

*You Shall Love the Stranger as Yourself: The Bible, Refugees, and Asylum.* By Fleur S. Houston. New York: Routledge, 2015. Pp. xii + 201. \$47.95.

Migration has become one of the big social issues of the 21st century. It is estimated that about 3.72 percent of the world's 6.5 billion people are displaced today. That means 1 out of every 33 people in the world is a migrant. From another interesting perspective, migrants would collectively constitute the fifth most populous country in the world. There are about 232 million migrants worldwide, and it is estimated that the number will double to 405 million by the year 2050. It is a phenomenon that is increasing because of globalization, economic necessity, war, and demographic disparities. However, migration is by no means a new phenomenon. Since the dawn of human history, people have been on the move. Interestingly, the Bible relays many stories about strangers, migrants, and refugees and dictates many laws aimed to protect them. Applying biblical analysis to one of the most pressing humanitarian crises of modern times, this latest book is a timely work that explores the complex political, legal, and humanitarian challenges raised by asylum-seekers and refugees from a biblical perspective.

Houston, who is the author of the sixth book in the *Biblical Challenges in the Contemporary World* series, reflects critically on the significance of the Bible for Christian life and explores how the biblical perspective may shape and challenge the lives of the faithful as well as their institutions and policies today. He is also a minister of the United Reformed Church with extensive local, national, and international experience connected with refugees and asylum-seekers.

This volume consists of eight main chapters plus a short introduction and conclusion. The first two chapters closely examine the current situation of refugees and asylum-seekers. Chapter 2, entitled "A World of Refugees," surveys the protection that is available for refugees under international law and the relationship between this and the need for humanitarian protection. One interesting aspect of this chapter is the telling of stories of real people to challenge the role of the state in refugee international law. Chapter 3, "Asylum," raises moral and ethical questions about the way societies treat the asylum-seekers. It addresses two important questions: What practices are permissible, and against what standards are asylum-seekers to be judged?

Chapters 4–7 examine biblical texts that are directly connected with migration. Chapter 4 closely looks at the OT Covenant Code and Deuteronomy's teachings about caring for the socially marginalized. It also defines the important Hebrew word *ger* and gives flesh to this mysterious person by studying the powerful narrative and character of Ruth. H. convincingly demonstrates that the Torah's Covenant Code and ethical duties towards the stranger are consistent both in its prescriptions and narratives. Chapter 5 surveys two major biblical events, the Exodus and the Exile. The author correctly identifies the suffering of forced migration and the challenges of resettlement found in the Bible that "have obvious human resonance with the plight of many refugees and asylum-seekers today" (93). Furthermore, the analyses of the book of Lamentations, Psalm 137, and the writings of the prophet Ezekiel reveal that those who experience forced displacement, especially women, are often deeply wounded

and have traumatic memories that are typically associated with vivid sensory “flashbacks” (114).

Chapter 6 examines another aspect of migration that is often overlooked; that is the situation of those who have found a new home in exile and then resettled in the country from which they or their forebears originated. The biblical illustrations come from Ezra and Nehemiah. Chapter 7 examines the life and teaching of Jesus from the perspective of migration. It also briefly deals with the situation of the early Christians as strangers and aliens, drawn from 1 Peter and Hebrews. While the analysis is insightful, the treatment is extremely brief and, to my mind, inadequate. Noticeably, there is no mention of any stories found in the Acts of the Apostles nor of Paul and his communities. Finally, chapter 8 explores the theme of hospitality in the Bible and its implications for Christians today.

Realizing the complex issues of international migration, the author offers no magic or simple solutions nor does she attempt to comprehensively cover all possible biblical texts. However, the book does challenge contemporary readers, especially Christian believers, to take a moral stance and responsibility to act justly and with compassion toward the immigrants in their midst if they claim to be inspired by the sacred Scriptures. Finally, H.’s knowledge of the complex issues of international migration and skillful analysis of the biblical texts, woven into accounts of contemporary refugee and migrant situations, provide a timely book that will be an important resource for scholars and students of Scripture, theology, religion, and human rights.

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*A Step Along the Way: Models of Christian Service.* By Stephen J. Pope. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2015. Pp. xxiii + 262. \$25.

Over the past two decades, service has become an important element of Catholic institutional life in the United States. High schools and colleges have introduced service trips and service learning programs. Parishes mandate “service hours” for Confirmation. And each year over 19,000 people volunteer in more than 200 programs affiliated to the Catholic Volunteer Network such as Jesuit Volunteer Corps (see, for instance, the *2015 Membership Survey*, [www.catholicvolunteernetwork.org](http://www.catholicvolunteernetwork.org)). Despite all of this attention, there is little sustained reflection about the meaning of service. For example, what exactly is meant by service? How does service today fit into the overall Christian tradition? And how can we avoid the dangers and pitfalls involved? Pope offers his readers a much needed resource that illuminates the value, meaning, and hazards of service.

Approaching service through the lens of virtue ethics, P. reminds the reader that Christian service concerns more than a response to community need. It is also about forming character. To highlight this point, the book begins with brief chapters that summarize the service of six exemplars: Dorothy Stang, SND, Dorothy Day, Mother