrutar de una fajita* (to enjoy a fajita) or a sizzling *carne asada* (grilled meat) and sing at the karaoke.

There is a girl there whom his co-workers called *La Malinche*¹³⁸. She is the *cantinera* (bar girl) who doubles up as a cashier, bartender and dancer. During the past week they went there to have *una fiesta de cumpleaños* (a birthday party) for one of his friends at the greenhouse. He described the evening as *fue muy divertido* (it was a lot of fun). During these times he feels that *la vida es bueno* (life is good), at least *por el momento* (for the moment).

On the wall of the clinic, there is a bumper sticker that says “If you ate today, thank a farmer.” He goes around town on his bike. There is no bus service that go near the greenhouses. One day, he together with his work mates biked all the way to Niagara Falls. They took a lot of pictures to send home.

In the literature he got from the clinic, he also showed me other brochures that spoke to the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. In the brochure, he said that Canada is described as *un firme defensor de los derechos humanos* (a firm defender of human rights). Canada condemns *los actos de explotacion* (acts of exploitation).

Lately there have been union organizers and student activists who have been inviting them to attend workshops on migrant rights. They teach workers how to

¹³⁸ *Malinche* is the name of the translator and mistress of Spanish conquistador, Hernan Cortez. Some see her as the mother of Mexico who effectively negotiated ways to prevent the Spaniards from making their conquest of the Americas even more violent than it was. Others take an opposite view and consider her a traitor.

reivindicar sus derechos (reclaim their rights). They teach workers how to document *las quejas* (complaints). They say that they are working hard to change the law to give more protect migrant workers. They asked them for *sugerencias* (suggestions) on how to improve the program.

They say that even if currently migrant workers in Ontario *estan restringidos de sindicarse* (are restricted from forming unions), this law may change someday soon. One other province, British Columbia has already allowed migrant workers to unionize. When that day comes, they will be able to negotiate for *mejores salarios y beneficios* (better salaries and benefits).

They will hopefully have better ways to deal with *de reclamos para tratar con patrones abusivos* (with complaints against abusive employers). At the moment there are *miles de patrones* in the program, but *solo uno de ellos* have been cited for labor violations, according to the organizer. At present nobody complains because *temen ser deportados* (they are afraid to be deported).

The complaints of migrant farm workers that he has heard include *el racismo* (racism), *deducciones injustos* (unfair deductions) *servicios sanitarios inadecuados* (inadequate health services) *prohibicion de negociacion colectiva* (prohibition against collective bargaining), *no proceso de recurso* (no process of appeal) and other *barreras para acceder a servicios esenciales* (barrier to accessing essential services).

This last time before he went to Canada the Mexican official reminded him not to make trouble. He and other Mexican migrant workers were told that *van a Canada a trabajar* (they go to Canada to work) and *no causen problemas* (not cause problems). At the greenhouses however, he was told that it all depended on the foreman. If he likes you,

you stayed. If he does not, you're gone. So they have learned to keep quiet and just do what he says.

One of the leaflets he received from the community organizer said "*Su trabajo es duro. Permita que la UFCW Canada trabaje duro para usted.*" Abusive employers however tell workers that if they don't like the conditions they should leave. There are many other Mexicans who can take their jobs. He says this is unfortunately true. In Mexico *hay mucha mas gente lista para trabajan en Canada* (there are many more people ready to work in Canada). All that Mexican migrant workers really want is *para ser tratado con respeto* (to be treated with respect). He says that many the migrants he works with *pidiendo al Señor que por favor les de fuerzas para aguantar* (ask the Lord to please give them the strength to endure). He does not want his children to become migrant workers. He wants them to have a better chance at life that he had. He himself has known nothing except poverty all his life. He says he values family most of all. *Yo creo que lo más importante es la familia.* (I believe what is most important is family). *La familia es lo primero* (Family comes first). He wants his children to do better. *Si yo he sido una cosa yo quiero que ellos sean más todavía.* (If I have done one thing, I want them to be even more).

CHAPTER 6

REFLECTIONS ON FAITH EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANT WORKERS

In this chapter, I share my reflections on the faith experiences of migrant workers as shared by them in the field interviews. In reporting on these experiences, I continue to use the approach of “lived religion”. Lived Religion as discussed refers to religion as practiced and experienced by ordinary people in the context of their everyday lives (McGuire 2003).

6.1. Lived Religion and Health

One of the themes that stood out in my interviews with migrant workers is health. It is one of the things that they consider very important in their work and life. People brought up in Western Christian tradition tend to view “the spiritual” and “the material” as two separate worlds. Spirituality is framed as something that is not of this world or that is opposed to whatever this world is about. Some believers have been told to deny the body because it gets in the way of spirituality.

For the migrant workers interviewed, the body is very real. They know when it is strong and when it is weak. They have a sense of how their bodies are after a long hot day in the fields. They stoop and kneel and bend and at the end of the day they feel their body hurt. They do their best to keep their bodies healthy because they know that if they get sick during the months they are on contract, there can be serious consequences. Depending in how their employers decide, they can lose their jobs and be sent home.

The body is the way that the migrant worker experiences the world around him. It is through the body that the migrant worker sees, hears, smells, touches and feels his daily

work in the farm. His body becomes very sensitive to things like heat and cold, because he works outdoors. When he comes in the Spring the weather is cool and pleasant, and then comes Summer and it becomes hot and then very hot and humid and then it gets cold again during the Fall. The changing of the seasons to someone who works in the farm requires the ability to adjust and adapt to the environment. It is clear to the migrant worker that a healthy body is what assures continuity of work and success. The interviews show that one of the things migrant workers do in their prayers is to request for good health.

6.2. Lived Religion and Faith Practices

From the interviews, we can see how a migrant workers perform their faith and how these actions shape their experience of the world. We notice that they tend to pick and choose whatever works for their particular needs. It could be praying to a saint, making a pilgrimage, or in Antonio's case, keeping an image of the Sacred Heart in one's wallet. It appears that what is important for the him is to have someone or something he can lean on, since a migrant worker's life can sometimes be as Armando suggests: precarious like *una vela en el viento* (a candle in the wind).

Many of the migrant workers I talked to feel very vulnerable. They look for people or things they can depend on for support. Saying prayers for good health is sometimes resorted for relief from the anxiety about getting sick. Any saint or virgin that can assure him of health and protect him from the *mal ojo* (evil eye) of disease and *mala suerte* (bad luck) wins his loyalty. He is prepared to do what it takes to keep his relationship with the saint or Virgin, in exchange for this assurance.

He makes *mandas* (requests) and promises and he intends to keep them if it will guarantee him good health while he is on the job. He may never use the words

“spirituality” or “faith” to describe what he does and his beliefs may not comply with the official teaching of the Catholic church, but the important thing to him is that it is his.

Belief in a power that sustains, heals and restores is what holds his faith together. I believe that when the migrant worker attends to his body and prays to God for good health, he is making an act of faith.

When he takes care of his body whether by bathing it to wash off harmful fertilizers and pesticides or when he takes extra precautions to avoid workplace injuries, he is engaging in spiritual practice.

6.3 Lived Religion and Migration

Representations of migrants in the dominant culture are often framed and constituted around race and gender, religion and ethnicity serving as identity markers. This is important since identity is tied up with power and privilege.

In regard to social power, there is an advantage in migrating to a country where one's religion is in the majority and a disadvantage when it is not. Migrant workers in Ontario are happy to know that there are churches around where they can go for worship. Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist migrants on the other hand have to reposition themselves as a minority when they come to Canada. It has been observed that people in the host country tend to read and impose religious identity and social traits on migrants. Syrian and other Middle Eastern refugees in Canada, for example, are presumed to be Muslim even when they are Christian.

When Mexican migrant workers are described using phenotypical features such as “brown” or “short”, their skin and body becomes them. When their religious practice is described as “Mexican” faith practices, then even their religion has become racialized.

Racial and religious discrimination is based on people's prejudices around religion, skin color, gender or body type. An *hijab* (veil) on a woman and a turban or *kippah*¹³⁹ in a man is considered a second skin, a public symbol of religious identity. There has been much debate lately in Canada about these cultural/religious symbols.

As reflected in many of the stories told by migrant workers during the interviews, they find solace and support from particular religious beliefs, traditions and christian texts. They are able to relate their experiences with stories of exile and migrants in the Biblical narrative. In the stories they read or that are read to them, they experience God speaking to them and acting on their behalf. They can identify with prayers and poetries of lament like Psalm 137 and say "By the waters of Ontario we sat down and wept when we remembered Mexico".

Abraham leaving his homeland of Ur to go to a land that God will show him, Joseph being sold as a slave and forcibly transported into Egypt, Ruth and Naomi fleeing famine in Moab and ending up in Bethlehem and Daniel in a lion's den in Babylon are stories that belong to the same archetype of journey and return. This fits in well with the experience of migrants going to Canada and returning home every year.

It does not come as a surprise therefore that these stories provide solace to migrant workers especially those who are on their first contract. Many of them remember the exact date of their arrival in Canada as an important milestone in their lives. They are able to narrate their stories starting from the date they first came. Some of them interpret their lives according to biblical texts they have received from others or have discovered on their own. These texts are given to them by the churches they go to or sometimes by

¹³⁹ A *kippah* (literal translation:dome) is a skullcap worn by Jewish men as a sign of respect and reverence when praying, studying or during worship.

evangelical missionaries who plant themselves in strategic street corners on Thursday and Friday nights when the migrants come to town. They are able to relate to migrant stories in the media, in music, in movies, and the biblical narrative because of their own personal experience of migration.

One of the things that migrant workers can teach us is how to read the Bible through migrants' eyes. This enhances our ability to speak of God from more than one place. (Bedford 2005) A closer reading of the interviews will uncover what I consider to be missiological questions: Who is God for the migrant worker? How do they understand "the will of God"? When do they see the need to pray to God? What do they pray for? To whom do they pray? How do they describe what happens to them when they pray? Where is God for them? The answers to these questions offer us a way towards understanding religion as lived by migrant workers and perhaps other migrants as well, including those of other faiths.

How religion is defined is important for academics and scholars, politicians and policy-makers. The migrant workers I interviewed did not appear worried about whether what they were saying and doing can be considered "religious" or not. For some it did not seem to matter what their practices and spiritual expressions were called. They just wanted to tell me stories about life as they experienced it.

What happens before, during and after the season is over is what makes up the stories they tell and re-tell. Some say that their migrant experience becomes richer with each re-telling. I doubt that any of them will describe what they are doing as "theology". From what I have heard, I am persuaded that as they weave their experiences with their stories of God, they are practicing theology. They are reflecting on what is going on and

connecting it with what they believe to be true about God and the world. They are in this sense, religious actors performing their faith stories everytime they tell it.

Their stories are “lived religion” and need to be accepted as religious discourse. That of course is not yet the case. Stories of migrant workers are not valued as much as academic discourses on migration. What they describe as their “faith” is often belittled and not even considered as faith by others.

In many of their stories, migrant workers use words like trust and confidence. They trust that if they seek to be good, they will be rewarded with blessings from God. They are confident that in return for obedience God will keep his promises. These attitudes have biblical foundations. Many stories in the Old Testament indicate that God will keep faith with Israel if Israel keeps faith with God.

Most of the migrants I talked to believe that God hears and answers prayer. They also have their explanations as to why some prayers are not answered. One of them is that God knows what is best. Everything God does is for the best. What is best is for us to submit to the will of God. One has prayed well if one is able to trust and surrender everything in God’s hands.

6.4. Lived Religion, Hospitality and Migrant Justice

Hospitality is an ethic that is central to the Hebrew Bible. Religious teachings like “Welcoming the Stranger”¹⁴⁰ however are not unique or exclusive to the Christian faith. The tradition of hospitality towards strangers, travellers and foreigners is present in

¹⁴⁰ “Welcoming the Stranger” is the title of a document published by the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNCHR) in 2013. “Welcoming Christ in the Migrant” is a document from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2011. The material became the theme for National Migration Week in January 8-14, 2012. The material included an artistic rendering of disciples welcoming a stranger on the road to Emmaus.

other religions as well. There are for example traditions of sanctuary and protection in all three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The dominant discourse in many places in the Global North is not about hospitality but fear of the other brought about to a large extent by the ever present vulnerability of nation-states to acts of terrorism. One of the things religious groups and faith-based organizations have done is to resist this dominant media narrative while pushing for reform of legislation and advocating for migrant rights. They frame the conversation around migration as a humanitarian rather than a security issue. They advocate standing alongside migrants and refugees and building solidarity around a shared humanity rather than support towards exclusion based on nationality, ethnicity, class, education, gender or race.

Welcome Sign



This “Welcome Your Neighbor” sign grew out of an idea that Immanuel Mennonite Church, in Harrisonburg, Virginia put on their Facebook page. It communicates a message of welcome by saying “*No importa de donde eres*” (It is not important where you are from.) Posting signs in their neighborhoods that had negative attitudes towards

immigrants was their way of showing their “deep commitment to sharing God’s love in the world” to friend and stranger alike. Their message is “No matter where you’re from, we’re glad you’re our neighbor” in three different color bands written in the three main languages spoken in the neighborhood. The sign has found its way across the border and is visible in many church yards in Ontario.

Many churches and congregations speak of “welcoming the stranger”. Action towards migrant justice is less visible. Churches tend to engage in acts of charity and public service, social/church events like dinners and religious celebrations for migrant workers. In Ontario, Canada it is generally non-church groups who are actively organizing and mobilizing workers towards collective bargaining or urging government to provide a pathway to permanent residence and citizenship for migrant workers. Much work still needs to be done in order to create more awareness and public conversations around migration, hospitality and migrant justice. Greater attention has to be given to the structural inequalities that are inscribed in Canadian immigration policy and the SAWP itself. Research can help take the conversation further and close the gap between religion and migration.

6.5. Lived Religion and Popular Devotion

Devotion as understood by many of migrant workers interviewed invariably involved personal devotions to the Virgin Mary and the Saints. There does not seem to be a great deal of systematic investigation into this aspect of lived religion among migrants. One area I would like to explore is whether these devotional practices can perhaps be viewed as acts or rituals of resistance against the hegemony of colonial western religion.

One insight from the sociology of knowledge, is that there is a relationship between ideas and the context out of which they grow. There is a sense that many of the narratives of the migrant workers cannot be understood without an understanding of the Mexican context or what Oscar Lewis referred to as “the culture of poverty”. Their faith perspectives and practices can only be sustained if there are inside communities that understand and support these beliefs and practices. Migrant workers rely on each other, their culture and their families to maintain their own religious worlds.

In the absence of other migrants in the same farm doing the same thing, doubts and uncertainties tend to arise. What going to Mass on Sunday, personal rituals and devotions do is to support the validity of their faith experiences. They continue to hold on to their beliefs aware that it differs from the way religion is practiced in Canada. In a sense, migrant workers in Ontario are practicing the radical non-conformity demanded by the Christian scriptures.

Reciprocity as a cultural practice is carried on in relationships with the saints. Favors are asked and when granted they return the favor by acts of devotion and thanksgiving. They tell stories of people who have been helped by the Virgin that decide to build a shrine in her honor, as an expression of their gratitude. Letting other people know through *testimonios* (testimonies) of the favor one has received is also another way of thanking the saint. For others making a pilgrimage to shrines with the entire family is a way of saying *gracias* “thank you”.

Migrant workers have many ways of saying thanks, beyond formal praise and worship in church. Those born in a different culture need to understand how gratitude is expressed in other cultures. There has to be an openness to seeing the world the way the

other sees it. Understanding how migrant workers view the world requires a readiness to accept the invisible, *lo que ningun ojo puedo ver* (that which no eye can see) as equally real. The interviews suggest that many beliefs are based on this other world that is unseen but impacts the everyday world just the same. Migrant workers seem to be comfortable living in *ambos mundos* (both worlds) at the same time.

Why does the market vendor, the sex worker, the drug addict hang a pendant of Santa Muerte around their neck? Many in Mexico would respond that it is because she is the protector of the oppressed and the forgotten. Marcos says he remains faithful to Santa Muerte because “she understands” him. Without doubt, believing and doing certain things fulfils some basic human needs. What these needs are can only be guessed by those who are unfamiliar with the culture.

Migrant workers have their own “go-to” power or *santo* they can pray to when they need supernatural help. The *curanderos* (native healers) that people go to as a complement or alternative to the more expensive medical doctors also have their own spiritual helpers that they invoke before they practice their craft. Some people who go to these native healers *no tiene fe* (do not have faith) in doctors. Even if they did, they cannot afford to pay them.

Some scholarly attempts to codify these practices fail to capture the inner worlds that they represent. The connections between the praying person and the object of veneration is difficult to express in words alone. Lived religion in the lives of the migrant workers I talked to continues to have a mysterious and ineffable feel to it. They point to a world that is real to them. When they are inside it, it has everything to do with who they are at that moment.

There is a spiritual richness and depth to this than is commonly supposed. Those who write off the truth of migrant experiences of God and the validity of their faith expressions have likely not had these experiences themselves. When people speak of “reality”, they speak like there is only one reality. In the faith perspectives expressed by migrant workers’ experiences there appears to be other realities that are at play.

Lorenzo’s comment “*Si tienes devoción, Dios vendrá a ti*” (“If you have devotion, God will come to you”) speaks to his own piety. How God comes into one’s life varies with the individual. For some, God comes to them when somebody they love is cured of a lingering illness or is saved from an accident or gets a job in the city or in another country. For many migrant workers, God came to them when they got their visa to work in Canada.

They pray for very particular things and they will go to whomever they can ask for help or wherever they can find solutions to everyday concerns. If all else fails, there is always *San Judas*, (Saint Jude Thaddeus) ¹⁴¹ the patron saint of the impossible. The logic seems to be that if all else fails, anything is worth a try. Migrant workers feel that given their circumstances, they need to use every resource available to them. Many believe that *asi es la vida* (this is life): this is the way things work out in their world. It may be hard to believe but they say this with such great dignity.

In a migrant workers life, something is always going on. Meanings are ascribed to events as they happen. Very often the explanation given to incidents of healing is that they are miracles brought about through the intercession of the saints that they have prayed to.

¹⁴¹ In Christian hagiography, St. Jude Thaddeus was the brother of St James the apostle. In Catholic iconography, he is depicted as having a flame over his head and carrying a round plate containing the image of Jesus over his chest. He is known as the Patron Saint of Impossible Causes. Robert Orsi in his book “Thank you St Jude” (1996) regards him as the most popular saint of American Catholic Laity particularly among women.

One goes to the saint that tradition says is able to deliver cures for certain things (e.g. Santa Lucia for blindness). Agustin's mother told him *no one cura ciegos como Santa Lucia*. (cures blindness like Santa Lucia).

In listening to migrant workers, I noticed that they have many miracle stories. Anything that cannot be explained by reason is often referred to as *milagros* (miracles). For Joaquin the miracle was the complete turnaround in his behavior when he became a Pentecostal. He credits *la unción* (the anointing) and *el poder del Espíritu Santo* (the power of the Holy Spirit) for this miracle in his life.

As social constructions, miracles are based on certain presuppositions found in beliefs, values, traditions and worldviews too numerous to name. They become "real" or not, depending on one's faith or cosmology or preferred theories of causality. There are those who believe that their prayers cause God or a saint to act on their behalf. Another view is that if a blessing comes through, it is the result of prayers and rituals performed by the supplicant.

It is prayer that causes things like miracles to happen. As always, they need the faith and cooperation of the believer. As Ignacio tells his son *a quien madruga, Dios le ayuda*. (The one who gets up early, God helps). God happens to them in everything that is going on. Faith perspectives of migrant workers demonstrate how the sacred is imagined in ways that are neither fixed nor bounded. It allows a view of God who is working through whatever happens.

As circumstances change, their faith perspectives evolve as well. Faith practices shift as a result of one's life experiences. Renato says that his coming to Canada *abrió mis*

ojos (opened my eyes). Faith is often seen as a daily devotion of doing the right thing for one's self and one's family. For many it is rooted in deeper convictions expressed through phrases like "God will provide", "God will take care of us", "God will be there for us", "God will protect us from all harm" Doing good or doing the right thing is a significant expression of one's religious commitments. Migrant workers say that their faith teaches them to do the right thing and it helps them through the bad times.

Others connect faith with a way of knowing. It is *de conocer a Dios* (knowing God). It is also a practice: *andar con El* (walk with Him). The symbols they use (eg *santos*) when practicing their faith can be seen as metaphors for the way they portray God. It is their way of relating to that which is sacred in their lives, according to how they were brought up in their culture and tradition. Some say that saints are intermediaries who bring their prayers and petitions, but in other cases (e.g. Santa Muerte) they are considered divine beings as well. One migrant worker considers Cesar Chavez¹⁴² as a saint although he does not pray to him. Overall, my experience of the migrant workers I interviewed are that they are strong, prayerful and wise human beings.

In any case, the migrant workers relate to saints as real persons, not just symbols. This is evident in the very intimate language they use when addressing their saints. One migrant worker says *perdóname virgencita* (forgive me dear virgin) every time he feels he has done wrong. Others report that in the past they or someone they know has written *cartas de amor* (love letters) to the Virgin and sent it to one of her shrines in Mexico. As far as the migrant workers are concerned, the saints are like us and unlike us. Marcos prays

¹⁴² Cesar Chavez was a Mexican American labor leader and civil rights activist who founded the United Farm Workers (UFW) union. His birthday March 31 is a state holiday in Colorado, California and Texas. He popularized the slogan *Si, se puede* (Yes, it can be done), which became the campaign slogan of Barack Obama in 2008.

to *Santa Muerte* because she understands him. In Agustin's household, the saints in the *altarcito* are all part of *la familia* (the family).

Their faith expressions contain their longings for a better life, financial security and well-being and a way out of *la pobreza* (poverty). I soon found out during the interviews that there was so much meaning loaded into words like *buena suerte* (good luck) and *mala suerte* (bad luck). How is luck to be understood in the context of religious faith? Luck sounds so random. When migrant workers talk about luck, they do so with the awareness that God is in control. When Armando says things will get better for him and his family in five years, he also says *Ojalá Dios quiera* (God willing) acknowledging that in the end it is God's will that prevails.

Among all the saints that migrant workers pray to, Our Lady of Guadalupe has a unique position as patrona representing God's faithfulness to the country (Mexico) and *la raza*¹⁴³ (the race). That may be why she is displayed prominently in their homes, *altarcitos* (little altars), offices, commercial establishments and churches. Some catholic churches in Canada that I visited in the course of fieldwork also have chapels with statues or images of Our Lady of Guadalupe and celebrate her through a small procession in town before the migrant workers leave. The procession is supported by small businesses who also benefit from migrant workers patronage eight months a year.

6.6. Lived Religion and the Everyday

I have used Meredith McGuire's work as my theoretical framework in researching the religious worlds of migrants. In her critique of sociology, she proposes that scholars

¹⁴³ *La Raza* was used by Mexican writer, Jose Vasconcelos in the title of his book *La Raza Cosmica* (The Cosmic Race). It expresses racial/ethnic pride. The term became popular in the 1970s during the Chicano movement in the United States, especially in places like Texas and Southern California.

stop privileging beliefs over practices and instead learn more about how people live and embody beliefs. The interviews confirm that for many of the respondents, religion is not limited to what people say they believe or what they do in church on Sundays. It includes activities done at home, in the community, and in their case, in the farms where they live and work.

They use religious symbols like images of *santos* (saints) and perform practices like lighting a *veladora* (votive candle) to express a faith that is rooted in their native traditions. It is one of the ways they practice being transnational, occupying two countries (Canada and Mexico) at the same time. This becomes evident in the comment of one migrant farmworker who says that the reason he goes to Mass on Sunday is *me recuerda a casa* : it reminds him of home. For those described themselves as *desarraigado* (uprooted) from their families and homes, religious practices are a way of rooting themselves by keeping their memories of faith and culture alive. Their experiences is similar to Israelite exiles remembering Jerusalem while weeping and singing their songs by the rivers of Babylon.

These faith practices are woven from stories and traditions that have been handed down from one generation to another in Mexico. One migrant worker remembers the statue of the Virgen of San Juan de Lagos being placed in his head, another has a tattoo of La Muerte on his right forearm. What name can we give to these practices? How are we to interpret them theologically?

For some of the migrant workers I interviewed the practices serve as *anclas* (anchors) for how they express faith. For Antonio, an image of *Sagrado Corazon* (Sacred Heart) in his *cartera* (wallet) is a constant reminder of God's *amor* (love) for him. It gives

him a feeling of security knowing that the God who protected him in Salvatierra continues to protect him in Canada.

When migrant workers describe their faith in their own words, they go beyond our stereotypes of what faith looks like. They talked about daily chores that they do in the farm that they don't often do at home in Mexico: cooking meals, washing dishes, doing laundry. The stories as I have written them are not as alive as when they were spoken. There is a richness to "orality" that cannot be captured in text. I have tried my best however to listen attentively and report what I have been told, often quoting the Spanish words verbatim as I heard them.

6.7. Lived Religion and Food

Migrant workers need to prepare their own meals. In order to do this they have to plan for what to buy and how much to spend. They budget a certain amount of money for groceries and produce every week. Some buy the same things every week (milk,vegetables,meat). Some pray before meals and others do not. Everyone agrees on the importance of eating well as a way to remain healthy and strong. Except for those who already know each other, there is often not as much conversation happening during meals.

6.8 Lived Religion and Culture

There is a sense in which the Mexican Migrant Farm Worker is different from other farm workers in Canada (eg Caribbean Farm Workers). Although both share the lived reality of oppression based on race, ethnicity, class, language and immigration status, they inhabit a different religious/cultural and symbolic universe. While both claim to be Christian and may have common beliefs, there are aspects of Mexican migrant faith that are

unique to their culture. When I asked them what these might be, one of the answers I got was *todo mexicano lo sabe* (all Mexicans know it).

The fact that the majority of Mexican farm workers identify themselves as *catolicos* (catholics) as distinct from *cristianos* or *pentecostales* or *renacidos* (christians or pentecostals or born again) does not mean that they consider themselves as official members of the Catholic Church or that they subscribe to catholic dogma and doctrine. Many of them will find it difficult to describe the Catholic “religion” or talk about “what Catholics believe”.

They are therefore sometimes referred to in the literature as “nominal” Christians (i.e. in name only). Their religious beliefs and practices were developed and are sustained through their interactions with others who believe the same things they do. Often their faith expressions are used to counteract feelings of powerlessness and insecurity amidst hardship.

In this regard, faith is considered to lead to empowerment, a way of gaining a felt sense that one has some measure of control over events that happen. When Agustin made a promise to the Virgin of San Juan de Lagos, there was a sense of agency as well as an accountability to perform a religious act in exchange. The fact that some of these practices are difficult to explain does not matter as much to the one who performs them. What matters is whether they produce the desired outcomes. It did not matter to Agustin that the image of the Virgin was “*muy pequena*” (very small) . What mattered to him was that it was “*muy milagrosa*”. It was effective in producing miracles.

This is a different view from studies by the Pew Research Center that measures “being religious” according to belief in God, frequency of prayer, attendance at worship services, adherence to a denomination and importance given to religion. Through these measures people are categorized as being more religious, less religious or highly religious. Migrant workers do not fit easily into this kind of categorization.

6.9 Lived Religion and Remittances

Migrant workers going *al centro* (downtown) to *enviar las remesas* (send remittances) on Friday nights can be categorized as just routine. There are some migrant workers however who see it as a weekly ritual of sacrificial giving for their families. It is symbolic of offering the fruits of their labor: a week of backbreaking work in the fields is being given in generosity for the people they left behind. They do this out of love. They do it with the hope that little by little the remittances will help others *salir de la pobreza* (get out of poverty). Some funds go to *mejorar la casa* (improve the house) or send children through school. If there is anything left over, they go to *inversiones* (investments). On occasion some end up as contributions/donations to church and community as well.

6.10 Lived Religion and Faith Perspectives

Migrant workers interviewed say that their faith is important to them. While they and other migrants elsewhere say that faith matters, there is very little research data on why and how it matters. Their practices appear to be simple on the surface but upon examination contain deep insight into the life of faith. Lorenzo expresses faith in the statement : *Dios dispone todas las cosas para el bien* (God arranges everything for the good). The line is taken from the Letter to the Romans and is also found in migrant stories cited in this research: the Joseph Esther Daniel and Ruth narratives.

Gratitude is a theme that runs through many of the stories that migrant workers tell. They show how it is possible to be grateful in the midst of adversity and uncertainty. They speak about God as *la presencia* (the presence) that they feel when they pray and also when they work. What some interpret as “passivity” and “fatalism” can also be read as a radical acceptance of the tentativeness of their life situation as they move from one eight month contract to the next, uncertain if there will be a next time.

Noam Chomsky (1997:119) connects this condition of uncertainty to the ideology of flexible labor markets. He says that “flexible labor markets is a fancy way of saying when you go to sleep at night, you don’t know if you’ll have a job tomorrow morning.”¹⁴⁴ In my conversation with farmowners and growers I have met some who are truly concerned for the welfare of the migrant workers and would not see what they do as exploitation. I am reminded of Robert Coles introduction:

He wants to make sure God is on his side. The minister says Jesus is on the side of the poor, so that could mean trouble for him (the grower) and he’s trying to avoid that. Getting himself on the wrong side of the Lord because that can mean big, big trouble.¹⁴⁵

While some describe the situation of migrant workers as exploitation and oppression, other migrant workers like Antonio believe that it is their *destino* (fate). There are also some who believe like Miguel that they can change their fate. Miguel says that the reason he decided to work in Canada was *para cambiar mi destino* (to change my destiny). Others feel that there is nothing that can be done to change it, if that is what one’s life is

¹⁴⁴ Noam Chomsky, (1997) *Class Warfare: Interviewed by David Barsamian*, Vancouver, New Star Books

¹⁴⁵ Introduction by Robert Coles in Rothenberg’s *With these Hands*, xii

destined for. Armando describes his faith as having to do with *esas cosas que Dios ya tiene en tu destino* (those things God already has in your destiny). There is no consensus on whether *destino* is predetermined or whether it is something that can be changed?

For many seasonal migrant workers, coming to Canada every year has become their way of life. However it is represented in the media or in the university, many migrants with the eyes of faith, see this way of life as a gift to them from God. They continue to be grateful that they have been chosen to receive it, aware that many of their countrymen will do anything to get an opportunity to become a migrant worker and earn in Canadian *migra-dolares* (migration dollars). They continue to be grateful in spite of the fact that their employment can be taken away from them anytime. Whether they acknowledge the gift as coming from God, the Virgen or the Santo Nino, the fact remains that it is viewed as a blessing for which *acciones de gracias* (acts of thanksgiving) are required.

The longing for a better life for family and self that many migrant workers talk about can be read as their expression of a deeper longing: the longing for God. The migrant workers feel this longing deeply. They are prepared to make big sacrifices to make their dreams come true, whatever they may be. Year on year, they hope that life will get better *para mis hijos* (for my children) and for the family as a whole. This however is not the case for everyone. Armando feels that in spite of all his efforts, things at home remain *todo sigue lo igual* (everything remains the same). One migrant worker in the study tells a story of how it *iba del mal en peor* (went from bad to worse).

6.11. Lived Religion and the Family

David Reiss (1981) talks about three dimensions of “family paradigms”. 1.”the degree to which family delays decisions until they have gathered the evidence” 2.the family’s belief that they do occupy the same experiential world which operates the same way for all of them. And 3.the belief that the social world is ordered by a coherent set of principles which can be discovered and mastered through exploration. All these three dimensions are related. In the study conducted by Reiss, he argues that that this family paradigm influences the way they will cope with pressure and how they will respond to the stresses that are an inevitable part of migration.

The first dimension has to do with how the family experiences “newness” and the change that migration brings. In the context of migrant farm workers, only one member of the family migrates: the father. This change becomes part of the family history. It becomes a way for the family to understand life. For the migrant worker himself, this represents a new life, a way to start over in a new place.

The second dimension has to do with the fact that every migrant worker interviewed says that they are working in Canada for the sake of their family in Mexico. They see their family as the reason for why they have chosen to become migrant workers. There is a sense that this is a family decision and what happens to one affects every family member.

This leads them to a third dimension where they approach the world in a new way, based on how they think about the new reality of having an absent husband and father and yet still keeping together as family.

All three dimensions relate to how the migrant workers experiences God and family. How they relate to family influences the way they will cope with pressure and how

they will respond to the stresses that are an inevitable part of seasonal migrant work in Canada.

When something happens, they define what is happening according to their religious beliefs. This naming of reality using religious language becomes the way they respond to what is going on in their families of origin. It shapes how they cope with homesickness and discouragement and fatigue. They draw on prayer and other resources as a way of coping with these daily challenges.

Some migrant worker will acknowledge how the congregations of the churches they go to make them feel like they are part of the family. This is important for churches to know. They can help especially migrant workers, especially those coming for the first time, form healthy attitudes towards life away from their families. These attitudes may decide how whether they move forward in hope or not.

Much depends on what resources they have at their disposal to cope with their inside/outside reality. The interviews establish that migrant workers view their faith as a resource. A community of faith can offer the resources of their faith tradition as a way of helping people engage the new reality. This as many migrant workers in this study confirm is vital in maintaining health and wellness.

Migrant workers as human subjects process their experiences according to their faith worlds. Events and their explanations need to fit it in with their view of the world. That is how experiencing become meaningful to them. This is how they become the authors of their own story. They realize that they have what they need in order to survive another season. They have resources at their disposal to meet the demands of everyday life for

themselves and their families. They also know where to get help when they need it. They meet challenges as they arise, living with their choices and their consequences.

I have found that faith perspectives determine whether migrant workers view themselves as victims or victors. Without religious faith, it is easy to identify oneself as a victim of circumstances. Migrant workers can just see things as happening to them but do not exhibit a sense that they are not making things happen. Some feel they have the power to make changes in their lives and some do not. Faith can change their perspectives on their own abilities as social actors. Migrant workers report how they feel empowered by their faith. They share stories of how faith has made them see life as “a blessing rather than a burden.”

Faith changes what they care about or not care about. It determines how they use their time and what they put their energies to. They have to continue caring about what happens to them and their families. If they stop caring, then they lose the energy to keep going.

Antonovsky (1987) suggests that there are three things that are important for a family to survive. One, they need to have a story that holds their life together. Two, they need to be assured that they have the resources to meet challenges. Three, they need to care for what goes on, enough for them to invest their time and energy towards a better life. All three are needed to function in a healthy way.

As Esteban says *Lo primero es la familia* (Family comes first). It is clear in the interviews that the family is always there, in the decisions that are made and in the way that the migrant workers deal with adversity. The family is a structure that helps them order their reality. It is what motivates them to make things happen. There are some migrant

workers who are very happy to share their experiences and some who do not want to talk about them. There are migrant workers who begin with an idealized version of themselves at the beginning and then become more forthcoming with their responses as trust builds in the course of several interviews.

I will argue that the best people to describe “what migration is like” are the migrant workers themselves. Whatever can be learned from one group of migrant workers can be helpful for other migrant workers who are looking for creative ways to adapt to life in the farm.

Migrant work for some leads to happy endings, For others, being away for so many months a year causes a disruption that they are never able to recover from. Some migrant workers experience a divorce or a break-up of family ties with people back home after being away for extended periods of time. Research indicates that migration can strain family relations but they can also galvanize a family together for transformation. Others experience mental health issues and are unable to cope with the stress of being separated from their loved ones.

Since migration is a complicated decision, the reasons why people migrate can be complicated as well. Some migrant workers mentioned “work opportunity”, and “to give my children a chance for a better future”. For others it was the fulfillment of a dream they had of “living and working abroad”. Some are able to discuss these experiences at length, while others are unable to relate one experience with another. Some say they are still sorting it out and are still in transition. They say that it is complicated and they have not adequately prepared for it. The amount of adjustment required is enormous for themselves and their families and stress builds up quickly and become intense especially during the

first year. Many migrant workers come in a state of fatigue. They describe how unsettled and disoriented they are during the first few weeks or months.

For some migrants workers, language and the inability to communicate in English is a major source of stress. It makes them unable to speak with their employers or the people at the bank and the supermarket and the people they meet on the street. Being far away from other family members and the lack of close friends leads to social isolation for many. Their experiences show how daunting it must be for migrants from another country for whom English is not the primary language to face the challenges of work, school and finances in a new country.

6.12. The Culture of Poverty

In preparing for the dissertation, I read Oscar Lewis' landmark study *Five Families*. Its subtitle suggests that it is "an intimate and objective revelation of family life in Mexico, a study of the culture of poverty". (Lewis:1959)

Lewis makes the claim that "in studying a culture through the intensive analysis of specific families, we learn what institutions mean to individuals." This is largely because he views the family as a small social system. He concludes by saying that the study of the family is a study of society.

Studying families bridges the gap between "the conceptual extremes of culture at one pole and the individual on the other. We see both culture and personality as they are in real life." In my research project, I combine insight into migrant stories which often include family stories (life-study/ narrative research) with exploring processes (case study) and interpreting faith experiences (phenomenology) of migrants that come from a culture of poverty. The theories proposed by Antonovsky and Reiss and the data presented

by Lewis helped me understand the faith perspectives of migrant workers as they relate to their families.

Lewis presents his data under the headings of material culture, economic life, social relations, religious life and interpersonal relations. From interviews and observation Lewis models an approach that allows for comparison between how a family views the world and how the larger culture outside the family represents reality.

The family is seen through the eyes of its members whom Lewis reconstructs through long intensive narratives. The process produces independent versions of family life which help test the validity and reliability of the data presented by each member. Although not a family, this same dynamic is present when interviewing migrant workers who live in the same farm.

Usually Lewis would begin with a study of a problem or an event that the family has had to wrestle with. In conversation with them, they share with him how they meet the challenges that situations bring. This reveals individual responses as well as the many layers of meaning that can be perceived by different family members engaging the same event.

Another approach involves a thick observation of a single day in the life of one family. Lewis uses a “day” as a single unit of investigation based on a single unit of time using direct observation. It required him to spend hours with the family listening and eating with them and talking about their stories. Case studies grew out of these conversations and interactions of just one day in the life of a migrant family. In presenting his findings, Lewis begins with a background to introduce each family to the reader along with a description of significant aspects of the community in which they live.

He points out that families do not just share living space, they share worlds and beliefs about reality. Their beliefs and faith practices are “social constructs” and these shape the way in which they perceive the world and how they deal with what comes up in their lives.

Oscar Lewis describes how difficult it is to free oneself from the culture of poverty. It is not like walking out of the door of one’s house and onto the street outside. *La Vida en Pobreza* (Life in Poverty) ¹⁴⁶ has deep roots in culture and personality. If we are to accept Lewis’ proposal, the dominant traits of Mexican culture manifest themselves in the personalities and religious lives of the migrant workers.

Migrant workers have to quickly learn new sets of rules and cultural expectations from the ones they are used to. Not knowing the rules can sometimes lead to unpleasant experiences with the law or the workplace. Migrant workers describe how during the first years they came to Canada much time and energy went into just adapting to the new environment. Often there was a feeling of insecurity and helplessness that came from living in a place where everything is so “foreign” and so “strange”. In christian language, I describe this experience as akin to Israelites in Babylon “singing songs of Zion in a strange land”.

This general feeling of unease and insecurity is present in the migrant worker in Canada and among family members back home. There is a loss of identity, a feeling of dislocation, and for others it becomes the reason for their family falling apart. Back home they had relatives they can call at a moment’s notice. In Canada, they could name no one

¹⁴⁶ *La Vida en Pobreza* is the title of a book by anthropologist Oscar Lewis where he traces the life of a Puerto Rican family from San Juan to New York City. It is his last and most read book. In it Lewis suggests that the poor inhabit a “culture of poverty” that manifests itself in distinct personality traits that he names in his research .

with whom they are really close. Nobody knows them really well either. This contributes to why migrant workers have such a hard time adjusting and adapting. It is always interesting to listen to stories of how migrant workers handled this or that crisis and who helped them navigate themselves through it.

In conclusion, the ability to communicate and influence one's environment and the feeling of having some control over circumstances are important factors in the lives of migrant workers. When the familiar has become strange, migrant workers turn to faith to help them navigate their journey in this strange land.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Migration is a distinctive social phenomenon of the 21st century. Globally more and more people are expected to continue migrating. Given its long history nobody has made the claim that it will stop anytime soon. This raises some important missiological questions like “What does this mean for the way we communicate the gospel?” and “How do we go about communicating the gospel in a world marked by migration, urbanization and pluralism?”

What lessons might be learned, drawing from the history of migration within Christianity, the stories of migration in the biblical narrative, and the stories of Mexican migrant workers in Canada? How might these learnings be part of the way world christianity engages in ecumenical theological reflection on mission and migration? (Lausanne 2004). How might the Spirit of God be moving and calling into being “a new heaven and a new earth” through migration?

7.1 Towards a Missiology of Migration

Irenaeus of Antioch remarked that “The glory of God is the human being fully alive.” When introducing the project to migrant workers, I began by relating what we were doing with the value of the human being in the Christian tradition. This is affirmed by the Biblical Narrative and the Reformed Christian Tradition in which I stand. It is also supported by many declarations and constitutions of countries in the community of nations. This value inevitably flows into the discourse around the human rights of migrant workers.

Human dignity comes with being human and is how we as bodies become fully alive. Like the image of God, it cannot be taken away, by any one by any government, or by any public or private entity. Human dignity is honored and affirmed when we ensure that human rights are respected and protected.

In an advocacy paper that was the product of consultations by close to a hundred representatives of sixty one organizations of migrants and religious and ecumenical groups which met last October 2013 at the Church Center for the United Nations in New York City for the Fourth International Consultation of the “Churches Witnessing With Migrants’ Human Rights, they came up with the following reflections about the right to adequate livelihood, a decent job, a living wage, and freedom from discrimination based on race, gender and class.

Included in that document is “freedom of movement” and where migration is seen as a “human right” as well. Human rights advocates insist on the right of migrants to live freely in safety and without fear, supported by the presence of a justice system that can attend to grievances when these rights have been violated.

The consultation declared that migrants as human beings with dignity and worth cannot therefore be reduced to commodities traded and exchanged in the global market place. Unjust structures of injustice in the global market system should not be allowed to strip them of their dignity and worth. A true and meaningful dialogue must include migrants as subjects of their own destinies. They have the same human rights to education, health, labor, welfare and the environment, just like everyone else.

Freedom of movement is a human right that allows people to create relationships and communities. Forced migration is therefore a violation of human rights. Violent situations, environmental degradation, militarization, wars, and political persecution in many countries have resulted in internal displacement and forced migration. It has created asylum seekers and massive numbers of refugees.

Under the conditions just mentioned, people had no choice but to flee from their communities and seek refuge in other countries. Exploitative economic conditions, unregulated and expanding access of transnational corporations to natural resources, extreme poverty, and natural and human-made calamities have also forced peoples to migrate. Under forced migration, there are sometimes few if any sustainable options. Many asylum seekers and refugees are forced to live for years in camps under sub-human conditions that diminish self-worth and limit full enjoyment of human rights.

The prophet Micah envisioned what makes for security and sustainability: "... they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken"(Micah 4:4). This vision addresses the right of all peoples to stay, prosper and live with provision and without fear anywhere, whether it is in their own countries or as migrants in another. This prophetic vision should shape our understanding of faith and migration.

The magnitude of neoliberal globalization, and the deepening of structural inequalities within countries, and between countries and regions, have commodified both human beings and human labor. Under neoliberal globalization, measures for the respect and protection of the rights and welfare of migrants and their families have been

subordinated to considerations about financial costs and benefits and the constant threat of global terrorism by extremists.

Exploitation of migrant workers has led to grave violations of their human rights. These include human trafficking, sexual abuse, harsh living and working conditions, social exclusion of migrants. Support and protection becomes more acute among migrants who are undocumented. Human rights, the well-being, safety and protection of migrants becomes a moral issue for our times. It is a missional challenge for churches who seek to do justice for “the least of these”.

When people move they carry with them their culture, beliefs and religious practices. They become “cultures in motion”¹⁴⁷ that leave their imprint wherever they go (Stearns 2001: 2). The impact of these movements are profound but it is a phenomenon which we are only beginning to understand. Stearns presents key episodes in history like Buddhism’s migration from India to China and the rest of the world, Islam’s movement from the Arabian peninsula, the Jewish diaspora and Christianity expansion from Afro-Eurasia to the New World, and the impact of the trans-atlantic slave trade on the cultures of the Caribbean, South and North America. He also mentions the impact of consumer products (eg, sports, music and movies) and brands (McDonald’s) on global culture.

Sociologists and anthropologists tell us that an encounter between cultures inevitably leads to changes in social formations. Seldom does nothing happen as a result of cultures bumping against each other or blending together to form new hybrid cultures. The migrants in the streets and enclaves of our cities are transforming culture in our cities and

¹⁴⁷ Stearns, P. (2001). Introduction. In *Cultures in Motion: Mapping Key Contacts and Their Imprints in World History* (pp. 2-5). Yale University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1npng1.4>

our churches. We can speak of migrants as evangelizing us and reminding us to “liberate the oppressed, open eyes that are blinded, and set captives free” (Lk 4:16-18) .

7.2 Christian Mission in the context of Migration

Most migrants will end up in the cities. How then does a church do mission in an urban environment? Given the size of cities like New York, Toronto, Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro , it is clear that the call to urban mission does not reside in a single church, denomination or leadership. The missional task rests on the entire Christian community.

At the core of communicating and embodying the gospel in the city is a move away from ethnocentrism to contextualization. The work of converting and discipling and bringing faith to the city requires a shared commitment to communicating the gospel to a *particular* place in a *particular* time.

Churches that do mission in cities do not all share the same worship style, they do not all come from the same denomination, nor are they reaching out for the same people group. They do, however, demonstrate common characteristics like being biblical, while paying attention to the local culture.

Then again there are groups whose main objective is to plant churches in an effort to “increase and multiply” within their different denominations and traditions. Many look at cities and see a number of existing churches, often occupying buildings that are nearly empty. It is natural to think, "The first thing we need to do is to renew the existing churches with the gospel." The establishment of new churches in a city is a key to renewing the older churches.

It has been observed that newer churches that introduce new ideas are able to bring in the “unchurched” at a generally higher rate than older churches. They provide a new vitality to communities and networks of Christians who did most of this work in previous decades. In regard to how this is done, once again we see various ministry initiatives from prayer movements, specialized ministries, professional associations, justice and mercy ministries, training of urban ministry leaders and church planters. We can only imagine what it like when all these groups come together in the same place.

One of the considerations expressed at the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, (1996) was the importance of the local churches in taking the responsibility for mission and evangelism. This is a view that I totally support working in a city like Toronto, the richest and biggest city in all of Canada.

The report stresses that : "the primary responsibility for mission, where there is a local church, is with that church in its own place." This responsibility implies that "where churches are not engaged actively in evangelism efforts, there is a need to challenge each other, in affirming ways, towards authentic proclamation of the gospel."

In a world that is marked by urbanization, globalization and pluralism, churches cannot act separately and independently from each other. What is needed, is for churches to work together both locally and globally. In other words, the churches must cultivate a certain mutuality in mission, which includes respect for churches of different cultures, ethnicities and traditions.

7.2.1. Faith in the City

Cultures are not fixed and neither are cities. Both are constantly changing. What this means is that our churches have to be changing as well, “reformed and always reforming” with the times. The new cultural context of postmodernity and globalization poses special challenges to any institution that is set in its ways. The plurality of beliefs and worldviews in multi-cultural, multi-confessional, multi-religious cities present a dizzying array of options. Monocultural contexts hardly exist anymore. The inculturation of the gospel in culturally pluralistic contexts has to find new ways of doing mission. And churches need to be in constant dialogue with people of other faiths. In multi-cultural and multi-religious contexts, new forms of witness, cooperation and dialogue need to be developed for mutual learning.

One of the most important aspects in the relationships between gospel and culture is the subject of the inculturation or contextualization. The church needs to engage the cultural values of the world in which it lives, so that its mission may find its way toward the mind and heart of listeners.

The gospel is shaped and transmitted *culturally*, and in turn all culture can be transformed through the gospel. This one gospel that we preach, this work of baptizing and making disciples can be lived and expressed in different ways. No particular tradition can possibly own the whole truth about Christianity. Hence the need to see everything in the wider framework of *Missio Dei*: the church and its mission do not belong to us; they belong to God. We are the people who are called and sent to be stewards of these sacred mysteries.

7.2.2. Gospel and Culture

The relationship between gospel and culture is very important today not only for the contextualization of the gospel especially in non-Christian cultural contexts, but also in the contexts of traditional Christian culture. In other words, the issue of "gospel and culture" challenges the mission of the traditional churches in their own context.

Every church must be able to faithfully express the message of the gospel in multiple cultural contexts. This “global” gospel becomes local in the living experience of the faith in Jesus Christ in and through a particular culture. In the case of migrant churches in the cities, what is culturally different between our churches should no longer be considered a reason for us to separate. It can actually be the reason for us to come together and unite and be a resource to one another on how to *perform* and *enact* the gospel in the city.

7.2.3 Mission and the Reign of God

The gospel proclaims that God's intention for the world is a “reign of God” where all of us have an equal place around the table. It is a world where everyone of us is invited and no one is excluded. The New Testament phrase "in Christ" then should be interpreted not just as individual Christians belonging to Christ but as all of us belonging and becoming one in Christ.

In John 14:9, Jesus says, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." Can we perhaps also say: "Anyone who has seen Jesus has seen a true human being."? Mission theology speaks about incarnation as the way God chose to reveal Godself to us. God speaks by becoming one of us and so we can say we know who we are because we have been created in God's image, in the image of the one who became one of us and into whose image we are becoming conformed.

Jesus, the revelation of God, is central to the Gospel we proclaim to the world. He is the only one among us who faithfully and perfectly represents what God wishes for every human person, created in the divine image. We therefore need to explore further the meaning of "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14). In some sense, this suggests that "flesh", that is the human being, is always situated in culture. In this mission of God, we see a God who shows no partiality, and rejects all attempts to use creation for domination or to rule over others in God's name (Acts 10:34; Gen.11:1-9). Another way to think of incarnation is a way for all of humanity coming into "fullness of being" because the Word has become flesh in them.

In God becoming human, what is being affirmed is the goodness of everything that is human. The biblical message speaks for community and belonging. Having been created in the image of a relational God, each and every man and woman is a full image of God.

I suggested that one of the ways forward has to do with revisiting our understandings of gospel and culture in the context of migration. I also suggested that we explore the meaning of incarnation as it relates to God, Jesus and Spirit.

The root metaphor of *Missio Dei* is based on a God that is in-relationship with humanity and creation. Mission in this context is an expression of God's radical hospitality, God's unconditional welcome to all the peoples of the world. The Mission of God then is a story of how God goes about healing all of us by welcoming and inviting us to be part of the work of restoring God's creation from the old to the new. (Isa. 43:18-21; Rev. 21:5).

Western Christians are now seeing how Eurocentric and ethnocentric their reading of Christian history, culture and biblical interpretation has been. Until recently, it has been normal practice to define religion within Western frameworks which are then applied to non-Western cultures. To the degree that culture and mission were implicated both in the means and the ends of colonial conquest, culture needs to be deconstructed along with the dominant narratives that come from the Western Christian tradition.

Declaring God's welcome to the migrant peoples of the world requires that we honor difference and diversity and plurality in culture, language, gender, race or religion. In a world that is also marked by conflict, because of our unwillingness to reconcile our differences, the practice of solidarity with the struggle of migrants everywhere becomes part of the praxis of mission.

As God continues to work among "the least of these", migrants from all over the world may become God's way of continuing "to pour the spirit on all flesh". Through

migrants of every race, people and nation, “all the families of the earth will be blessed”.
(Gen 12:3)

7.2.4. Standing in Solidarity with Migrant Workers

The discourse around migration is really about inclusion and exclusion: both themes are present in the biblical tradition. Migrant workers are deprived of rights that citizens are entitled to. In Canada, seasonal migrant farmworkers are prevented from becoming residents or citizens. They remain hostage to the rules of their employment agreed upon by their two countries. Mexican migrant farmworkers are tied to their *patron* (employer), their contracts state that they cannot seek employment elsewhere. They are vulnerable because their employers have the power to have them deported. They have little or no leverage in the workplace.

Treating migrant workers as “non-citizens” is the reason being used for why they are not covered by labor legislation that protects the rights of other workers. All this is legal, but is it just? Is it ethical? Is it right that some people are exempted from basic protections just because they happen to be non-citizens?

It has been argued that societies have a right to choose its members. And members of a country through its government can decide who may or may not enter its borders. The state sets the rules and conditions under which outsiders can be admitted into the country and eventually become insiders. Insiders have the right to protect themselves from outsiders who threaten their security and way of life. After all, it is easier for people to live with others who are like them. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure that only those who are legally considered admissible should be allowed entry. And even for those who

have already entered the country legally, they can still be deported out of the country, if they are “out of status”. When people talk about migrants who may undermine the system, they are usually referring to migrants from non-western societies. Since most of them are people of color, does this position perhaps lead to racism?

What then is the Mission of Church in this context? I suggest that the call to mission in this context is to stand in solidarity with migrants and migrant workers by insisting on a framework that is based on universal human rights. The Church needs to challenge the claim that the state has the absolute power to unilaterally close its borders to migrants. I suggest that the Church put forward its message that the land is created by God for all. The good of all nations (God’s *shalom*) transcends the good of a particular nation. When there is a conflict over whose rights take precedence, priority must be given to the basic rights of the human person. The challenge to missiology today will be whether it can “give voice to suffering” (Adorno).

Honoring the rights of migrants is one step forward towards respect for human dignity and human equality. It must say that the state does not have the presumptive right to unilaterally close its borders against refugees. They do not have the absolute right to decide who can be let in and who can be kept out. The state is accountable to the rest of humanity for its actions especially when it violates basic human rights like the right to free movement. Migration is a moral and political issue that the Church needs to take a stand on.

Migration in the history of Christianity as demonstrated in this dissertation shows the contribution of migrants in the places where they settled. My reading of migrant stories

in the Biblical narrative brought the issue of migration and faith in conversation with the Mission of God . In these stories we are told how God sends people across borders to carry God's blessing. The stories affirm that God stands in solidarity with migrants. It is God's desire that people be treated equally regardless of their places of origin.

Recent debates on Migration center around threats to global security and the potential of terrorist attacks. This is used as the argument for the militarization of borders and strict enforcement of immigration policies on asylum seekers and refugees. I will argue that a close reading of the biblical narrative will show how God favors compassion over securitization. The stories show how for God the dignity of the human person takes precedence over the nation's concern for its own safety. The story of Ruth the Moabite woman can be a template for how an outsider, from a tribe that is an enemy of Israel, should be treated.

A missiology of migration needs to include a theology of human rights and responsibilities. In the struggle for human rights, some migrants see community organizing and resistance as faith practices. They challenge evil structures that perpetuate their continued oppression and exploitation, using insights from the biblical narrative. Migrants are truly the ones who speak best about their hopes and aspirations and about how to advance and protect their rights and interests. It is their voices that we need to listen to. We need to listen to what Spirit is saying to the churches through these migrant voices.

The Bible tells us: "Keep loving each other like family. Don't neglect to open up your homes to guests, because by doing this some have been hosts to angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:1-2). Migrants are not just neighbors; they are persons equal in

rights and dignity to everyone else. This is part of the abundant life that God desires for all.

Missiologists together with the global faith community and civil society can take up migrant concerns as everybody's concerns, by asserting that governments honor the human rights of migrants. Churches need to remind the world that migrants are human beings like the rest of us: bearers of God's image and likeness, and agents of God's mission in the world. The issue however is not as simple as this. There are many other things that need to be taken into account.

This is the goal of the Global Compact on Migration that is currently being worked on at the United Nations.

7.3 A Global Compact on Migration 2017

The global compact for migration will be the first, intergovernment negotiated agreement, prepared by the United Nations, to cover all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner. The churches can use it as leads to where the global conversation around migration is going.

In the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants , adopted in September 2016, the General Assembly decided to develop a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. The process to develop this global compact for migration started in April 2017. The General Assembly will then hold an intergovernmental conference on international migration in 2018 with a view to adopting the global compact.

The global compact is a significant opportunity to improve the governance on migration, to address the challenges associated with today's migration, and to strengthen the contribution of migrants and migration to sustainable development.

The church can help craft a global ethic that is constructed around the value of the human person in community. Gospel cannot be expected to cover every area of policy-making. There will be those who will point out that the Christian church has used the gospel as tool to achieve and defend land theft, exploitation, domination, superiority, and privilege. The dominant secular culture can be expected to challenge the claims of the church at every turn, including questioning whether it can even speak credibly on the issue. This means that the Church will have to be prepared to struggle and resist.

7.4 Mission as Struggle and Resistance

So where do we go from here? The World Council of Churches (WCC) in its document "Together Towards Life" in Busan, Korea in 2013 speaks of "Mission as Struggle and Resistance". It is a view of mission that the Church can use in its struggle to uphold the human rights of migrants.

*De hecho, la misión, el dinero y el poder político son socios estratégicos. Aunque nuestro discurso misiológico y teológico diga que la misión de la iglesia es estar en solidaridad con los pobres, a veces, en la práctica, está mucho más preocupada por estar en los centros de poder, comiendo con los ricos y haciendo presión para obtener el dinero necesario que le permita mantener la burocracia eclesiástica. Esto plantea retos específicos a la hora de reflexionar acerca de lo que es buena nueva para los privilegiados y poderosos.*¹⁴⁸

The problem, as expressed in the document, is that while the church's missiological

¹⁴⁸ Excerpted from *La misión como lucha y resistencia* "Together Towards Life", WCC 2013, 48

and theological discourse speaks of solidarity with the poor, in practice it appears like the Church itself is more concerned with maintaining its own secure status as a global institution and reclaiming the power it used to have under the former Christendom.

The credibility of the Church is put into question by people who wonder whether the church itself is prepared to relinquish power and carry out its mission from a position of vulnerability. They point to how the church's theology is built on Empire¹⁴⁹ and how the Bible has been used by christian colonizers to justify everything from war to land theft to subjugation of indigenous peoples, human slavery and white supremacy.

Meanwhile, churches continue to make statements around “welcoming the stranger” and craft official documents denouncing human rights violations of migrants and refugees. The migrants I talked to do not feel that they are part of this conversation. They do not see any significant change in their situation that has come about as a result of the churches' pronouncements on migration. The claims of people from the Global South that the church is actually the chaplain of the status quo is not entirely unfounded.

Something needs to happen for migrants to see that they are part of this struggle and they are part of the church. They need to be convinced that the churches are not there to act as benefactors who make them objects of charity but as fellow sojourners. As this is happening, migrants are creating new churches where they can express their faith and spirituality in their own way. They wonder why churches in the established communities are reluctant to offer support beyond the usual *Misa en Espanol* or facilitating services like

¹⁴⁹ As defined by the Accra Declaration of 2004, this refers to “the coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power that constitutes a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests.

health, counseling etc. It appears like this is as far as most churches are willing to go in their ministry towards migrants. Going further may cause divisions in the congregation.

Some churches say it is all that they can do given their limited resources. When they do that, they show that they too are governed by the logic of the market. They claim that their ministry towards migrants can proceed only if there is enough funding to support it. We therefore find ourselves in a situation where at the end of the day nothing changes. The root causes of the injustice and inequality are not addressed. Churches go on with “business as usual”. The challenge remains: how can we partner with God in overcoming “the forces of sin and death” without the use of force? How can we truly “love our enemy” and be a church that stands on the side of migrant workers? How is this solidarity a part of the reign of God and the church’s mission at the present time?

The gospel of the “reign of God” if it is going to work fully needs to be offered and proclaimed but not imposed. People need to be invited into seeing it on the ground and welcome has to be extended to any and all who come. The Church cannot be associated with the worldly powers that she denounces. She cannot use coercion or manipulation or violence to have her way. How then does one speak to those who say “We have no king but Caesar.” It is a difficult task and different traditions within Christianity speak to how church should relate to civil authority. They point to how we can take missiology to the public square.

One way I propose we do this is to recover the meaning of *dikaiosyne* which is at the heart of Paul’s letter to the Romans. I find myself in agreement with Wolsterstoff that

this word can be interpreted as “justice”.¹⁵⁰ The work of resistance and struggle is in the interest of fairness and equity. When the church stands up for the rights of migrants, it is performing an act of *dikaiosyne* and is witnessing to the Justice of God in the world.

7.10 Mission and Migration in a Globalized World

It may be helpful to see how conversations around mission and migration are taking shape in the context of globalization. It is certainly a conversation that is worth having in our local communities even if it makes some of us uncomfortable. To understand globalization we need to see the social conditions that led to it. These will explain not just its history but also show how globalization and the market economy is changing us. Even our own understanding of what it means to be human has been impacted by globalization. The globalization of western culture has shaped our understanding of religion and how we view the relationship of the church to the nation-state.

Globalization is undergirded by an ideology called neo-liberal economics. Its main purpose is economic growth. Institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO are there to support economic growth which is perceived as the engine that drives the wealth of nations.¹⁵¹ Economic policies are intended to protect and defend the market. Neo-liberal economics is an ideology that promotes the market. It emphasizes the accumulation of wealth, competition and self-interest over common good. Its focus is on property rights rather than human rights.

¹⁵⁰ In the Reformed Tradition, *dikaiosyne* is often interpreted as righteousness: God’s free gift to all those who believe (Romans 3-4) . In some places of the Old Testament, it can also mean “God’s covenant faithfulness” or “God’s power to save”.

¹⁵¹ This is the title of Adam Smith’s book that lays out the groundwork for the capitalist economy.

When the law itself is created to protect and defend the interests of the powerful, what is the “missional” thing to do? How does the church resist unjust rulers? What can it do to oppose unjust laws? The market is clearly not concerned about eliminating poverty or war or making life better for migrants. If it is, it has to be about the economic benefits that these actions will bring. Naomi Klein shows how “disaster capitalism” uses even instances of human misery to serve its own ends.¹⁵²

Globalization has led to environmental degradation of the seas and the forests. In many places, this has led fishermen to migrate elsewhere because the places where they used to fish are now polluted or traditional lands have been taken away from them by mining companies and/or para-military units / local politicians hired by them. These are just some of ways that globalization makes people poor.

The free market ideology dominates the world in more ways than it realizes. A tiny group of people mostly Transnational Corporations (TNC) have disrupted the social and ecological structures of the planet. It is in the face of this reality, I agree with the WCC view that Mission is about struggle and resistance.

Who will stop the corporations from exploiting nature and people? It will have to be people (i.e. migrants, women, indigenous peoples, labor unions, fishermen etc) working together with civil society, international organizations and faith-based organizations, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGO). In order to mobilize these groups, there needs to be an alternative vision. What is this alternative vision? What theological and biblical resources can be mobilized to support the vision of an alternative world?

¹⁵² See Klein, N 2007, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Toronto, Vintage Canada

Against this background we remember the words attributed to Margaret Thatcher where she argues “There is no alternative.” On the other hand, the *indignados* (the indignant) who gathered in the public squares of Madrid and Barcelona in Spain in 2011 cried out “*El Otro Mundo Es Posible*.” (Another World is Possible).

The collapse of Marxism in Eastern Europe has been used as support for the inevitability of the market economy. The market economy presents itself to the dominant culture as the tool to solve all its problems. It sees itself as “Jesus” (ie. the one that saves). The alternatives to globalization and the market economy will not come from those who benefit from the system. It can only come from those who are disadvantaged because of it. All the various sectors of society have a role to play and none is more important than the other. We need each other. In the biblical narrative, being open to one another is the way we respond to God. It is how we become a blessing. It cannot be just one particular group (e.g. the Christian church). It has to be a common witness with people of others faiths and no faith as well. In our time it is unfortunate that religious groups choose to work alone rather than work together.

The struggle for human rights is for everybody including those who violate them. There is room for people of all faiths and those who claim to have none, to come together in solidarity with one another. We can all listen to migrants (men, women and children in the millions) tell their story of what it is like to be forced out of their homes, uprooted from their villages, and kept in detention in places where they seek asylum. I have found that it is through deep listening to these stories that new meanings begin to emerge.

There are no ready-made solutions to the problem of migration that is driven by globalization. Like the gospel that we read and reads us, it all depends on context. Mission

cannot attach itself to only one view of reality. It cannot be just one voice, even if this might be of the church, that speaks for the rest of us. What I have learned from interviewing migrant workers is that everybody has a story to tell. Everybody deserves to be heard.

Mission today is about listening to other people of other faiths and other cultures. It is part of God's work for the healing of the nations. Mission is about cooperation and building on what is already being done by many groups everywhere. Whatever we learn from each other comes as a result of deep listening and dialogue. I would like to repeat that the context of Mission is the context of migration. A Missiology of migration needs to emerge from the experience of the migrants themselves.

Moreover it has to be grounded in our belief in the Spirit of God that speaks to us as we read the Biblical Narrative . In these stories, we come to the awareness that our call is not just to be "stewards of the mysteries"(1 Cor 5:1) but also to be co-creators of a new global economy.

Globalization has enabled all of us to share the same global space. It has given the world's religions an opportunity to meet each other. In Canada, where I live and work, migrants are present everywhere. We are already in daily contact with people of other faiths. We are already experiencing each other as we live in the same communities, go to the same supermarkets and ride the same buses/trains to go to the work in the cities. Our children play in the same parks and go to the same schools.

I am persuaded that this diversity will be the shape of the new church and future societies. In this future culture, people will no longer be asked to give up their religion or

their cultural values. They can continue to hold onto them and still feel part of the community. In a globalized world we can no claim superiority over other races or religions.

Mission can no longer be seen as the Christian way of persuading others to choose Christianity as their preferred religion. Instead it should be about finding ways we can listen for the Word of God speaking to us through the faith of others. While it continues to be part of our responsibility to make our beliefs understandable to others, we should begin by demonstrating a genuine interest in the beliefs and practices of others as we do so.

What this means in practice is learning to see the world from their eyes. This dissertation tries to do this by letting migrant workers speak for themselves on their own terms. We have already learned the consequences of trying to impose our religious beliefs and practices on others. “Welcoming the stranger” in this context means being hospitable not just to people but also to ideas that may first seem to be strange to us.

If we sincerely want to live together in peace we have to learn to give up the ways of Empire. We need to work together in harmony at the same time that we engage our differences. We have to make room for everyone and leave no one behind. The gospel that we preach needs to make people feel that they have a place at the table and they will not be turned away. This is what makes working with migrants a transformative practice.

In summary, globalization has created a different world. It is a complex system and all of us without exception have been impacted by it, whether we are aware of it or not. In some ways, globalization is a new form of colonization. It is still about conquest of the competition for economic gain. It is still about the use of force and other forms of power to get one’s way. We cannot say that we have not in some way benefitted from the system because we know we have. The Church as an institution cannot honestly say that it has not

participated in the ways of power or that it has not by its silence become complicit in the actions of those who oppress the weak and the excluded other. The Church has to recognize how, by its action or non-action, it has contributed to keeping things the way they are.

We can see examples of this in the political defense of apartheid by White Christians in South Africa where the Church was deeply implicated in racism. The church demonstrated that its alliance was with the powerful rather than the powerless. The world is desperately seeking for a solution to overcome the problems that arise with large movements of people through migration.

In the so called “Wars of Religion” referred to in Chapter 3, that led to the persecution and migration of Huguenots and Puritans to the New World, it is interesting to note that it may have been a war around borders rather than just religion. In other words the real issue was about power and control over the church by the monarchies of that time. It was less about religion than it was about who can have sovereign power over religious institutions like the papacy as well as religious beliefs and practices, whether Protestant or Catholic.

In order to keep the peace, the state encouraged people to keep their religion to themselves. This was the beginning of the privatization of religion. It was introduced by the state because it was to their benefit that people did so. Separating religion from politics therefore was a strategy of Empire. When the church resisted they were told to read what Romans 13 said about obedience to civil authority.

Mission is situated inside this tension between empire and gospel. As far as the market economy is concerned it is “The Lord and Giver of Life”. It is the only thing that can save the world. There is no alternative to capitalism. The few western nations and

powerful trans-national corporations will determine what goes on for the rest of the world and will appropriate to themselves the authority to decide what is right (or wrong) for the world.

We live in a culture where we are told that nothing is permanent or universal in the human experience. If this argument is pushed to its logical conclusion, it means that there is no ethical foundation that binds all of us. If there are no universals in human society then the only way we can resolve our differences will be through war. This is why rather than choosing to work together by listening to each other, we go into war and make it the way for us to resolve our differences. We engage in war and use power rather than dialogue as a way to arrive at a solution. The way of Empire tends more towards coercion rather than cooperation.

This can be very discouraging in the area of human rights. There are times when we are tempted to concede that no other world is possible and that there are indeed no alternatives. If we believe what we read in the biblical narrative however, there is always reason to hope. In the midst of the struggle, we can continue to believe in the goodness of the human spirit in spite of all evidence to the contrary.

We can still affirm like the migrant workers interviewed in this study that contrary to what Adam Smith claims, the “invisible hand” in human history is not the market economy but God. This is the power of the gospel for those who believe. The message of the cross is one of self-sacrifice instead of power. The answer to the conquering lion is a slaughtered lamb (Rev 5:1-10) .

Given the way the world is currently structured between rich nations and poor nations, is it really possible to change things around? Or is it true as Hardt and Negri

suggest that globalization is irresistible and its effects are irreversible? Is it possible to liberate ourselves from the hegemony of western culture and the western Christian tradition? Will the rich and powerful nations give up their control? Some say power never gives control over unless it is taken from them. Where will globalization lead us? Is there a way to change its course? Will struggle and resistance yield a new heaven and a new earth?

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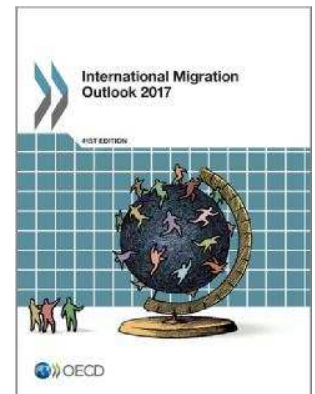
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APPENDICES

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION OUTLOOK 2017

**OECD *Multilingual Summaries*
International Migration Outlook 2017***Summary in Spanish***Perspectivas de la Migración Internacional 2017***Resumen en español***Principales Tendencias**

Los flujos migratorios permanentes en la zona de la OCDE han aumentado por tercer año consecutivo, según datos preliminares de 2016. En ese año alrededor de 5 millones de personas emigraron de manera permanente a países de la OCDE, cifra muy superior al máximo anterior, observado en 2007 antes de la crisis económica.

La migración de indole humanitaria fue el principal factor del alza de 2015-2016; representó 1.5 millones de personas entre enero de 2015 y diciembre de 2016. En 2015 la migración por reunificación de familias y libre movimiento dentro de la Unión Europea representó alrededor de un tercio del total de la emigración permanente a la zona de la OCDE. Los cinco primeros países de origen en 2015 fueron China, Siria, Rumania, Polonia e India. De los nuevos inmigrantes a países de la OCDE, 29% provenían de otro país de la OCDE.

La migración temporal también ha aumentado en la zona de la OCDE. En 2015 la movilidad internacional dentro de las empresas aumentó en más de 10% y el traslado de trabajadores por comisión dentro de la Unión Europea ascendió en 3%. La contratación internacional de trabajadores estacionales aumentó en muchos países, de manera especialmente grande en Polonia.

En 2016, al igual que en 2015, los países de la OCDE registraron más de 1.6 millones de nuevas solicitudes de asilo. De ellas, casi tres cuartas partes se registraron en países europeos de la OCDE. Los sirios hicieron más de 20% de las solicitudes en la zona de la OCDE, mientras que los afganos hicieron 13%. Alemania registró 720,000 solicitudes formales de asilo en 2016 y, de todos los países de la OCDE, recibió el mayor número de solicitudes en relación con su población (0.9%).

En respuesta a la creciente demanda de protección internacional, muchos países de la OCDE han aumentado sus programas de repoblación. Sin embargo, las condiciones que se ofrecen a quienes gozan de estatuto de protección fuera de la Convención de 1951 del ACNUR se han vuelto

menos favorables en varios países. Por otra parte, muchos países aplican controles fronterizos y verificaciones de entrada y permanencia más estrictos. En todo caso, los países de la OCDE siguen revisando y mejorando sus políticas para atraer trabajadores extranjeros, empresarios e inversores altamente calificados ofreciéndoles más canales de entrada y mejores condiciones de residencia.

En 2016 los índices de empleo de la población migrante de la OCDE se mantuvieron relativamente estables en 67.4%, lo que supone un aumento de un punto porcentual en comparación con el año anterior. No obstante, los índices de desempleo de los nacidos en el extranjero siguen siendo mayores que los de sus equivalentes nacidos en el país de acogida, sobre todo en Europa.

Con el telón de fondo de la crisis de refugiados, se han dedicado muchos esfuerzos a elaborar políticas públicas apropiadas para facilitar la integración al mercado laboral de los refugiados y solicitantes de asilo recién llegados. Muchos países de la OCDE han diversificado sus ofertas de integración para proporcionar acciones individualizadas y alinearlas con las necesidades del mercado laboral. En todo caso, se ha insistido en intervenciones tempranas como las evaluaciones iniciales de competencias, y en acelerar el proceso de integración, entre otras cosas abreviando la duración de los programas. Varios países han hecho obligatoria la participación en los programas de integración.

La migración familiar

En años recientes, la migración familiar, que comprende cuatro subcategorías principales (la formación de familias, los familiares acompañantes, la reunificación familiar y la adopción internacional), ha sido el canal principal de la migración permanente a la zona de la OCDE. Comparados con los otros grupos de migrantes, los familiares adultos se integran lentamente al mercado laboral del país de acogida.

En la migración familiar se incluye una amplia variedad de migrantes, desde recién nacidos a adultos de edad muy avanzada, personas de todo nivel de competencia y de todos los países de origen. Esta diversidad distingue la migración familiar de otros canales de migración. Es un fenómeno complejo atendido por un espectro amplio de reglas y disposiciones migratorias familiares en los países de la OCDE.

La expansión de los derechos durante las últimas décadas se ha acompañado de crecientes requisitos para acceder a ellos y para obtener los permisos de residencia que se otorgan a los migrantes familiares. El control de la migración familiar se ha vuelto más complejo en la medida que se esfuerza por conciliar prioridades distintas y objetivos encontrados de políticas públicas. Aunque se debe controlar la migración familiar, varias limitaciones restringen el alcance de ese control. Existen cuatro retos fundamentales para las políticas vigentes de migración familiar: cómo anticiparse mejor al volumen de los flujos migratorios familiares; cómo equilibrar las reglas de la migración familiar con la necesidad de que los países sigan siendo atractivos para los trabajadores migrantes seleccionados; cómo usar los requisitos para acelerar la integración de los migrantes familiares, y cómo atender los derechos de reunificación familiar de los menores que migran solos.

Principales hallazgos

La migración ha alcanzado un punto culminante considerada desde 2007

- Los flujos migratorios permanentes a países de la OCDE alcanzaron los 4.7 millones de entradas en 2015 (7% más que en 2014), y deben de haber ascendido a alrededor de 5 millones de entradas en 2016, según datos preliminares.
- En 2016 los países de la OCDE registraron más de 1.6 millones de solicitudes de asilo, al igual que en 2015. A alrededor de 1.5 millones de personas se les otorgó protección internacional durante esos dos años.
- En 2015 se entregaron más de 1.5 millones de permisos para estudiantes de educación superior en la zona de la OCDE.
- La población nacida en el extranjero en países de la OCDE ascendía a 124 millones de personas en 2015.

La integración de los inmigrantes al mercado laboral se ha recuperado lentamente

- Más de dos de cada tres migrantes en la zona de la OCDE están empleados. En promedio, el índice de desempleo de los trabajadores nacidos en el extranjero alcanzó el 8.3% en 2016 y el 12.4% en los países europeos de la OCDE; esto es, 1.8 y 4.3 puntos porcentuales arriba del índice de desempleo de los trabajadores nacidos en el país de acogida.
- Los migrantes están demasiado representados en los empleos que implican tareas repetitivas, lo que los deja en mayor riesgo de pérdida del empleo a medida que progresa la automatización. En los países europeos de la OCDE, 47% de los trabajadores nacidos en el extranjero se dedican a ocupaciones que consisten principalmente en tareas repetitivas.

Migración familiar

- Más de 1.6 millones de migrantes familiares recibieron un permiso de residencia en la zona de la OCDE en 2015, lo que representa casi 40% del total del flujo de inmigración permanente. La reunificación familiar ocurre con retraso respecto las categorías de la migración económica, pero también responde a los cambios de las políticas públicas relativas a los requisitos, los tiempos de trámite y las reglas de otros canales de migración.
- La formación de familias es un factor importante y creciente de la migración familiar. En muchos países de la OCDE, más de 10% de los matrimonios se producen entre un ciudadano y un extranjero.
- En comparación con otros grupos de migrantes, los familiares adultos que migran parecen integrarse más despacio al mercado laboral del país de acogida. En Europa, alcanzan índices de empleo parecidos, en promedio, a los de otras categorías migratorias y los nativos solo después de 20 años de permanencia.
- La migración familiar de los cónyuges y los hijos de extranjeros está sujeta a requisitos de ingreso o vivienda en la mayoría de los países de la OCDE. Tales restricciones son menos comunes en el caso de los cónyuges y los hijos extranjeros de los ciudadanos. Varios países de la OCDE también han añadido requisitos de idioma e integración en la última década. Hay pocas pruebas de que esto haya afectado los resultados de empleo.

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APPENDIX B: PHOTOS

Figure 1-1

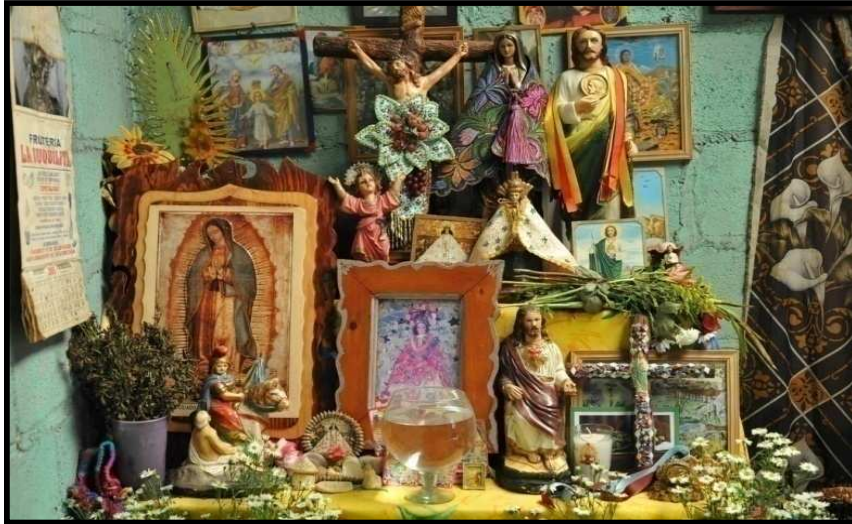


Figure 1-2



Figure 1-3



Figure 1-4



Figure 1-5



Figure 1-6



Figure 1-7



Figure 1-8



Figure 1-9



Figure 1-10



Figure 1-11



Figure 1-12



Figure 1-13

