

THE IRRUPTION OF MIGRANTS: THEOLOGY OF MIGRATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Migration, a defining dimension of human history since its very origins, is slowly becoming a significant issue in contemporary theological reflection. Reviewing the theological literature on this phenomenon in the last 30 years, the author reconstructs the recent history of the theology of migration, analyzes its relevance in Latino/a and Asian American theologies in the United States, and highlights its main trajectories, themes, and perspectives for the foreseeable future.

ROUGHLY 50 YEARS AGO the expression “irruption of the poor” appeared, signifying a new era in Christian theology. It marked the beginning of a series of contextual and liberating discourses that pointed to new ways of reflecting on and speaking of the God of Jesus Christ that gave voice to the challenges posed by those who lived at the very margins of society up to that time. Gustavo Gutiérrez, one of the first theologians to take on these challenges, spoke about the fundamental significance that the irruption of the poor in history, those “nonpersons,”¹ have had for Christian theology, and what it would mean to be attentive to the “signs of the times,” a duty incumbent on the entire church, as the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* no. 4 strongly reminds us.²

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¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983) 92, 193. Here Gutiérrez affirms that his liberation theology wants to confront the challenge of the “nonperson,” that is, the exploited and marginalized human beings and cultures.

² On the irruption of the poor as a sign of the times see Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la Liberación: Perspectivas*, rev. and aug. ed. (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1990) 21–22.

Today the world is witnessing another phenomenon related to that more extensive and massive reality of the irruption of the poor that has now assumed planetary dimensions and has become a common feature of the global village in which we are living: the irruption of migrants. The numbers speak clearly: there are 214 million migrants worldwide, 15.2 million refugees, and 27.1 million internally displaced people.³ The impact of the irruption of these “people on the move” on the contemporary scene has finally gotten the attention of Christian theology, as is evidenced by the growing number of publications and conferences organized on this subject.

This article reviews the literature on the growing theological thinking of human mobility⁴ in order to highlight its themes, trajectories, and perspectives. The article is divided into five main parts. Part 1 considers three factors that have caused theology to be more attentive to the reality of migration and experience of migrants, especially in the last ten years. Part 2 sketches the history of the theology of migration, starting from the 1960s through what can be defined as a “boom” of this reflection at the beginning of this third millennium. Part 3 critically observes two U.S. theological currents that have a clear migratory matrix. Part 4 analyzes some principal themes treated in the current theological reflection on migration. Finally, part 5 assesses the journey covered until now and suggests further urgent theological reflection on migration. The perspective that inspires this reflection is Roman Catholic in the sense that Roman Catholicism is the Christian tradition within which I have been formed and to which I belong. At the same time, it is inspired by the insights of the Second Vatican Council that call for serious attention to ecumenical and inter-religious issues.

IRRUPTION OF MIGRANTS IN THEOLOGY: THREE FACTORS

In reality migration, like the phenomenon of poverty, has never been alien to the Judeo-Christian tradition. The biblical stories narrate in abundant detail the geographical movements of our ancestors in the faith: Abraham and Sarah; Isaac and Rebekah; Jacob and Rachel; Joseph, his brothers, and their descendants who became immigrants and slaves in the land of Egypt;

³ Robin Cohen, “On the Move: The Migration Imperative,” *Global 5* (January 2011) 14–17, <http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/pdfs/on-the-move-the-migration-imperative-1>. (This and all other URLs referenced in this article were accessed October 4, 2011.)

⁴ I use “human mobility” as a synonym for “migration.” I use these terms to refer in a general and inclusive way to all the various aspects of the complex phenomenon of people on the move; these include international migrants, internal migrants, refugees and internally displaced people, nomadic people, seafarers, etc. In this article, however, I focus more on the reality of international migrants who comprise the great majority of people on the move.

Moses and the entire people of Israel on their journey to the Promised Land; the experience of the Babylonian exile; Ruth, the foreign and immigrant woman whom Matthew's Gospel lists among Jesus' ancestors (Mt 1:5). The God of Israel never fails to remind the people to respect and even love the immigrants as they love themselves, "for you were immigrants in the land of Egypt" (Lev 19:33–34). The Matthean Infancy Narrative shows the newborn Jesus taking refuge in Egypt with his family to escape the violent and homicidal persecution of King Herod (Mt 2:13–15). In the same Gospel Jesus identifies with the stranger and indicates the attitude of welcoming as one of the main criteria of the "final judgment" (Mt 25:35, 43). The First Letter of Peter relates how the first Christian communities were composed also of strangers and immigrants who had welcomed the Good News proclaimed by Jesus' disciples and were striving to live it out in an urban environment that was often hostile to them.⁵

Precisely because the movements of persons and entire peoples are ubiquitous in the Bible, biblical exegesis and theology showed early on considerable interest in these questions. The same has not happened in the field of systematic theology, which has either totally ignored or found it difficult to include the issues related to human mobility in its agenda. Perhaps this happened because for years migration was usually considered a social phenomenon having little or nothing to do with a systematic reflection on Christian faith. For this reason it becomes important today to examine the factors that are now favoring a growing involvement of Christian theology with the phenomenon and experience of migration. Three crucial factors will be highlighted here. The first is what can be called a "social factor" that refers to the interpretation that some sociologists have given of the current era as the "age of migration."⁶ Obviously, migration is a social phenomenon that has accompanied the journey of humankind since its origins. Yet, today as never before in human history, in this globalized world, individuals and entire populations have rapidly migrated, facilitated by the remarkable advances in technologies of transportation and communications. Moreover, the space that human mobility occupies in political agendas and in public debates worldwide is simply extraordinary; migration becomes the favored lens, often exploited by powerful self-interests, through which people are reading momentous transformations happening in their societies. Today's rapidly changing social and political realities challenge

⁵ See John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*, with a new introduction (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

⁶ Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 4th rev. ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2009).

Christian churches and theology to deal seriously and urgently with the phenomenon of human mobility.

The second factor is theological. It concerns the fundamental importance that human history and experience, considered in the diversity of geographical and cultural contexts, have acquired in contemporary theology as essential loci for reflecting on Christian faith. In Roman Catholicism the two *loci theologici* par excellence have conventionally been Scripture and tradition. The discovery of the crucial theological import of human history and experience in context, particularly in countries of the Global South faced with extreme social, economic, and political hardships, has led to a new way of conceiving the objective of theology: it can no longer be considered as solely a speculative discipline; it also assumes an eminently “praxical” dimension. In other words, the goal of theology is not simply to understand, but to understand in order to transform the reality of oppression, violence, and sin in which people live as they journey toward the realization of the reign of God. It is precisely in this sense that the term “praxis” has taken on an ever-growing significance in theological thinking, even though the meaning of this word has not always been properly comprehended and explained.⁷ U.S. theologian Kevin Burke aptly summarizes this way of understanding and doing theology: “Theology not only ‘thinks’ about God, but commits to God’s way and acts on God’s word. It integrates conceptualization, commitment, and praxis.”⁸ Starting from this vision of what thinking about the Christian God should be, migration, as one of the central aspects of current human history and experience, can become one of the privileged sources or *loci theologici* of contemporary theological reflection.

The third factor is pastoral-practical. It emerges principally in the constant quest for spiritual and theological enlightenment by those pastoral agents who work within the numerous structures that the church has established to minister to migrants, as well as by the many believers who take seriously the questions related to human mobility. These questions ask the church and theology to throw light on this complex and controversial phenomenon that often leaves believers perplexed as they struggle to live

⁷ See Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. and exp. ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2002) 70–87; Bevans *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2009) 156–62; Giacomo Canobbio, “Uno sguardo complessivo sulla teologia del ‘900,” in *Teologia e storia: L’Eredità del ‘900*, ed. Giacomo Canobbio (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 2002) 7–32, at 27–31.

⁸ Kevin F. Burke, “Thinking about the Church: The Gift of Cultural Diversity to Theology,” in *Many Faces, One Church: Cultural Diversity and the American Catholic Experience*, ed. Peter C. Phan and Diana Hayes (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004) 27–47, at 42.

between the imperative of Christian compassion and the need for security, as well as to live together in harmony with the newly arrived members of the Christian and civic community often regarded with suspicion and hostility. Pastoral workers and faithful believers are asking for the necessary spiritual and theological resources that can sustain them in a society that is undergoing a rapid and deep process of transformation, a society that is becoming increasingly multicultural and multireligious due to migration. But as the church and theology struggle with these matters in Western countries that are receiving millions of migrants, it cannot be forgotten that the migrants themselves are trying to read their own experiences in the light of faith and to give theological answers to the numerous challenges they face. As I will later suggest, the human and faith experiences of migrants have become one of the main *loci* of the theology of migration.

Recalling these three factors helps explain, even if not entirely, the current theological interest in migration. They also fuel the hope that such theological reflection will gain greater prominence, so that a theology of migration might become—paraphrasing Ephesians 2:19—no longer an alien and a stranger, but a full “citizen” in the “city” of Christian theology.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE THEOLOGY OF MIGRATION SINCE THE 1960S

Without presuming to offer a complete picture of this subject, I want here to map out the path covered by the theology of migration in the past 50 years. It begins with the 1960s, the period in which the opportunity and necessity of theological reflection on human mobility emerged; it ends with the first decade of the 21st century, in which the first national and international theological conferences on this issue were organized.

In 1961 the World Council of Churches organized a congress in Switzerland on migration. At that congress Protestant theologian Pieter de Jong attempted to lay the foundations of a theology of migration. Though mainly a biblical reflection on human mobility, it can surely be held up as one of the first, if cautious, attempts to elaborate a theology of migration.⁹ Toward the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the writings of some Scalabrinian missionaries,¹⁰ based in the Centro Studi Emigrazione di Roma (CSER)—a center founded by them in 1963 to promote

⁹ Pieter De Jong, “Il migrante è uno straniero,” *Studi emigrazione* 1 (1965) 53–64.

¹⁰ The Missionaries of St. Charles (Scalabrinians) are a Roman Catholic religious order founded in 1887 by Blessed Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, bishop of Piacenza (Italy), to minister to Italian emigrants. In 1972 they officially expanded the scope of their ministry to all migrants and refugees regardless of nationality or religion.

interdisciplinary research and to study the phenomenon of migration—began to offer some initial ecclesial reflections based on their pastoral experience with Italian migrants in Europe and the Americas. These texts reveal the need of a deeper theological reflection on human mobility; they are biblical-pastoral in character rather than systematic-theological and seem mainly intended to promote pastoral care of migrants.¹¹ By the end of the 1970s the first attempts to craft a theology of migration appeared in the United States. These attempts reflected a new current of contextual theology that was developing there, i.e., Hispanic or Latino/a theology. In 1978 Mexican-American theologian Allan Figueroa Deck wrote one of the first and still few pastoral-theological essays on the reality of undocumented immigration; to this day, this subject remains one of the most difficult and highly controversial aspects of the phenomenon of migration in that it deals with the stigma of “illegality.”¹² In the following years Hispanic theology would offer other thoughtful considerations on human mobility, but they still represent, at least from a systematic viewpoint, brief and tentative attempts to articulate a theology of migration.¹³ Another important migration experience that received much attention in the United States in the 1980s, particularly because of its grave legal, civic, and religious implications, was the Sanctuary Movement, a civic, ecumenical, and interreligious movement involving numerous Christian communities in Mexico, Canada, and the United States; it gave sanctuary to thousands of refugees who had fled the civil wars that devastated some Central American countries (such as Guatemala and El Salvador). The militarized regimes of these countries were supported by the U.S. government, which, in the context of the struggle against Communism that characterized the Cold War, could not offer political asylum to people fleeing from these allied nations. Without entering into the details of this important movement that drew the attention of the media during those years and continues to inspire those who are dedicated to the promotion and protection of the rights of immigrants today in the United States,¹⁴ it is important to underline that this particular

¹¹ Cesare Zanconato and Tarcisio Rubin, *Chiesa peregrinante: Note di teologia pastorale* (Piacenza: Seminario Scalabrini, 1968); Cesare Zanconato, *Chiesa migrante: Una pastorale in movimento* (Roma: CSER, 1972).

¹² Allan Figueroa Deck, “A Christian Perspective on the Reality of Illegal Immigration,” *Social Thought* 4 (1978) 39–53.

¹³ Jorge Lara-Braud, “Reflexiones teológicas sobre la migración,” *Apuntes* 2 (1982) 3–7; Hugo Lopez, “Toward a Theology of Migration,” *Apuntes* 2 (1982) 68–71; Lopez, “El divino migrante,” *Apuntes* 4 (1984) 14–19.

¹⁴ Building on the tradition of the Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s and inspired by the words of Cardinal Roger Mahony, archbishop (now emeritus) of Los Angeles in March 2006, who said he would instruct his priests and pastoral agents working in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to disregard provisions of House Bill HR4437,

experience generated elements of theological reflection that were more occasional than systematic, and that unfortunately remained at the margins of the U.S. theological scene.¹⁵

A notable step forward in the development of the theology of migration was taken in what might be the first essay to deal systematically with this subject: in 1980 Italian biblical theologian Giacomo Danesi published an article that first of all identified the reasons, the presuppositions, and a methodology for a theology of migration. The main weakness of the article is that Danesi did not follow the methodology he proposed. His reflection did not start with a “scientific” study of the phenomenon of migration, as he suggested at the beginning of his article, but side-stepped it and ended up with a long biblical-theological meditation on the concept of stranger and fraternity in the Bible applied to contemporary migration.¹⁶ Yet, the strengths of Danesi’s article remain, among them the awareness that the systematic development of a theology of human mobility needs first and foremost the elaboration of a proper methodology, beginning with a thorough scientific analysis of the reality of migration, which entails an ongoing collaboration with the social sciences that study this phenomenon.

In the first years of the 21st century, various international congresses on the theology of migration took up this and other considerations. Some of these events were especially important: the congress in Tijuana, Mexico, organized in 2002 by the Scalabrinian missionaries and the Transborder Institute of the University of San Diego;¹⁷ a 2003 symposium in Aachen, Germany, organized by the Institute of Missiology of Missio Germany;¹⁸ a 2004 conference at the University of Notre Dame, the United States, organized by the Scalabrinian missionaries and the University of Notre Dame;¹⁹

a New Sanctuary Movement was born a few years ago to defend the rights and dignity of immigrants and promote a just and humane immigration reform in the United States. See www.newsanctuarymovement.org.

¹⁵ Justo L. González, “Sanctuary: Historical, Legal, and Biblical Considerations,” *Apuntes* 5 (1985) 36–47; Jon Sobrino, “Sanctuary: A Theological Analysis,” *Cross Currents* 38 (1988) 164–72.

¹⁶ Giacomo Danesi, “Per una teologia delle migrazioni,” in *Per una pastorale dei migranti: Contributi in occasione del 75. della morte di Mons. G. B. Scalabrini* (Rome: Direzione Generale dei Missionari Scalabriniani, 1980) 75–128.

¹⁷ See Gioacchino Campese and Pietro Ciallella, eds., *Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 2003).

¹⁸ Raúl Fonet-Betancourt, ed., *Migration and Interculturality: Theological and Philosophical Challenges* (Aachen: Wissenschaftsverlag Mainz, 2004), articles in English (9), Spanish (6), and French (2).

¹⁹ Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campese, eds., *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 2008).

a 2006 conference in São Paulo, Brazil, organized by the study centers of the Scalabrinian missionaries in Latin America;²⁰ a 2006 conference in Manila, the Philippines, organized by the Filipino Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrant and Itinerant People, Maryhill School of Theology, and the Scalabrini Migration Center in Manila;²¹ and two conferences held in Fairfield, Connecticut, in 2007 and Washington, D.C. in 2008, sponsored by the Theology of Migration Project at Woodstock Theological Center of Georgetown University.²² In addition to having enriched the literature on this subject with the publication of essays that touch on the various theological and social science disciplines that study migration, these gatherings have also indicated the paths that need to be followed to advance the theological reflection on human mobility in an interdisciplinary way as well as by dialoguing with the people involved in this phenomenon: pastoral agents, sociologists and anthropologists, theologians, and, most of all, the migrants themselves. It is precisely this interdisciplinary dimension that is emphasized in an unprecedented work in this field, a sociopastoral dictionary on migration published most recently in Italy, with contributions from 123 scholars from all over the world.²³ The fourth part of my article, in which some of the central themes of the current theological reflection on human mobility will be highlighted, will draw particularly from the aforementioned abundant and rich material. But at this point I treat two U.S. theological currents rooted in the experience of migration.

THEOLOGIES OF IMMIGRANTS: THE CASE OF LATINOS/AS AND ASIAN AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES

In a nation such as the United States that was born, built, and continues to prosper, thanks to the sacrifice, hard work, vitality, and creativity of numerous generations of migrants from all over the world, it should come as no surprise that some of these migrants and their descendants have crafted their own theological reflection, i.e., contextual theologies that emerged from two of the most numerous, important, and influential minorities in the United States: the Latinos/as or Hispanics and the

²⁰ The main talks presented during this event have been published in the theological review *Espaços* 14 (2006) 3–102, produced by the Instituto Teológico São Paulo (ITESP) that hosted this gathering.

²¹ Fabio Baggio and Agnes Brazal, eds., *Faith on the Move: Toward a Theology of Migration in Asia* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University, 2008).

²² Donald Kerwin and Jill Marie Gerschutz, eds., *And You Welcomed Me: Migration and Catholic Social Teaching* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington, 2009).

²³ Graziano Battistella, ed., *Migrazioni: Dizionario socio-pastorale* (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 2010).

Asian-Americans.²⁴ It is important to clarify, however, that the labels used to define these minorities are “pan-ethnic” in character in that they include a wide variety of cultures, histories, and languages. While the Hispanic minority, despite its diversity, can count on a common language conjugated through different accents and idiomatic expressions, for Asian-Americans this is not the case. To give an idea of the substantial significance of these groups in the United States, I cite some general data.²⁵ A news release of the Census Bureau issued on October 19, 2010, says that 12% of the U.S. population, or 36.7 million people, is foreign-born, while another 11%, or 33 million people, has at least one foreign-born parent. This means that at least one in five people in the United States today is a first or second generation resident. Another aspect of this reality is that more than half the foreign-born population comes from Latin America, and almost one-third comes from Mexico. The 2000 census reveals that the most numerous minority in the United States are the Hispanics, who number 48.4 million, not counting the 4 million residents in Puerto Rico. This means that 16% of the total U.S. population is Hispanic, a very young group with a median age of 27.4 years. Almost 38% of the total Latino/a population are immigrants, that is, more than 18 million. Asian-Americans represent a highly variegated population of 15.5 million people (5% of the total U.S. population) with a median age of 29.8 years. More than 60% of Asian-Americans are foreign-born, and as a whole the Asian-American minority has the highest percentage growth rate of any racial group in the United States. After Spanish, Chinese is the most widely spoken non-English language in the United States. The newer data from the 2010 census in the United States, when they become available, will further clarify the influence of immigration and minorities in the demographic make-up of this country.

It is legitimate to ask how widely U.S. contextualized theologies are known outside their country of origin to gauge how they influence Christian theology globally. Without going into detail, it can be said that at least in Europe they have not yet received the attention they deserve.

²⁴ I have not included here black theologies in the United States even though there is a clear migratory matrix in the tragic experience of slavery from Africa. I have chosen to focus in this article on more recent immigration. However, as I will show later, some black theologians are lamenting the omission of the black Caribbean diaspora experience in black theologies. To this I would add the experience of African immigrants and refugees in the United States today that has been interpreted from more historical and missiological perspectives by Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2008).

²⁵ Data for Latinos/as, Asian-Americans, and immigrants, regular and irregular, in the United States are taken from the U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov>, and the Pew Hispanic Center, <http://www.pewhispanic.org>.

Representative theologians such as Virgilio Elizondo and Peter Phan are known, but their writings, with rare exceptions, have not been translated into European languages. Works that have attempted a synthesis of the development of theology in the 20th and 21st centuries have not included these theologies.²⁶ Even the most recent updating of theology in North America, such as that proposed by the Italian theological review *Credere Oggi* in its March/April 2008 issue, has completely ignored these theologies.

I cannot here provide a synthesis of Latino/a and Asian-American theologies. Theologians of these two constituencies have already done this.²⁷ Here I examine how these two theological currents have treated the phenomenon of migration. As for Hispanic theology, a certain ambivalence among authors on the subject is evident at least until the first years of the 21st century—see, e.g., the writings of the prolific Cuban-American theologian Orlando Espín. In 2000 Espín wrote two important articles, one on the importance and urgency of theological reflection on immigration in the United States and another on the state of Latino/a theology in general. In the first essay Espín makes two basic affirmations: first, starting from the history of the United States as a nation of immigrants and from the fact that almost half the U.S. Roman Catholics are Latinos/as, and a significant part of them are immigrants (without speaking of the millions of Asian, African, and European immigrants who are Roman Catholic), he maintains that theology in the United States today cannot be honestly done without

²⁶ In particular see the important, voluminous work by Rosino Gibellini, *La teologia del XX secolo*, 6th ed., updated (Brescia: Queriniana, 2007), which provides a comprehensive overview of contemporary Christian theology. Oddly, Gibellini knows these U.S. theologies and their main representatives but did not incorporate them into his work.

²⁷ For Latino/a theology see, e.g., Eduardo C. Fernández, *La Cosecha: Harvesting Contemporary United States Hispanic Theology (1972–1998)* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2000); Miguel A. De La Torre and Edwin David Aponte, *Introducing Latino/a Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2001); María Pilar Aquino and María José Rosado-Nunes, eds., *Feminist Intercultural Theology: Latina Explorations for a Just World* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2007); Benjamín Valentín, ed., *In Our Own Voices: Latino/a Renditions of Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2010). On Asian American theology see Peter C. Phan and Jung Young Lee, eds., *Journeys at the Margin: Toward an Autobiographical Theology in American-Asian Perspective* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1999); Fumitaka Matsouka and Eleazar S. Fernandez, eds., *Realizing the America of Our Hearts: Theological Voices of Asian Americans* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2003); Rita Nakashima Brock et al., eds., *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion and Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007); Jonathan Y. Tan, *Introducing Asian American Theologies* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2008); Sang Hyun Lee, *From a Liminal Place: An Asian American Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010).

considering the traumatic experiences of immigration of millions of Roman Catholic faithful. Second, Espín rightly affirms that migration is not an issue just for moral and pastoral theology; it must also become an issue for dogmatic theology, which until now has ignored it.²⁸ In the earlier article Espín seems to deny the affirmations of the latter article. There he maintains that up to this point Hispanic theology mainly started from the experience of immigration, without recognizing that the majority of Latinos/as are U.S. citizens, and concludes that to insist on immigration as the defining experience of the Hispanic community means banking on the past rather than looking forward to the future.²⁹ Espín's ambivalence on this subject is evident and needs to be clarified. The explanation touches on the complex issue of the paths of integration of the different ethnic Latino groups in the United States and also on the experience of social and racial discrimination suffered by this minority. However, it is not entirely true that Hispanic theologians have articulated their thought only or mostly on the migration experiences of their constituencies. While we find profound theological reflection on the experience of exile and diaspora³⁰ of so many Latinos/as, we also find it on the condition of their being strangers in a land that they consider their homeland, but where at the same time they feel rejected. There are also reflections on their living "in-between" two cultures—that of their ancestors and that of their residence in the United States, even if they have lived in this country for generations now.³¹ But all this does not mean that Hispanic theology has elaborated a systematic theology of migration, something that Espín seems to affirm, promote, and

²⁸ Orlando O. Espín, "Immigration, Territory, and Globalization: Theological Reflections," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 7 (2000) 46–59. See also Espín, "Immigration and Theology: Reflections by an Implicated Theologian," *Perspectivas: Occasional Papers* 10 (Fall 2006) 37–49.

²⁹ Orlando O. Espín, "The State of U.S. Latino/a Theology: An Understanding," *Perspectivas: Occasional Papers* 4 (Fall 2000) 19–55, at 33.

³⁰ Another current of Latino/a theology deals with the phenomenon of migration known as "diaspora theology." See, e.g., Luis R. Rivera Rodríguez, "Immigration and the Bible: Comments by a Diasporic Theologian," *Perspectivas: Occasional Papers* 10 (Fall 2006) 23–36; Rivera Rodríguez, "Diaspora Theology," in *Hispanic American Religious Cultures*, vol. 1, ed. Miguel A. De La Torre (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2009) 200–205; Fernando F. Segovia, "Melting and Dreaming in America: Visions and Re-visions," in *A Dream Unfinished: Theological Reflections on America from the Margins*, ed. Eleazar S. Fernandez and Fernando F. Segovia (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2001) 228–67. Diaspora theology has been developed also in other contexts; see Delroy A. Reid-Salmon, *Home Away from Home: The Caribbean Diasporan Church in the Black Atlantic Tradition* (London: Equinox, 2008).

³¹ See Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Fernando F. Segovia, eds., *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); Fernandez and Segovia, eds., *A Dream Unfinished*.

deny at the same time in the two articles just mentioned. In fact, an analysis of the Latino/a theological literature shows a strong reserve on the part of Hispanics against identifying themselves as “immigrant” or “migrant,” and this represents a legitimate choice for a minority that for generations has been discriminated against and marginalized in U.S. society. Latino theologian Figueroa Deck observes that in the context of a U.S. society in which Latinos/as typically have been treated as “perpetual strangers,” even if many of them have been citizens of this country for generations, the use of the “analogy of the immigrant” to explain the experience of this minority is inadequate.³² Faced with this situation, it is understandable that Hispanic theological thought affirms its specific identity and the right of belonging fully to the United States, and, as a consequence, maintains also that the “immigrant label” is to be avoided because it gives the wrong impression—that those who use this label to identify themselves think that they do not yet belong to this nation. If this reasoning is legitimate and valid, especially because the data listed earlier show that more than half the Hispanics are U.S. citizens, at the same time it could not only aggravate an already existing division among Latino/a immigrants and Hispanic citizens (of the second, third, or even later generations), but provoke a possible estrangement of Latino/a theology from the experience of migration and the serious issues it raises. I mention here but two: the presence and problems of more than 11.1 million irregular immigrants, most of whom are Latinos (according to some estimates, four out of five);³³ and the violence against and deaths of thousands of immigrants at the U.S.-Mexico border and along the journey from Central America to the United States.³⁴ Some Hispanic theologians have reminded their colleagues not to exclude from their theological reflection those who, precisely because they do not “legally” belong to a society, could become invisible also to theological

³² Allan Figueroa Deck, “At the Crossroads: North American and Hispanic,” in *We Are a People: Initiatives in Hispanic American Theology*, ed. Roberto S. Goizueta (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf & Stock, 2001) 1–20, at 2–3.

³³ On irregular immigration in the United States see the most recent report by Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, *Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010* (Washington: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011), available at <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/133.pdf>. See also the report by Mark Hugo Lopez, Rich Morin, and Paul Taylor, *Illegal Immigration Backlash Worries, Divides Latinos* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center, 2010), which illustrates the division among Latinos/as around the issue of undocumented immigration; available at <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/128.pdf>.

³⁴ On these issues see Olivia Ruiz Marrujo, “The Gender of Risk: Sexual Violence against Undocumented Women,” in *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey* 225–39; Joseph Nevins, “Thinking out of Bounds: A Critical Analysis of Academic and Human Rights Writings on Migrant Deaths in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region,” *Migraciones internacionales* 2 (2003) 171–90.

thinking. Moreover—and this may be the most relevant critique from the viewpoint of a theology of migration—the risk is to underestimate the constitutive “pilgrim” dimension of Christian faith, defined by missiologist Andrew Walls as the “pilgrim principle,”³⁵ which points to the fundamental awareness that everyone in the Christian community must have of being always on a journey toward the reign of God and so of being always stranger and migrant. This is something that belongs to the “DNA” of Christian belief.

Latino/a theology, however, seems to have changed course in the past few years by showing considerable interest in the phenomenon of human mobility—as indicated by the contributions of Hispanic theologians to the conferences on the theology of migration mentioned earlier.³⁶ The entire 2006 issue of *Perspectivas: Occasional Papers*, the review of the Hispanic Theological Initiative, was dedicated to the issue of migration. And the 2009 annual assembly of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS) was devoted to the theme of migration and, in particular, to the question of immigration reform in the United States.³⁷

As for Asian-American theology, one aspect that stands out relative to Hispanic theology is the diversity reflecting the denominational affiliation of their constituencies: most Latino/a theologians are Roman Catholic, while the majority of Asian-American thinkers come from a wide range of Christian denominations. It is important to underscore this aspect in order to understand some of the distinctive thematic features of these two theologies. Whereas Latinos/as and Asian-Americans share the experience of diaspora, marginality, and social and racial discrimination, Asian-Americans express their experience of living “in-between” in a more articulated way that reflects the complexity of this “hyphenated” existence. Korean-American theologian Jung Young Lee elaborates the latter condition and

³⁵ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1996) 8–9.

³⁶ See, e.g., María Pilar Aquino, “La humanidad peregrina viviente: Migración y experiencia religiosa,” in *Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization* 103–142; Alex Nava, “God in the Desert: Searching for the Divine in the Midst of Death,” in *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey* 62–75. Latino/a theologians also participated in the Spring Institute for Lived Theology 2010, a conference on migration sponsored by the University of Virginia and held at the University of San Diego; see <http://www.livedtheology.org>.

³⁷ The *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* (January 2011) online offers two articles on immigration, both affirming the Bible as a key ally in the struggle for a humane immigration reform: Aquiles Ernesto Martínez, “Old Testament Legislation and Foreigners: An Alternative Majority Group Response,” <http://www.latinoteology.org/2011/old-testament-foreigners>; Gilberto Ruiz, “A Migrant Being at Work: Movement and Migration in Johannine Christology,” <http://www.latinoteology.org/2011/migrant-worker-migration>.

concludes that “to be in-between” characterizes not only the existence of persons in an interstitial space between two cultures in which they feel they belong at the same time to neither and to both (“to be in-both”). This experience of living simultaneously in-between and in-both cultures has the potential to offer the person the opportunity to go beyond (“to be beyond”), that is, of creating a different way of living in a multicultural and multireligious context that enhances the ability to learn what is good and useful in each culture and discard what is harmful, and to dialogue with everybody who seeks to knock down the cultural, social, and religious barriers that prevent harmonious living. The language of each of these theologies captures the experience of *convivencia* (a typically Latin American concept) and of living in harmony (a typically Asian concept) with oneself, one another, the entire creation, and God. So these three catch phrases—“to be in-between,” “to be in-both,” and “to be beyond”—become the fuller expression of the experience of the immigrant because they not only identify his or her condition of social marginality, but they also indicate the possibility of living and learning in the context of multiple cultures and religions, and the hope of building up a new reality, one that is more just and rich in human relations.³⁸ In terms of reflection on the reality of migration the most significant difference between Latino/a and Asian-American theologies is arguably that while Hispanic theologians consider an “immigrant analogy” unable to signify the peculiar condition of the Latinos/as, the Asian-American thinkers do not seem to have any problem in using the same image to identify themselves. Jung Young Lee himself affirms that his Asian-American theology of marginality is also a theology of migration.³⁹ Vietnamese-American theologian Peter Phan never fails to remind his audiences that he arrived in the United States as a refugee and has dedicated a number of his writings to articulating (1) a theology of migration especially based on the experience of the Vietnamese who landed in the United States as refugees and immigrants,⁴⁰ and (2) the foundations and contents of an intercultural theology of migration in the United States.⁴¹ More recently the young Vietnamese-American theologian Linh N. Hoang has written on the significant role of religious experience, and particularly the unique appropriation of the doctrine of Trinity, in the

³⁸ See Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); and Peter C. Phan, “The Experience of Migration in the United States as a Source of Intercultural Theology,” in *Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization* 149–50.

³⁹ Lee, *Marginality* 74.

⁴⁰ Peter C. Phan, *Christianity with an Asian Face: Asian American Theology in the Making* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2003) 228–47.

⁴¹ Phan, “Experience of Migration” 143–69.

process of “culture negotiation” by Vietnamese Catholic refugees in the United States. Hoang not only analyzes and reflects on the cultural and faith experience of these people and their participation in U.S. Catholicism, but also shows what could be the peculiar contribution of Vietnamese refugees to the U.S. Catholic Church.⁴² Korean-American theologian Anselm Min has elaborated on an ethnic theology rooted in the experience of Koreans in the United States, a theology that finds in Abraham as *homo viator* one of its main exemplars. Wayfarers must be attentive and open to everyone’s needs, because authentic Christian theological thought must overcome all forms of tribalism to promote relationality with other human beings in the respect of diversity; Min calls this “solidarity of others.”⁴³ One can rightly observe that this difference between Asian-American and Latino/a theology regarding the use of the “immigrant analogy” is due to the fact that the majority of Asian-Americans living in the United States (more than 60%) are still first generation immigrants and therefore this experience has more weight for them than for Hispanics. In addition to this demographic factor, there are also the tragic events that have marked the history of Asian immigration in the United States, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the infamous Executive Order 9066 in 1942 that ordered the internment of some 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II.⁴⁴

In conclusion, I underline two other common features of these U.S. theological currents. The first refers to the importance that both Hispanic and Asian-American theologies give to popular religion as an essential locus of their reflection, i.e., the faith experience of the people as a privileged *locus theologicus*. Here too we find a substantial concurrence of interests, especially among Roman Catholic theologians,⁴⁵ even if Latino/a theologians have investigated and articulated this theme in greater depth than their Asian American colleagues.⁴⁶ The second is that even though

⁴² Linh N. Hoang, *Rebuilding Religious Experience: Vietnamese Refugees in America* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Mueller e.K., 2008).

⁴³ Anselm K. Min, “From Autobiography to Fellowship of Others: Reflections on Doing Ethnic Theology Today,” in *Journeys at the Margin* 135–59; see also Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World: A Postmodern Theology after Postmodernism* (New York: T. & T. Clark International, 2004).

⁴⁴ Tan, *Introducing Asian American Theologies* 1–56.

⁴⁵ Phan, “Experience of Migration” 168.

⁴⁶ See Orlando O. Espín, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis 1997); Roberto S. Goizueta, “The Symbolic Realism of U.S. Latino/a Popular Catholicism,” *Theological Studies* 65 (2004) 255–74; Eduardo C. Fernández, *Mexican-American Catholics* (New York: Paulist, 2007). For an Asian American reflection on popular Catholicism see Peter C. Phan, *Vietnamese-American Catholics* (New York: Paulist, 2005).

these two theological movements are deliberately elaborating a contextual reflection, in reality their practitioners do not want them to be simply identified as “ethnic theologies” because they believe that the theological insights they express are valid for not only their own constituencies but also Christian theology as such, especially those Western theologies that for centuries have considered themselves as “the universal theology” or the *theologia perennis*. Therefore Hispanic and Asian- American theologies are contextual, ethnic, and pan-ethnic, but their practitioners are aware of and willing to cooperate with other theological movements in the Christian universe in order to construct an authentically “Catholic” theology from below.⁴⁷

MAIN THEMES OF CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON MIGRATION

Some of the main themes that have drawn the attention of theological reflection on migration in the last decade have been anticipated in the theological conferences noted at the end of the second part of this essay. Particularly important was the first international congress in Tijuana, Mexico, in 2002, where some of these issues were identified and discussed.⁴⁸ This section does not pretend to exhaust the wealth and variety of content that the theology of migration has brought to my attention, but simply to offer a tentative synthesis of what could be considered some of the main issues that have emerged in this debate and so to describe the contours of this theological field.

Theologies of Migration and Methodologies

During the Tijuana conference, U.S. theologian Robert Schreiter, a most attentive theological observer and interpreter of the dynamics of globalization in today’s world, had suggested that there are different ways of doing theology of human mobility, and he outlined three distinct approaches. I cannot here enter into the details of Schreiter’s proposal;⁴⁹ suffice it to say that he was already affirming that there does not exist “the” theology of migration, but various “theologies” of migration, and that this pluralism depends on both the methodological and thematic starting points of these

⁴⁷ See Peter C. Phan, “Introduction: An Asian-American Theology: Believing and Thinking at the Boundaries,” in *Journeys at the Margin* xi–xxvii, at xxvi–xxvii; Tan, *Introducing Asian American Theologies* 83–84.

⁴⁸ See Phan, “Experience of Migration” 143–69; Robert J. Schreiter, “Theology’s Contribution to (Im)Migration,” in *Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization* 170–80; Gioacchino Campese and Flor Maria Rigoni, “Hacer teología desde el migrante: Diario de un camino,” in *Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization* 181–203.

⁴⁹ Schreiter, “Theology’s Contribution to (Im)Migration” 170–80.

reflections as well as their geographic and cultural contexts. To give an idea of this pluralism, I will mention some significant essays published on the subject since 2008. Baptist pastor and theologian of Jamaican origins Delroy Reid-Salmon affirms in a recent article that one of the sins of black theology is undoubtedly that of having omitted the experience of the Caribbean diaspora from the theological discourse about black Christians in both the United Kingdom and the United States. This is further evidence of how the experience of migrants is a *locus theologicus* also in the context of theologies that have been characterized since their origins by a radical openness to the most marginal human experiences such as black theology. According to Reid-Salmon the inclusion of the experience of black immigrants or black diaspora in the discourse of black theology would represent a further expression of the catholicity of Christian faith and the catholicity of “Black Christianity.”⁵⁰ Noteworthy are also the initiatives and scholarly activities in theological reflection on human mobility of the ecumenical organization Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).⁵¹ Spanish authors have produced important works in this field. I refer particularly to the book of Spanish missionary/theologian José Antonio Martínez Díez, who has worked in Latin America and is presently ministering to homeless immigrant minors in Spain; his study, following the method “see-judge-act,” articulates a “theology of the immigrant.”⁵² Also in Spain Jesuit Daniel Izuzquiza offers a reflection on a political theology of migration rooted in the eucharistic celebration.⁵³ In Italy at the end of 2010 the Gregorian University Press published a well-documented doctoral dissertation whose objective is to contribute to a definition of which theology might be more suited to inspire and nourish the pastoral care of and mission to migrants.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Delroy A. Reid-Salmon, “A Sin of Black Theology: The Omission of the Caribbean Diasporan Experience from Black Theological Discourse,” *Black Theology* 6 (2008) 154–73.

⁵¹ See esp. Benz H. R. Schär and Ralf Geisler, eds., *Theological Reflections on Migration: A CCME Reader* (Brussels: CCME, 2008), http://www.ccme.be/fileadmin/filer/ccme/70_DOWNLOADS/20_Publications/2008_CCME_Reader-Theological_Reflections_on_Migration.pdf; Darrell Jackson and Alessia Passarelli, *Mapping Migration Mapping Churches’ Responses: Europe Study* (Brussels: CCME, 2008), http://www.ccme.be/fileadmin/filer/ccme/70_DOWNLOADS/20_Publications/2009-07-04_CCME_Publ_-_Mapping_migration_-_Mapping_Churches_responses.pdf.

⁵² José Martínez Díez, *El Cristiano ante la inmigración* (Madrid: PPC, 2008).

⁵³ Daniel Izuzquiza, *Al partir el pan: Notas para una teología política de las migraciones* (Barcelona: Cristianisme i Justicia, 2010), <http://www.fespinal.com/espinal/lilib/es169.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Gaetano Parolin, *Chiesa postconciliare e migrazioni: Quale teologia per la missione con i migranti*, Tesi Gregoriana Missiologia 6 (Rome: Gregorian University, 2010).

In terms of methodologies, Phan suggested during the Tijuana conference that migration is one of the essential sources of an intercultural theology in the United States, and he proposed both method and resources for this reflection.⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that almost all the contributions made to the theology of migration in the last decade have insisted on the experience of migrants as one of the fundamental resources for this discourse. The latest contributions in this area confirm this trend by highlighting the centrality of the migrants and their experiences in the theological and pastoral thinking on human mobility.⁵⁶ Other thinkers have also taken up the methodological issue: Jorge Castillo, a theologian from Panama working in The Netherlands, has underlined the intercultural character of the method of the theology of human mobility;⁵⁷ Nancy Bedford, an Argentinian-American theologian, has observed that the traditional concept of *locus theologicus* as interpreted by the Basque-Salvadoran martyr/theologian Ignacio Ellacuría can support a theology that speaks of God from more than one place (*locus*), that is, the different contexts in which migrants live. Her proposal of the concept of *via theologica* as a variation of *locus theologicus* underscores the necessary dynamism of a theological reading of the phenomenon of human mobility;⁵⁸ and Gioacchino Campese, who has not only affirmed the theological significance of migration through a closer examination of the concepts of “signs of the times” and *locus theologicus*, but has also pinpointed the methodology proposed by Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino⁵⁹ as a valid and useful system for interpreting theologically the reality of migration in its great complexity.⁶⁰ U.S. theologian Daniel Groody has proposed four conceptual foundations

⁵⁵ Phan, “Experience of Migration” 143–69.

⁵⁶ See Alfredo José Gonçalves, “Migrantes: Profetas da esperança,” *Revista eclesiástica brasileira* 278 (2010) 306–30; Carmem Lussi, “Mobilidade humana e evangelização: Contribuições a partir do contexto brasileiro,” *Revista eclesiástica brasileira* 278 (2010) 276–305; Roberto Marinucci, “Caminhos da igreja junto a migrantes e refugiados: Representações sociais e desafios pastorais,” *Revista eclesiástica brasileira* 278 (2010) 331–54.

⁵⁷ Jorge Castillo Guerra, “Hacia una teología de la migración: Perspectivas y propuestas,” in *Migration and Interculturality* 151–75; Castillo, “A Theology of Migration: Toward an Intercultural Methodology,” in *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey* 243–70.

⁵⁸ Nancy E. Bedford, “To Speak of God from More than One Place: Theological Reflections from the Experience of Migration,” in *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation*, ed. Ivan Petrella (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2005) 95–118.

⁵⁹ Ignacio Ellacuría, *Escritos teológicos*, vol. 1 (San Salvador: UCA, 2000) 187–218; Jon Sobrino, “La teología y el ‘principio liberación,’” *Revista latinoamericana de teología* 12 (1995) 115–40.

⁶⁰ See Gioacchino Campese, “Al escucha de los clamores de la realidad: Hacer teología desde las migraciones,” *Espaços* 14 (2006) 133–50; Campese, *Hacia una*

for a theology of migration: *imago Dei*, which allows a reading of human mobility starting from the fundamental humanity of the migrants created in God's image; *verbum Dei*, which shows Jesus Christ as the "migrant Son of God," the one who, in the mystery of incarnation, crosses the border between the human and the divine worlds; *missio Dei*, which indicates the participation in the universal mission of God whose will is that in any human being, especially the most vulnerable ones such as refugees and irregular migrants, people would recognize the image and the dignity as children of God; and finally *visio Dei*, which underlines the eschatological dimension of Christian faith, which teaches that to be disciples of Jesus here on earth, in the different geographic and cultural contexts, means to journey in the direction of God's reign.⁶¹

The Christian God from the Perspective of Migration

The theology of migration has also just begun to interpret the mystery of God starting from the experience of human mobility.⁶² To date, two themes that have been explored include the communion in diversity within the Trinity as a cue for a theology of migration,⁶³ and the interpretation of Trinity in a multicultural and multireligious society as a paradigm of the hospitality of God *ad intra* and *ad extra*.⁶⁴ Biblical theologians have produced thought-provoking reflections on the God who comes as guest (Gen 18) and knocks on the door of humanity asking to be welcomed (Rev 3:20), the God who comes as migrant and pilgrim, and the God who walks with the people of Israel and lives in a tent rather than in a temple (1 Chr 17:5).⁶⁵ As we have seen earlier, the theology of human mobility

teología desde la realidad de las migraciones: Método y desafíos (Guadalajara: Sistema Universitario Jesuita, 2008); Campese, "Teologia delle migrazioni," in *Migrazioni: Dizionario socio-pastorale* 1016–27.

⁶¹ Daniel G. Groody, "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees," *Theological Studies* 70 (2009) 638–67.

⁶² See Miguel H. Díaz, "Life-Giving Migrations: Re-visioning the Mystery of God through U.S. Hispanic Eyes," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* online (April 2006), <http://www.latinoteology.org>; Díaz, "On Loving Strangers: Encountering the Mystery of God in the Face of Migrants," *Word and World* 29 (2009) 234–42.

⁶³ See Fabio Baggio, "Diversity in Trinitarian Communion: Pointers toward a Theology of Migrations," in *Migration in a Global World*, ed. Solange Lefebvre and Luiz Carlos Susin (London: SCM, 2008) 74–85.

⁶⁴ Francesc Torralba, "*No olvidéis la hospitalidad*" (*Heb 13,2*): *Una exploración teológica* (Madrid: PPC, 2004) 51–62.

⁶⁵ Carmine Di Sante, "Lo straniero ospitato e lo straniero ospitante," in *Lo straniero: Nemico, ospite, profeta?*, ed. Ermes Ronchi (Milano: Paoline, 2006) 55–78, at 76–78; Elmar Salmann, "Dio vicino e straniero, prossimità e estraneità: Volti di Dio," in *ibid.* 79–95.

has interpreted Jesus Christ, beginning with NT texts, as the “migrant Son of God,” the one who through his incarnation pitches his tent among us (Jn 1:14) and in so doing crosses the border between the divine and the human worlds; the one who identifies so much with our humanity to the point of not limiting himself merely to approaching the stranger, but of himself becoming a stranger (Jn 1:10–11; Mt 25:35); descendant of strangers as indicated by the presence of foreign women in his genealogy (Mt 1:1–17); the one who becomes an itinerant prophet of the reign of God and as such “has nowhere to lay his head” (Lk 9:58). In other words, Jesus is presented as the paradigm of the migrant, of the border-crosser, and therefore as the God-made-flesh who can fully understand the precarious and vulnerable condition of the migrant and the refugee.⁶⁶

The Migrant as Metaphor of the Christian Believer

The theology of migration, once again in cooperation with biblical theology,⁶⁷ has rediscovered the migrant as a metaphor of the true Christian believer, who, even though he or she has a homeland, lives in it as though a foreigner and a stranger. This is a dimension of Christian life that the famous and anonymous Christian document *Letter to Diognetus*, dating approximately from the second century CE, emphasized.⁶⁸ The true Christian is the person who acknowledges in every moment the fact of being on a journey, of being a pilgrim of the reign of God, for this is the final goal of those who believe in the God revealed by Jesus Christ. This pilgrim dimension, Walls’s “pilgrim principle,” is a constitutive element of Christianity since its origins, that is, from its roots in Jewish traditions—“a wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an immigrant” (Deut 26:5)—to its affirmation in the life of the itinerant

⁶⁶ See Lee, *Marginality* 77–100; Phan, *Christianity with an Asian Face* 112–15; Phan, *Vietnamese-American Catholics* 107–11; Campese and Rigoni, “Hacer teología desde el migrante” 190–91; Groody, “Crossing the Divide” 648–53; VanThanh Nguyen, “Asia in Motion: A Biblical Reflection on Migration,” *Asian Christian Review* 4.2 (2010) 18–31, especially at 25–27.

⁶⁷ See Xavier Alegre, “Centurión de Cafarnaún (Lc 7,1–10), Modelo de Cristiano en Lucas: El emigrante y el extranjero paradigmas del creyente en la Biblia,” *Revista latinoamericana de teología* 27 (2007) 123–59; Dianne Bergant, “Ruth: The Migrant Who Saved the People,” in *Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization* 49–61; Donald Senior, “‘Beloved Aliens and Exiles’: New Testament Perspectives on Migration,” in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey* 20–34.

⁶⁸ For a reflection on the significance of this ancient document for a theology of migration see Peter C. Phan, “Migration in the Patristic Era: History and Theology,” in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey* 35–61, at 54–58; Anselm K. Min, “Migration and Christian Hope: Historical and Eschatological Reflections on Migration,” in *Faith on the Move* 177–202.

prophet of Nazareth and his followers who continue to walk throughout the world to proclaim the gospel. In this perspective the migrant becomes, with his or her simple and “naked” presence, the living witness of the human pilgrimage toward God as a response to a God who has “pilgrimed” toward humanity. Therefore, the “immigrant analogy,” for legitimate reasons considered inadequate by Hispanic theology, is essential for a theology of migration. In a world where even in Christian communities it has become easy to alienate strangers and migrants, biblical scholar Carmine Di Sante reminds us that “alienation does not consist in being a stranger but in having forgotten that one is a stranger, and that God is God precisely because God does not allow this suppression of awareness to happen, namely, the illusion that those who live outside their homeland are already at home without having to seek it anymore.”⁶⁹ At the same time the theology of migration begins to understand and rediscover the fundamental value of the richness, tenacity, and beauty of the faith of the migrants, a faith conveyed through popular expressions (such as devotions) that allowed these people to survive as human beings and believers in difficult and dangerous situations. This is the faith of those who place themselves completely in God’s hands because they recognize their own vulnerability and inability to exist without God’s infinite and unconditional grace.⁷⁰ It is a faith that shows us glimpses of the reign of God announced by Jesus.⁷¹ Also through these—at times extraordinary—expressions of faith, the migrant confirms his or her status as a metaphor of the true Christian.

Ecclesiology and Migration

Scholars involved in the pastoral and theological reflection on migration have been recently underscoring the ecclesiological relevance and significance of this phenomenon.⁷² These theologians have examined the images of the church already existing in our Christian tradition that reflect the experience of migration and could illuminate it. Among these images is that of the

⁶⁹ Carmine di Sante, *Lo straniero nella Bibbia: Saggio sull’ospitalità* (Troina: Città Aperta, 2002) 221.

⁷⁰ See Campese and Righi, “Hacer teología desde el migrante” 191–92; Daniel G. Groody, *Border of Death, Valley of Life: An Immigrant Journey of Heart and Spirit* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Groody, “Jesus and the Undocumented Immigrant: A Spiritual Geography of a Crucified People,” *Theological Studies* 70 (2009) 298–316; Gioacchino Campese, “Religione Popolare,” in *Migrazioni: Dizionario socio-pastorale* 876–87.

⁷¹ See Robert Lasalle-Klein, “Marina’s Story and the Historical Reality of Jesus,” in *Jesus of Galilee: Contextual Christology for the 21st Century*, ed. Robert Lasalle-Klein (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2011) 99–118.

⁷² See Carmem Lussi, *Missione della chiesa nel contesto della mobilità umana* (Vatican City: Urbaniana University, 2005) 34–44.

“pilgrim church.”⁷³ This same image of the church, of a “nomad” and pilgrim church that becomes a refuge for the homeless who flee from persecutions and violence in their own homeland, has been taken up by Nigerian theologian Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator regarding the devastating situation of refugees in Africa.⁷⁴ In Europe German-Togolese theologian Amélé Ekuè affirms that Christian immigrants help reshape the church as a community deeply aware of its global and local dimensions, and discover that “being a church together” means understanding it as a community of strangers and sojourners that continues to extend God’s hospitality to the marginalized and the excluded.⁷⁵ In dialogue with political and social sciences, Filipino theologian Emmanuel de Guzman reflects on a way of being church that includes the hopes and problems of migrants: a church not only as a community that helps and sustains migrants, but most of all as a community with and of migrants.⁷⁶ This point that has been emphasized from a missiological perspective by U.S. theologian Stephen Bevans who underscored the active agency of migrants in the mission of the church.⁷⁷ Phan underscores the often ignored and crucial contributions that newer immigrants are making to the understanding of the mission of the church in the United States, a country characterized by cultural and religious diversity and power hegemony in the world.⁷⁸ Particularly challenging is the situation of some Protestant churches in Europe, such as those in Italy, which represent a small minority in a predominantly Roman Catholic country. In Italy the immigrants are at least half of the church-going Protestants, and in many communities they represent more than 60% of the membership. The courageous and difficult choice to build up intercultural communities, instead of ghetto or parallel churches, based on equality, empowerment, and real partnership is something to be admired and closely monitored as a learning experience for all Christian churches.⁷⁹

⁷³ See Espín, “Immigration, Territory, and Globalization” 47–48; Mark Griffin and Theron Walker, *Living on the Borders: What the Church Can Learn from Ethnic Immigrant Cultures* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos, 2004); Sandra Mazzolini, “Chiesa pellegrina,” in *Migrazioni: Dizionario socio-pastorale* 145–50.

⁷⁴ Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *From Crisis to Kairos: The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV/AIDS, Refugees, and Poverty* (Nairobi: Pauline, 2005) 143–79.

⁷⁵ Amélé Adamawi-Aho Ekuè, “Migrant Christians: Believing Wanderers between Cultures and Nations,” *Ecumenical Review* 61 (2009) 387–99.

⁷⁶ Emmanuel S. De Guzman, “The Church as ‘Imagined Communities’ among Differentiated Social Bodies,” in *Faith on the Move* 118–54.

⁷⁷ Stephen B. Bevans, “Mission among the Migrants, Mission of the Migrants: Mission of the Church,” in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey* 89–106.

⁷⁸ Peter C. Phan, “Cultures, Religions, and Power: Proclaiming Christ in the United States Today,” *Theological Studies* 65 (2004) 714–40.

⁷⁹ Doris Peschke, “The Role of Religion for the Integration of Migrants and Institutional Responses in Europe: Some Reflections,” *Ecumenical Review* 61 (2009) 367–80, at 377–78.

Catholicity

A favorite theme of the theology of migration in the 21st century has been catholicity,⁸⁰ especially in contexts where political nationalism has entered into Christian communities thereby putting the fundamental universal dimension of Christianity at risk. This development endangers those who, because of their cultural diversity and social status, are not considered full members of society or even citizens.⁸¹ Some theologians concerned with human mobility have explored the meaning and different aspects of catholicity, a dimension that is not interpreted today in a traditional way, that is, in terms of the expansion and omnipresence of the Christian church, but first and foremost as an essential quality of a church that is always radically open to any human being and group, without distinction. The migrants, with their rich diversity and urgent need of inclusion, continue to remind the whole church of the fundamental importance of catholicity that is at the same time a gift, a mission, and a hope. The Christian community, of course, never completely realizes the ideal of catholicity, but it needs to constantly renew its full commitment to it, especially when migrants present themselves on the threshold of our churches.⁸²

Migrant Women

The feminization of migration has now been amply acknowledged,⁸³ although for decades human mobility was studied as an essentially masculine phenomenon. Important steps have been taken in the field of migration studies to make up for this serious lacuna; the same is also happening in the field of the theology of migration. Reflections on the experience of migrant women have begun to appear. Noteworthy are the works of Filipino theologian Gemma Cruz, who has studied and interpreted migration from

⁸⁰ For an insightful reading of catholicity in the era of globalization see Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1997).

⁸¹ See Dana W. Wilbanks, "Nationalism and International Migration," in *Resistance and Theological Ethics*, ed. Ronald H. Stone and Robert L. Stivers (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004) 83–95.

⁸² See Espín, "Immigration, Territory, and Globalization" 55–56; Robert J. Schreiter, "Catholicity as a Framework for Addressing Migration," in *Migration in a Global World* 32–47; "Cattolicità," in *Migrazioni: Dizionario socio-pastorale* 102–11; Gioacchino Campese, "Beyond Ethnic and National Imagination: Toward a Catholic Theology of U.S. Immigration," in *Religion and Social Justice for Immigrants*, ed. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University, 2007) 175–90; Campese, *Hacia una teología desde la realidad* 78–94.

⁸³ See Castles and Miller, *Age of Migration* 12. For more on gender issues and migration see Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gender and U.S. Immigration: Contemporary Trends* (Berkeley: University of California, 2001).

intercultural and gender perspectives; she has written a number of essays on the condition of migrant domestic workers from the viewpoint of theology.⁸⁴ Cuban-American theologian Daisy Machado, in a notable essay on the condition of the irregular migrant women, reproaches feminist theologies, even the most progressive ones, because they formulate their emancipating and liberating discourses within the limits of their cultural and national borders and ignore the most vulnerable women who remain at the margins of our societies, invisible, voiceless, and without representation.⁸⁵

Irregular Migrants

As Machado's essay has shown, the irregular migrants are finally entering the field of the theology of migration. This is very significant because irregular—or as it is commonly known “illegal” or “clandestine”⁸⁶—migration is one of the most controversial and thorny issues of the public debate on human mobility. In Western countries it has become a hot political issue, and has led various political parties and movements to play with and manipulate the fears of the local populations by criminalizing the immigrants and transforming them into the main threat against societal security. Theology of migration wants to move beyond these fears, without minimizing them, and to put at the center of its reflection the human person, especially those who are invisible, voiceless, and most vulnerable. In this way the theology of migration expresses a preferential option for irregular migrants—that is, those who suffer most the experience of leaving their

⁸⁴ Gemma T. Cruz, “Faith on the Edge: Religion and Women in the Context of Migration,” *Feminist Theology* 15 (2006) 9–25; “One Bread, One Body, One People: The Challenges of Migration to Theological Reflection,” *CTSA Proceedings* 62 (2007) 208–28; “Between Identity and Security: Theological Implications of Migration in the Context of Globalization,” *Theological Studies* 69 (2008) 357–75; and especially *An Intercultural Theology of Migration: Pilgrims in the Wilderness* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). The importance of this latter work goes well beyond the topic of migrant women because of its methodology, its intercultural and interdisciplinary character, and its wealth of theological themes. To my knowledge, it is the first theological monograph in English on migration.

⁸⁵ Daisy L. Machado, “The Unnamed Woman: Justice, Feminists, and the Undocumented Woman,” in *Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice*, ed. María Pilar Aquino, Daisy L. Machado, and Jeanette Rodríguez (Austin: University of Texas, 2002) 161–76.

⁸⁶ The too common and popular ways to refer to migrants as “aliens,” “illegal,” “illegal alien,” or “clandestine” men and women must be avoided in Christian theological discourse on human mobility because these terms degrade the fundamental human dignity of people on the move. For an interesting reading of the issues involved in this dimension of human mobility from a Roman Catholic perspective see Graziano Battistella, “The Poor in Motion: Reflections on Unauthorized Migration,” *Asian Christian Review* 4.2 (2010) 70–81.

homeland and entering into and becoming full members of another society. It is important to understand that the approach chosen by the theology of migration is not that of considering irregular immigrants merely as victims, to whom Ignacio Ellacuría's metaphor of "crucified peoples" could be applied.⁸⁷ But following his lead, I have highlighted the active and courageous participation of these marginalized and persecuted people in the construction of a new "multicolored" society. Such a society is more humane, just, and based on *convivencia*—a society, in other words, that represents a critical step on the journey toward the reign of God.⁸⁸

Theology of Migration and Interreligious Dialogue

Sensitive questions concerning the theology of religions and interreligious dialogue have begun to emerge in theological reflection on human mobility. It has become clear, particularly in Europe, where the majority of migrants are often non-Christian, that the migrants' diversity is religious as well as cultural. In the Western world, amid the sudden awakening of a distorted Christian identity that used to protect "Christian" territory from the "invasion" of foreigners, these "others" in religious terms—especially

⁸⁷ Gioacchino Campese, "¿Cuántos Más? The Crucified Peoples at the U.S.-Mexico Border," in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey* 271–98; Groody, "Jesus and the Undocumented Immigrant" 298–316. For more on the theological reflection on undocumented migration see also Red Casas del Migrante – Scalabrini, "El clamor de los indocumentados" (2000), http://www.sedosmission.org/site/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=66&lang=en; Daniel G. Groody, "Undocumented Migration and Religious Experience: A Theological Interpretation of the Mexican-American Border," in *Encountering Transcendence: Contributions to a Theology of Christian Religious Experience*, ed. Lieven Boeve, Hans Geybels, and Stijn van den Bossche (Leuven: Peeters, 2005) 359–72; Groody, "Christology at the U.S./Mexico Border: An Eschatological View," in *Jesus of Galilee* 249–61.

⁸⁸ Gioacchino Campese, "Behold the Beauty of the Lord: The Journey toward Dignity and Freedom of Undocumented Immigrants in the United States," in *Migration and Interculturality* 133–50. On the historical mobilization of immigrants in the United States in 2006 and their active participation in the construction of a new civil community, see Sylvia R. Lazos, "The Immigrant Rights Marches (Las Marchas): Did the "Gigante" (Giant) Wake Up or Does It Still Sleep Tonight?," Research Paper 08–15, William S. Boyd School of Law, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (April 18, 2008), papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1122485; Luisa Heredia, "'Welcoming the Stranger': The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Immigrant Rights in Los Angeles," Research Paper Series on Latino Immigrant Civic and Political Participation, No. 4 (June 2009), <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation>; Gustavo Cano, "Political Mobilization of Latino Immigrants in American Cities and the U.S. Immigration Debate" (2009), http://ilas.columbia.edu/images/uploads/workingpapers/Gustavo_Cano-Political_Mobilization_of_Latino_Immigrants_in_American_Cities_and_the_US_Immigration_Debate.pdf.

Muslims—are often treated en masse as fundamentalists and fanatics, and therefore as potential terrorists. In the post 9/11 world in which the idea of “clash of civilizations” has often been used to characterize the current situation, it becomes at times extremely difficult to treat these questions. This is why it is significant that particularly in Europe⁸⁹ and Asia⁹⁰ the theology of migration is taking seriously the interreligious dimension of this phenomenon. It is seeking to learn how other religions deal with human mobility. It is trying to help Roman Catholic immigrants establish a fruitful dialogue with the local people of the countries with non-Christian majority population in which they live and work. Finally, it is working to sustain healthy relations with non-Christian immigrants living in traditionally Christian countries.⁹¹ Particularly suggestive is the approach of Chinese-American and Pentecostal theologian Amos Yong, who sets up a dialogue between the theology of hospitality and the theology of religions. In this way Yong proposes a reflection on the praxis of interreligious dialogue in a pneumatological framework that starts from the Christian imperative of hospitality in a multicultural and multireligious society.⁹²

Hospitality

As we have just seen in the case of interreligious dialogue, hospitality in its diverse forms and from different viewpoints asserts itself as one of the crucial themes of the theology of human mobility. The last decade has seen a rediscovery of the relevance and importance of hospitality in today’s world that cuts across different disciplines and is highlighted by the work of prominent thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Zygmunt Baumann.⁹³ Christianity has also seen a progressive renaissance of the tradition of hospitality that had almost fallen into oblivion, accompanied by a critical reflection that underscores it as a complex essential aspect of the Christian faith. This rediscovery and critical rereading of hospitality within the

⁸⁹ Jaume Garcia, *Vidas itinerantes: Apuntes para una teología interreligiosa de la migración* (Barcelona: Cristianisme i Justicia, 2007).

⁹⁰ James H. Kroeger, “Living Faith in a Strange Land: Migration and Interreligious Dialogue,” in *Faith on the Move* 219–51; Anthony Rogers, “Globalizing Solidarity through Faith Encounters in Asia,” in *Faith on the Move* 203–18.

⁹¹ Peter C. Phan, “Dialogo interreligioso,” in *Migrazioni: Dizionario socio-pastorale* 365–71.

⁹² Amos Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2008).

⁹³ Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University, 2000); Zygmunt Bauman, *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 2009) 225–58.

Christian tradition has brought to light its various dimensions: biblical,⁹⁴ pastoral, practical, ethical, spiritual, theological, cultural, gender, and also the limitations and risks of hospitality, especially from the viewpoint of those whose hospitality has been abused.⁹⁵ This reflection has been nurtured also by those Christians for whom hospitality is a full-time ministry and a spirituality, a way of life: people who work in shelters for migrants, soup kitchens, and monasteries. From these “ministers of hospitality and welcoming” the theology of migration has discovered that at the heart of hospitality is not the “giving” or the “doing” but the “being,” that is, human relationships. Therefore hospitality means not simply “to do something for” or “to give something to” somebody, but “being with” somebody. Starting from this essential relational dimension, a fundamental biblical truth about hospitality can be rediscovered: the Christian believer who welcomes and gives hospitality to another person is no more than a stranger welcoming another stranger.⁹⁶ Theology of migration starting from this profound rediscovery of the Christian tradition of hospitality, inspired by some of the biblical icons of hospitality, such as Abraham (Gen 18) and Jesus himself (Lk 19:1–10), has also affirmed hospitality as a *locus theologicus*, that is, a privileged locus where God reveals Godself in often surprising ways and by grace enables the conversion and the transformation

⁹⁴ See Walter A. Vogels, “Hospitality in Biblical Perspective,” *Liturgical Ministry* 11 (2002) 161–73; Andrew Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in its Mediterranean Setting* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005); Gabriele Bentoglio, “*Mio padre era un Arameo errante . . .*”: *Temî di teologia biblica sulla mobilità umana* (Vatican City: Urbaniana University, 2006) 117–75; Enzo Bianchi, *Ero straniero e mi avete ospitato* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2006); VanThanh Nguyen, “An Asian View of Biblical Hospitality,” *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 74 (2010) 445–59; Giuseppe Bellia, “Accoglienza/ospitalità nella Bibbia,” in *Migrazioni: Dizionario socio-pastorale* 3–15.

⁹⁵ See Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999); “Responding to Strangers: Insights from the Christian Tradition,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19 (2006) 81–101; Lucien Richard, *Living the Hospitality of God* (New York: Paulist, 2000); Mercy A. Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women’s Theology* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 2001) 90–109; Amy G. Oden, ed., *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001); Frances Torralba, *Sobre la hospitalidad: Extraños y vulnerables como tu* (Madrid: PPC, 2003); Torralba “*No olvidéis la hospitalidad*”; Letty M. Russell, *Just Hospitality: God’s Welcome in a World of Difference*, ed. Shannon J. Clarkson and Kate M. Ott (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009); Linh Hoang, “Crossing and Dwelling: Hospitality in a Theology of Migration,” *Asian Christian Review* 4.2 (2010) 82–97; Giovanni Graziano Tassello, “Accoglienza/ospitalità nella pastorale,” in *Migrazioni: Dizionario socio-pastorale* 15–18.

⁹⁶ Christine D. Pohl, “Biblical Issues in Mission and Migration,” *Missiology* 31 (2003) 1–15, at 5.

of individuals and communities.⁹⁷ Scholars have also observed that a theology of migration has to go beyond hospitality precisely because of the limitations and risks of this practice and tradition.⁹⁸ This is certainly a legitimate and valid critique, but it does not consider the fact that the critical study of hospitality to which I have referred has pondered thoughtfully its weaknesses, facilitating in this way a Christian reading of the real and ideal hospitality that is a fundamental dimension of any theological reflection on human mobility.⁹⁹

ASSESSMENT AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

The abundance of literature presented in this article¹⁰⁰ shows that the theology of migration has taken an important step ahead in this last decade, a step that allows it not to be an “alien” anymore in the field of Christian thought. Despite the considerable progress that has been made, however, it also has to be admitted that the theological reflection on human mobility has still a long way to go to reach maturity. In other words, most of this theological journey lies ahead of it rather than behind. In sum it can be said that the recent studies on the theology of migration discussed here underline the main characteristics and orientations that this reflection has assumed in the last decade: awareness of the reality of migration in its complexity and humanity, which highlights the substantial interdisciplinary character of this theology; its contextuality and, consequently, plurality, because theological reflection has to respond to migration flows that are changing and dynamic, that have much in common but also present specific characteristics and issues; its rootedness in a Christian tradition that from its biblical origins has set the migrants, the strangers, the pilgrims at the

⁹⁷ See Campese and Rigoni, “Hacer teología desde el migrante” 196–200; Gioacchino Campese, “Acogida y hospitalidad en la frontera: Unas perspectivas desde las casas del migrante,” *Travesía* 57 (2007) 20–25.

⁹⁸ See Carmen M. Nanko-Fernández, “Beyond Hospitality: Implications of Im/Migration for Teología y Pastoral de Conjunto,” *Perspectivas: Occasional Papers* 10 (Fall 2006) 51–62.

⁹⁹ Theologians who have reflected at length on this theme readily recognize the inadequacy of the Christian discourse on hospitality as a comprehensive response to the complex issues raised by immigrants and refugees. Pohl, e.g., writes: “Although hospitality is inadequate as a total response to the needs of strangers, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, it is a crucial component of any response” (“Responding to Strangers” 83).

¹⁰⁰ The most evident shortcoming of this article is the absence of titles in other important “theological” languages such as French and German; this is due to my linguistic limitations. Centro Studi e Ricerche per l’Emigrazione (CSERPE) based in Basel provides a periodically updated online bibliography on migration and theological sciences in a number of languages, including French and German; see <http://www.cserpe.org/theology.htm>.

center of its narrative, even if this datum has been, and continues to be, ignored by many. Within this general framework theological reflection on migration is making progress, but it also needs further clarification, investigation, and refinement of terminology, methodologies, and themes.¹⁰¹ An instance of this need is the careless application to migration of terms from the Christian theological tradition, where meanings of terms are taken for granted, without examination of their history, development, and contents. For instance, what does it mean that migration is a *locus theologicus* if the meaning and evolution of this concept within the Christian tradition has not been analyzed?¹⁰² In regard to method, it has to be recognized that some essays on the theology of migration are seriously problematic; indeed some display substantial ignorance of the phenomenon of migration itself. Clearly one cannot develop a theology of migration without a deep knowledge of the Christian theological tradition; but it is equally true that theological reflection on human mobility is impracticable without broad acquaintance with this phenomenon, especially the experiences of migrants. As for the themes that have emerged in the fourth part of this article, all are in need of further research and study, some more than others. For example, the unavoidable and necessary reflection on the Trinity from the perspective of the experience of migration is still in its early stages and needs a serious effort to explore this theme in contemporary theology, especially starting from the different cultural understandings of this central Christian mystery. In this context Miguel Díaz rightly observes that “little has been done to relate migration to the mystery of God.”¹⁰³ Hence it is extremely important to see to it that systematic reflections on the theology of migration do not remain isolated, but that their practical and political dimensions—political in the fullest sense of the term, that is, oriented toward the common good of the *polis*—be developed and clarified so that this thought, nurtured in the Christian tradition by a profound knowledge of the phenomenon of human mobility and the experience of the migrants, might inspire the “pilgrimage” of Christian communities in general and of the migrants themselves in this planet on the move.

¹⁰¹ See, for instance, the suggestions by Sandra Mazzolini in “Missione tra i migranti missione dei migranti: I quaderni SIMI,” *Euntes Docete* 62 (2009) 211–31.

¹⁰² I refer to Carmem Lussi, “Human Mobility as a Theological Consideration,” in *Migration in a Global World* 49–60. Lussi affirms that migration is a *locus theologicus* without reviewing and discussing the meaning of this concept in the tradition and its evolution in recent Christian theology.

¹⁰³ Díaz, “On Loving Strangers” 235. In this context Lussi’s affirmation that trinitarian theology has “led” the systematic theological reflection on migration (Lussi, “Human Mobility as a Theological Consideration” 54), does not correspond to the actual situation of the theology of migration and to the bibliographical data presented in this article.

It is essential that the theology of migration be articulated “with memory and imagination”¹⁰⁴: with great attention to the Christian tradition and the centrality that strangers have in it on the one hand; and with a “catholic” imagination on the other hand, i.e., one that is open, dialogical, attentive to the questions that emerge from the experience of migrants, alert to the ongoing transformations that occur in this dynamic, ever-changing, and complex reality of human mobility, and ready to offer an answer of faith to the questions that arise from this phenomenon that is transforming our societies and our Christian communities.

¹⁰⁴ Peter C. Phan, “Betwixt and Between: Doing Theology with Memory and Imagination,” in *Journeys at the Margin* 127–30.