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WHEN DEATH MEETS LIFE
Exploring the Links Between Migration and
Salvation

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Introduction: Living in the Age of Migration

Mobility is as old as the human species. It is very much a part of human existence such that it is regarded as an engine of human history. Today, however, we are witnessing human mobility in unprecedented ways. At no other point in history has the number of people on the move at such a large scale that the current historical period is being referred to as the age of migration.¹ To be sure, this claim is not without merit. The report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), for instance, says that the number of people living outside their country of origin has dramatically

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¹See Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* 4th edition, New York: The Guilford Press, 2009. See also Andrés Solimano, *International Migration in the Age of Crisis and Globalization: Historical and Recent Experiences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Whereas other previous great migrations have been largely based on and described according to ethnic or regional groups migration today, or migration in the age of globalization, literally has the “the world on the move.” John Haywood, *The Great Migrations: From the Earliest Humans to the Age of Globalization*, London: Quercus, 2009, 244-249.

increased from 150 million in 2000 - when IOM published its first World Migration Report — to more than 214 million in 2010. That's an increase of 64 million in a matter of 10 years. Moreover, the IOM reports that the figure could rise to as much as 405 million by 2050.² Worldwide, migrants now account for approximately 3.1% of the world population and more than 10 percent of the population in 38 countries. In fact if all migrants in the world were to come together to constitute a country, theirs would be the world's fifth most populous.

To be sure, human mobility in the age of globalization is not only bringing changes to global demographics; it is also transforming religion, culture, politics, and economics and, consequently, identities and subjectivities. This essay argues that the tragic conditions and glimpses of liberation embedded in contemporary migration make it a heuristic lens for understanding the meaning of and quest for salvation today. It is to this idea that I now turn to.

Linking Migration and Salvation

In Christian history a number of models or ways of understanding salvation have been expounded. These include the idea of Christ as expiation and sacrifice, Christ as defeating cosmic evil, Christ as bringing about satisfaction for evil, Christ as substitution for punishment, Christ as paradigm, and Christ as effecting anthropological change.³ To be sure, these models do not exhaust our understanding of salvation. Many of the abovementioned models, for example, were articulated with reference to a particular context which no longer has significant credence in the contemporary world. Thus, one of the challenges for theology today is to articulate an understanding of salvation which speaks to contemporary times.

Anselm Min says that at the heart of Christian faith is the reality and hope of salvation in Jesus Christ and that the Christian tradition has

²International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2010: The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change*, Geneva: IOM, 2010, xix. The latest (2011) report still puts the number of migrants worldwide to 214 million. This is significant, IOM maintains, because the total number of migrants has not fallen despite the ongoing effects of the global economic crisis. International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2011: Communicating Effectively About Migration*, Geneva: IOM, 2011, 49.

³See Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Redemption," in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed., Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A Lane, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987, 836-851.

always equated this salvation with the transcendent, eschatological fulfilment of human existence in a life freed from sin, finitude, and mortality and united with the triune God. While Min submits that this understanding of salvation is perhaps *the* non-negotiable item of Christian faith, what has been a matter of debate is the relation between salvation and our activities in the world.⁴ It is to this debate on “the relation between salvation and our activities in the world” that this essay hopes to contribute to by exploring migration as a heuristic lens on the meaning of and quest for salvation today, particularly in the way migration provides a window into sinful conditions and, at the same time, efforts towards liberation. From an eschatological perspective, we could look at these two interrelated aspects as salvation’s “not yet” (sinful conditions) and “already” aspects (efforts toward liberation). It is to these two aspects that I now turn to.

Salvation’s “Not Yet”: Migration and Sin

Catholicism believes that after the Fall humanity did not become totally corrupt but was “wounded by sin” and stands in need of salvation from God. Salvation, in a word, is about the liberation of the human person or the human race from sin and its consequences. I submit that migration, as a wound of our time,⁵ could be a means for understanding salvation today in the way it points to or reflects sin and its consequences in contemporary times. The problematic conditions of contemporary migration, for example, could be argued as symptomatic of structural sin or those structures in the world which are dehumanizing and hinder people from being all that they can be. First and foremost, the majority of the world’s migrants and would-be-migrants come from developing countries that suffer not just from the uneven distribution of the world’s wealth and resources but also from regional and global economic policies that burden or

⁴Anselm Min, *Dialectic of Salvation: Issues in Theology of Liberation*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989, 79.

⁵Carmem Lussi points out that contemporary mobility constitutes a “grief and anguish of people of our time” (GS, no. 1). See Carmem Lussi, “Human Mobility as a Theological Consideration,” in *Migration in a Global World*, ed. Solange Lefebvre and Luis Carlos Susin, *Concilium* 2008/5, London: SCM Press, 49-60, at 50. One could then speak of migration today as a “signs of the times” or those events of history through which God continues to speak to us and summon us to respond for the sake of the reign of God’s love and justice throughout the whole of creation. Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1994, 95.

further disadvantage these developing countries. Migrants are victims, as well, of the injustice within their own countries, particularly in the hands of their governments who not only cannot provide them with (good) jobs but create a migration industry that turns migrants into primary exports and commodities or cash cows for their remittances. When they migrate, migrants also experience exploitation in the hands of various local and transnational vultures, from exploitative recruiters, *coyotes*⁶ or human smugglers, abusive employers to multinational companies, banks, and financial agencies who prey on their (migrants) vulnerability.

Even when migrants do get inside the destination country legally there are still a host of problems that they face disproportionately. They could suffer, for instance, from inequities in the educational or health care system. Health care providers unfamiliar with the migrants' languages and cultures as well as the pressures migrants face may minimize or misunderstand their symptoms. The destination country could also implement policies that discriminate migrants. Taiwan, for example, has a law that mandates employers to pay migrant workers the minimum wage for a full-time local worker, which is about \$500 per month. On the surface the policy looks just. The problem is that the wage requirement was instituted not for the sake of the migrant workers but in order to protect the wage scale of local workers. As Lou Aldrich, SJ notes in "A Critical Evaluation of the Migrant Workers' Situation in Taiwan in Light of the Catholic Social Tradition,"

The Taiwan wage scale was just, but for the wrong reasons, hence, as long as the official salary of NT\$16,000 was paid to protect the local worker, how much of that was stolen by illegal broker fees was not a great concern of either Taiwan or the sending nations. This manifests a grave failure to see the migrant worker as a person offering and receiving mutual benefits in a spirit of solidarity; rather the migrant is regarded primarily as a commodity, perhaps even a dangerous commodity...⁷

⁶A "coyote" is a guide who takes migrants across international borders in exchange for money.

⁷Lou Aldrich, SJ, "A Critical Evaluation of the Migrant Workers' Situation in Taiwan in Light of the Catholic Social Tradition," in *Faith on the Move: Toward a Theology of Migration in Asia*, ed. Fabio Baggio and Agnes Brazal, Manila, Phils.: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008, 49-67, at 50-51.

The situation is more problematic for unskilled migrant workers. First and foremost, their jobs have the reputation of “needed but not wanted”, cheap, and exploitative labour. Often labelled as “disposable people” their jobs are the 3D (dirty, disdained, and dangerous) jobs, e.g. fishing and agriculture, construction, trade and service sectors, which are often mired in unjust working conditions. Photographer Philippe Chancel, for example, goes to the extent of describing migrant construction workers in the United Arab Emirates as “the new slaves” of the Gulf.⁸ The International Labour Organization (ILO) reports that there are between 30 million and 40 million irregular migrant workers worldwide who occupy the “bargain basement of globalization.”⁹ Not surprisingly, migrants, especially undocumented migrants, are considered as “crucified people”¹⁰ today. Gioacchino Campese sheds light on this perspective in “*Cuantos Mas: The Crucified Peoples at the U.S. Mexico Border*,” where he discusses the structural violence that migrants, especially those who are undocumented, are subjected to.¹¹

Such conditions, that form part of contemporary migration, constitute a social sin. Social sin, which includes unjust structures, distorted consciousness, and collective actions and inactions that facilitate

⁸Chancel’s photographs of these men were exhibited at a gallery in Dubai. These men are among the 15 million foreigners working in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar whose economies are heavily dependent on migrant labour. Tim Hume, “Photographer captures ‘new slaves’ of the Gulf,” <<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/11/11/world/meast/emirates-workers-art/index.html>> accessed December 9, 2012.

⁹Veronica Uy, “International Labor Organization: 40M illegal migrants prop up economies,” <<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/topstories/topstories/view/20081027-168750/40M-illegal-migrants-prop-up-economies>> accessed December 9, 2012.

¹⁰Coined by Ignacio Ellacuria and further developed by Jon Sobrino, ‘crucified people’ refers to that collective body which, as the majority of humanity, owes its situation of crucifixion to the way society is organized and maintained by a minority that exercises its dominion through a series of factors which, taken together and given their concrete impact within history, must be regarded as sin. Ignacio Ellacuria, “The Crucified People,” in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993, 580-603, at 590.

¹¹Gioacchino Campese, “*Cuantos Mas*”: The Crucified Peoples at the U.S. Mexico Border,” in *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*, ed. Daniel Groody and Gioacchino Campese, South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2008, 271-298, at 287-293. See also Daniel D. Groody, “Jesus and the Undocumented Immigrant: A Spiritual Geography of a Crucified People,” *Theological Studies* 70 (2009) 298-316, at 312.

injustice and dehumanization, recognises that humans create institutions and policies to regulate society and that sometimes these institutions and policies are sinful. While individuals create these institutions and policies, individual conversion of heart may not be adequate to transform the system. Thus, Christians cannot allow sinful institutions, systems, policies, and structures to go unchallenged. Kristin Heyer drives home this point in "Social Sin and Immigration: Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors." Heyer contends that the socioeconomic, legal, and political structures that lead to undocumented immigration are connected to the ideological blinders that obstruct hospitality to immigrants. Heyer also argues that approaching immigration from the perspective of social sin provides a more holistic understanding of the issue and arguably paves the way toward greater receptivity to an ethic of hospitality.¹²

The eschatological horizon of migrants' realities arguably leads us to consider ways in which the "crucified people" of today are integrally related to the salvation of the world. Insofar as in Christian terms all sanctification, all inner transformation, is ultimately for the sake of transformative action and redemptive practice in society¹³ the suffering of migrants all over the world strongly calls for Christian witness and make humanity's quest for salvation even more strongly linked with one another, especially with the marginal(ized).

Salvation's "Already" Aspect: Migration and Liberation

The fruit of sin is separation from God and from one another. Consequently, salvation reconciles us with one another and so restores us to communion with God.¹⁴ In Scriptural language salvation generally means liberation from evil toward a state of freedom and security (1 Samuel 11:13; 14:45; 2 Samuel 23:10; 2 Kings 13:17). In the synoptic gospels, in particular, salvation is interpreted as an experience of God's reign.

¹²Kristin Heyer "Social Sin and Immigration: Good Fences Make Bad Neighbours," *Theological Studies* 71, 2 (June 2010) 410-436, at 425.

¹³Robert Egan, "The Mystical and the Prophetic: Dimensions of Christian Existence," *The Way* (Supplement, 2002) 92-106. See also Philip Sheldrake, "Christian Spirituality as a Way of Living Publicly: A Dialectic of the Mystical and Prophetic," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 3, 1 (2003) 19-37.

¹⁴Michael Himes, *The Mystery of Faith: An Introduction to Catholicism*, Cincinnati, OH: St Anthony Messenger Press, 2004, 36.

The sinful conditions in migration described in the previous section drives home the notion that salvation consists not in flight from the (evil) world but in commitment to a (healing) world. Not surprisingly, Christians believe that salvation includes a past, present, and future sense.¹⁵ In fact, Catholicism expands on the notion of salvation by pointing out that salvation necessitates or is considered to be caused by both divine action, e.g. grace and by personal responsibility or self-effort.

Contemporary migration reflects salvation's present or "already" aspect in the way it offers glimpses into efforts toward liberation. In doing so it offers windows into a sense of "heaven on earth" or salvation "in the here and now" in various ways. First and foremost, migrants are people in search of a better life for themselves and their families. This liberative quest is the enduring theme of wave after wave, generation after generation of migrants worldwide. And because it is the world's poor that are mainly on the move, or at least desperate to move, in many cases migration is rooted in the search for the bare necessities in life. Moreover, migrants' experience and perspective of the world, in general, and other people and their cultures, in particular, is broadened.

For the more affluent migrants mobility means being able to more easily avail of the better opportunities and quality of life for themselves and their children in developed countries.¹⁶ And for all those who make it, for all those who find their promised land for

¹⁵More specifically, Christians believe that in the past we were saved from the penalty of sin through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; at present, we are being saved from the power of sin with the help of the Holy Spirit; and we will someday be saved from the presence of sin when we meet Christ face to face in glory.

¹⁶This is particularly true in the case of education. In the US alone there are thousands of foreign students sent by their affluent parents who see their Western education as a ticket to a better job and/or possible residency as well as eventual citizenship in the country. This could also be seen in the growing maternity tourism where rich foreign women, especially those from China, Mexico, South Korea, and Turkey avail of tourism packages that allow them to give birth in the US and, consequently, have so-called "anchor babies" who get citizenship by virtue of the 14th Amendment, which gives automatic citizenship to any baby born in the US. At age 21 these babies would be able to petition the US government to grant their parents permanent residence status. Hence, they serve as their parents' insurance policy and ticket to better quality of life in the US should they need to move, especially in their old age. Jennifer Medina, "Arriving as Pregnant Tourists, Leaving with American Babies," <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/29/us/29babies.html>> accessed December 8, 2012.

themselves and their descendants, their sojourn or emigration means salvation not only in the form of more humane or better economic conditions but also a deeper sense of self-worth and a higher level of self-development. In the case of immigrant Latino youth in the United States Catherine R. Cooper and Rebecca Burciaga says migration often serves as a “pathway to college, to the professoriate, and to a green card.”¹⁷ For poorer migrants’ immediate families it means having the much-needed money or resources for necessary living expenses.

For receiving developed countries, especially those with falling fertility rates, exploding elderly population, and a dwindling pool of people in their working age, migrants provide a certain sense of stability not just economically but also demographically.¹⁸ In the US alone immigrant workers contributed as much as 31.7% to the GDP growth of the country in 2000-2007.¹⁹ A survey of life in Qatar also found that an overwhelming majority of Qatari nationals value the contribution of foreigners to the development of their country because of their hard work (89%) and their talents (89%). They also agree that foreigners — expatriates as well as labour migrants — make the country more receptive to new cultures. A survey by the International Labour Organization (ILO) of how migrant workers were perceived in Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, in the meantime, found that the majority of respondents believed that migrant workers were needed to fill labour shortages.²⁰ Indeed, despite the presence of fears on migrants taking up jobs or

¹⁷See Catherine R. Cooper and Rebecca Burciaga, “Pathways to college, to the professoriate, and to a green card: Linking Research, Policy, and Practice on Immigrant Latino Youth,” in *Migration in the 21st Century: Rights, Outcomes and Policy*, ed. Thomas N. Maloney and Kim Korinek, London: Routledge, 2011, 177-191, at 177-191.

¹⁸John Allen, *The Future Church: How Ten Trends Are Revolutionizing the Catholic Church*, New York, NY: Doubleday, 2009, 157. See also Patricia Fernandez-Kelly, “Facts and Fictions of Unauthorized Immigration to the US,” in *Migration in the 21st Century: Rights, Outcomes and Policy*, ed. Thomas N. Maloney and Kim Korinek, London: Routledge, 2011, 192-201, at 196.

¹⁹R. Puentes, “Towards an Assessment of Migration, Development and Human Rights Links: Conceptual Framework and New Strategic indicators,” Paper presented at Peoples’ Global Action on Migration, Development and Human Rights, IV Global Forum, Mexico City, November.2010, 24 as cited in International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2011*, 29.

²⁰International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2011*, 11.

using up and straining resources or social services²¹ there is considerable recognition of the value of migration in the over-all economic and cultural health of the countries of destination.

Contemporary migration could also be seen in liberative terms in the way it has become a source of economic salvation not just for migrants, their families, and receiving countries but also for the countries of origin.²² Remittances are a case in point. While remittances do not definitively offset the long-term problems of sending developing countries, the considerable impact of money sent home by migrants is still noteworthy to mention here.²³ Put together, the money sent by migrants worldwide in 2010, according to the World Bank, is estimated at USD325 billion. These remittances are often higher than either overseas development assistance (ODA) and, in net terms, probably greater than net foreign direct investment (FDI).²⁴ To be sure, money sent by migrants keep the economy of many developing countries afloat or relatively steady. Official and unofficial remittances included, the USD22 billion that Filipino migrants sent to the Philippines in 2006, for instance, even exceeded by 25% the country's national budget for the same year!²⁵ Indeed, though they are not a cure-all recent studies on migrants' remittances have pointed out that it helps ease poverty in countries of origin. In fact, a special report on migration in *The Economist* argues that for many poor countries remittances provide more than aid and foreign direct investment combined. Close to 50% of Guinea-Bissau's GDP,

²¹A recent study in the United States, which shows that natives clearly get or benefit much more for their taxes in terms of social services than do migrants, disputes this line of thinking. See the graph in R. Puentes, "Towards an Assessment of Migration, Development and Human Rights Links," 25 as cited in International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2011*, 29.

²²Several Arab governments, for example, have recognized that emigration can help alleviate pressure on the domestic labour market. As early as the 1960s and 1970s, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia began actively facilitating the international mobility of their nationals, albeit mostly those in lower skilled categories.

²³For an examination on the use of migrant remittances to encourage small-business development see Sidney Weintraub and Sergio Diaz-Briquets, *Migration, Remittances, and Small Business Development: Mexico and Caribbean Basin Countries*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991.

²⁴International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2011*, 30.

²⁵In terms of official remittances (those sent through banks or government agencies) in 2006, the Philippines actually ranked fourth. India topped the list with \$24.5 billion, followed by Mexico at \$24.2 billion and China at \$21.0 billion.

for example, comes from remittances. Eritrea and Haiti, in the meantime, relies on remittances for 38% and 21% of their GDP respectively.²⁶ A study commissioned by the World Bank is more explicit on the difference remittances make:

Remittances raise the incomes of migrant households and increase the recipient country's foreign exchange reserves. At the household level, the literature suggests that remittance income helps meet a variety of family needs, such as increased consumption - of food, housing, and durable items - and increased investment - in business, microenterprise, education, and financial enterprises. Through these means remittances support a wide variety of development purposes: improving family welfare, reducing economic vulnerability, and boosting the local economy, while increasing the use of formal banking services by the poor. If remittances are invested in productive activities such as local business and the education of young children, they can contribute to output growth and generate positive multiplier effects.²⁷

The UN reports, as well, that when one factors in goods in kind and cash carried by travellers, perhaps one in ten people on the planet gains from remittances.²⁸ Michele Pistone and John Hoeffner offer a more comprehensive argument for migration's benefits to the countries of origin in *Stepping Out of the Brain Drain: Applying Catholic Social Teaching in a New Era of Migration* by pointing at how the international knowledge transfer, money transfer, and technology

²⁶In 2007, for example, foreigners in America sent home \$275 million dollars using the 2,625 money agents, mostly through grocers, bakers and other small immigrant shops. New York alone has 500 of these small-time money agents. "Special Report on Migration," *The Economist* (January 5, 2008) 10-11.

²⁷Samuel Munzele Maimbo, et. al. *Migrant Labor Remittances in South Asia*, Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2005, 4. The authors also attribute the increased attention on the impact of remittances on economic development in the development debate in migration literature to the steady decline in the volume of overseas development assistance (ODA). A more recent report also illustrates the increasing nexus between remittances and economic development by pointing out the switch in the motivation for remittances from consumption to investment. This is particularly true in the case of South Asia and East Asia which continued to post strong growth in remittances even in the midst of the global financial crisis in 2008. Falling asset prices, rising interest rate differentials and a depreciation of the local currency have attracted investments from migrants. Dilip Ratha, Sanket Mohapatra and Ani Silwal, "World Bank: Migration and Development Brief No. 10," <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1110315015165/Migration&DevelopmentBrief10.pdf> > accessed December 7, 2012.

²⁸"Special Report on Migration," *The Economist* (January 5, 2008) 11.

development transfer given by skilled and educated professional migrants — whether during their migration or upon their return — have played a significant role in the sending countries.²⁹ Moreover, Pistone and Hoeffner contend migrants' contributions go beyond sending money or goods. There are also the so-called "political and social remittances" — the ideas, behaviours, identities and economic resources that flow from host-to-sending country via migrants and their transnational networks — which promote entrepreneurship, community development as well as greater political consciousness and participation in sending countries.³⁰ Migrants not only transfer knowledge and technology development. They also invest, help build vital infrastructures like schools, wells, and health centres, establish educational scholarships, raise money for calamity victims, etc. All these and more are re-casting the migrants as social capital.³¹

Theological Reflections

Migration is clearly linked with salvation. Borders have been re-drawn, people's stories have been re-written, identities and subjectivities have been transformed because groups or masses of people crossed either by land, sea or air. Time and time again people's liberation or the need for it is caused by human movements. Even Christianity's master narratives are embedded in migration stories. The Bible itself is basically "a literary tapestry woven from the stories of migrants."³² In the Old Testament the central story, in which the redemption of the chosen people themselves is rooted in, is the journey out of Egypt and into the promised land. In the New

²⁹Michele Pistone and John Hoeffner, *Stepping Out of the Brain Drain: Applying Catholic Social Teaching in a New Era of Migration*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007, 129-174.

³⁰Pistone and Hoeffner, *Stepping Out of the Brain Drain*, 129-130. See also Peggy Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, 54-55; 180-197.

³¹Migrants today also wield a bit more power and are more likely to demand stronger legal rights and formal recognition than previous waves of migration. They are more organized as well as more open, insistent, and defensive about their religious and cultural identity. Mexican migrants, for example, gained the right to vote after threatening to withhold remittances, which has become Mexico's second most important source of foreign exchange.

³²Leslie J. Hoppe, "Israel and Egypt: Relationships and Memory," *The Bible Today* 45 (July/August 2007) 209 as quoted in vanThanh Nguyen, SVD, "Asia in Motion: A Biblical Reflection on Migration," *Asian Christian Review* 4, 2 (Winter 2010) 18-31, at 22.

Testament Jesus' role as an itinerant preacher is a critical part of his ministry. Then there's Paul and his followers whose multiple back and forth journeys across the Roman Empire gave birth to and nurtured the early Christian communities.³³ Moreover, the early Christian movement was called the "Way" (Acts 9:2).³⁴ Truly, Christianity would probably not have been the global religion that it is today without the countless Christians who crossed the seas and continue to travel to uncharted territories to propagate or witness to their faith.

The great Christian proclamation of salvation recognises the depth and reality of evil and then, in embracing it, overcomes it. It insists that life is bigger than death; that love is greater than hatred; that goodness is far deeper than evil. In the 1952 apostolic constitution *Exsul Familia Nazarethana*, which is considered as the magna carta of the Church on migration, Pope Pius XII points out that displaced persons lose much of their security and human dignity.³⁵ Today, to cross borders increasingly means facing "a reality that is filled with human suffering, poverty, neglect, and despair."³⁶ In recent times we have seen the increase of geographical borders and the fortification of borders. "On top of the walls at the frontiers among nations there are borders inside our cities, borders in schools, borders in health care, borders within workplaces."³⁷ Still, migrants continue to cross the border because to them it is the gateway to the land of their dreams or, to refugees, the gateway to security.

³³Nguyen himself gives an interesting summary of the Bible from the perspective of migration. Nguyen writes: "The Bible is loaded with stories written by, for, and about strangers, migrants and refugees. It begins with the first human parents being exiled from Paradise and ends with the prophet John in exile on the island of Patmos. Encapsulated between these two bookends namely Genesis and Revelation are stories of God's people constantly being purified and transformed as they struggled to find their way home to be with their creator." Nguyen, "Asia in Motion," 21-22.

³⁴The experience and theme of displacement is also very much a part of Christian experience in Late Antiquity. See Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen, "Displaced Peoples: Reflections from Late Antiquity on a Contemporary Crisis," *Pacifica* 24 (February 2011) 29-42.

³⁵Pope Pius XII, *Exsul Familia Nazarethana* <<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius12/p12exsul.htm>> accessed December 6, 2012.

³⁶Daisy Machado, "The Unnamed Woman: Justice, Feminists, and the Undocumented Woman," in *Religion and Justice: A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology*, ed. Maria Pilar Aquino et al. (Austin: University of Texas, 2002) 161-176, at 169.

³⁷Graziano Battistella, "The Poor in Motion," *Asian Christian Review* Vol. 4, No. 2 (Winter 2010) 70-81, at 81.

Matthew Amster contends that borderzones serve as a kind of laboratory for creative forms of agency. Amster posits that they serve as a “malleable resource” in a way that border crossing becomes empowering.³⁸ To be sure, the border is a site not only of the pathos of migrants but also a marker or a symbol for freedom, a new home (for refugees and asylum seekers) and a better life (for all migrants). This demarcation, i.e., the border, is both a barrier and a gateway between hope and despair, dreams and nightmare. Crossing it makes a lot of difference, if not all the difference, between a life of poverty and misery and a life of promise and possibilities.

The combination of profound experience of oppression and glimpses of human liberation, thus, makes migration a heuristic lens for a contemporary theology on salvation. To be sure, contemporary migration provides windows into human suffering and, at the same time, human well-being; it is rich with situations where death meets life and hope overcomes fear and despair. In a nutshell, migration simultaneously symbolizes the human drama of exclusion and inclusion, of death and life. As illustrated in the previous section this dialectic underscores the notion that salvation’s “already” aspect is as real as salvation’s “not yet.” It drives home the point that the divine is both present and absent and life is both horror and love. As Silvano Tomasi stresses “migration is graced even in difficult circumstances.... [It can be seen as] part of the ongoing mystery of redemption, contributing to solving the great problems of the human family. [Migrants] are, thus, also part of God’s plan for the growth of the human family in greater cultural unity and universal fraternity.”³⁹ P. Giacomo Danesi more explicitly articulates the link between migration and redemption:

Against the Gospel ideal of brotherhood, migrations, whatever form they may take, are always revealed as ways of gradually forming a new social fabric, a new body, which the Gospel message is called to animate; by virtue of the tragic aspect they often entail, they are transformed into appeals to brotherhood on a world scale; by virtue of the conflicts that accompany them, they are an aspect of the painful

³⁸Matthew Amster, “The rhetoric of the state: Dependency and Control in the Malaysian-Indonesian Borderland,” *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 12, 1 (2005) 23-43, at 23, 39.

³⁹Silvano Tomasi, “The Prophetic Mission of the Churches: Theological Perspectives,” in *The Prophetic Mission of the Churches in Response to Forced Displacement of Peoples*, report of a global ecumenical consultation, Addis Ababa, November 6–11 1995 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1996) 36-43, at 41.

birth of the pilgrim Church; by virtue of the discords and disparities they disclose, they become an appeal for a juster universal order; and by virtue of the rapprochement they effect between the most diverse components of the human family, migrations are ways to — and the foundation of — a pentecostal, universalistic, catholic, and ecumenical experience of Christian brotherhood (sic).⁴⁰

This ensemble of conditions and experiences embedded in contemporary migration reminds us that our salvation never takes place in isolation but in communion; it is not achieved in a static state but in dynamic purposeful life-changing movements. Migrants move in order to live. In the process, they encounter death but, like Jesus, dying is not the last word but resurrection and, consequently, new life or hope. Indeed, in God's great economy of salvation hope, not death, is the last word.

Conclusion

Jon Sobrino says that to do theology means, in part, to face reality and raise it to a theological concept and that, in doing so, theology should be honest with the real.⁴¹ Anselm Min drives home this point in the context of migration in "Migration and Christian Hope" by drawing attention to the fact that theology is a reflection on the transcendent significance of all aspects of human experience, but especially of those aspects in which human dignity and solidarity are at stake.⁴² In reality, however, migration has only recently engaged the attention of theology.⁴³ But theological attention, it indeed, must get. For migration is not only re-arranging human geography it is also re-shaping identities and subjectivities. It is not only bringing or exacerbating sinful conditions; it is also creating other paths to human survival and liberation.

⁴⁰P. Giacomo Danesi, "Towards a Theology of Migration," in World Council of Churches, *Church and Migration: WCC Fifth Assembly Dossier No. 13*, Geneva: WCC Migration Secretariat, 1981, 10-41, at 35.

⁴¹Jon Sobrino, *Witnesses of the Kingdom: The Martyrs of El Salvador and the Crucified Peoples*, New York: Orbis, 2003, 13.

⁴²Anselm Min, "Migration and Christian Hope," in *Faith on the Move: Towards a Theology of Migration in Asia*, ed. Fabio Baggio and Agnes Brazal, Quezon City, Phils: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008, 177-202, at 187.

⁴³For a more detailed discussion on the attention that migration has gotten, so far, in the field of theology see Gioacchino Campese, "The Irruption of Migrants: Theology of Migration in the 21st Century," *Theological Studies* 73, 1 (March 2012) 3-32.

Migration clearly brings salvation for migrants. What is also increasingly becoming clear is that salvation history (understood as salvation in history) today is tied with the plight of the millions of migrants all over the world and the millions more who (will) continue to be forced to embrace migration in the name of survival. Salvation is about being saved from death, not so much biological death but the suffering and degradation within life resulting from the consequences of sinful conditions. Divine help comes in Christ through grace that sustains and the Church partly carries out this mission by providing — like Jesus — “the intellectual vision and the practical inspiration to serve and to love by making herself the neighbour of all the beaten, wounded, defeated, and forcibly uprooted persons along her endless road.”⁴⁴ By simultaneously bringing and evoking suffering and healing, dying and rising to a new life migration is a symbol of a Church working its way toward redemption.

⁴⁴Pope Benedict XVI, “Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization,” New York, April 18, 2008 as quoted in Silvano Tomasi, “Human Rights as a Framework for Advocacy on Behalf of the Displaced: The Approach of the Catholic Church,” in *Driven from Home: Protecting the Rights of Forced Migrants*, ed., David Hollenbach, SJ, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010, 55-69, at 65.