A Theology for Resettlement

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Abstract

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Through a critical use of migration theology this thesis determines pastoral outcomes for a former refugee community in Porirua, New Zealand. Resettlement after forced migration is challenging on many levels; migration theology seeks to make a practical and enduring response to these challenges. In particular migration theology has considerable potential to impact migration theory and to contribute meaningfully toward the needs of migrants and their home and host communities. The moral impetus that migration theology engenders, with its notion of the value of all human beings and its commitment to solidarity with the poor, is a powerful tool for change in churches, migrant communities and toward social justice. Migration theology is an integrated discipline: integrating thought and practice; integrating the insights of other disciplines; and integrating theological and Scriptural themes to develop a practical theology of compassionate action with a preferential option for the poor. Highlighting the important place of religion and the way in which many migrants practise their faith in their migration experience is a particular feature of migration theology. The theology of migration promotes interdependence between host and migrant communities: migration theology looks to migrants for the valuable contribution they are able to make to society in general, to the church and religious practices and to what the migration experience can teach us about the bible, helping to shape a theology of migration that strengthens the growth of true humanity for all people.

This thesis is presented in three chapters. Chapter one gives a survey and critique of migration theology in general and of the migration theology of Daniel G. Groody in particular. Chapters two and three follow a process of theological enquiry put forward by Jorge E. Castillo Guerra. Chapter two examines two aspects of context: first, the subjective context of the Kachin Christian Church in Porirua; second, the general context (that is, that which relates broadly to the Kachin people of Northern Burma) is considered, giving thought to the geopolitical situation in Burma and to factors relating to the forced migration of Kachin people. Chapter three is broken into two sections: first, biblical themes and theological ideas are outlined that may contribute to the

Kachin Church; and second, an examination of the pastoral outcomes that emerge through this theological enquiry.

This thesis concludes that migration theology has an important role to play in migrant communities. Pastoral outcomes must not be limited to the care and nurture of these communities, but must foster a 'double belonging' that encourages migrants to have a leadership influence in both home and host society. These outcomes can serve migrant communities at their points of need offering pastoral solutions and fostering integrative practices that contribute to justice and the humanisation of the host society; as these outcomes submit to the biblical text they equip Christian communities with a faithful and practical spirituality. These themes, discussed throughout this thesis, demonstrate that migration theology has a unique and vital role to play in the issue of migration.

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Thesis question: What pastoral outcomes can be determined, for the Kachin Christian Church in Porirua, through a critical use of migration theology?

Introduction

The issue of forced migration is problematic and multifaceted. Amongst the many academic disciplines that are applied to the issue of migration, theology is a more recent and underrated contributing resource. Over the last ten years a number of theologians have formed a school of thought titled migration theology. Characteristic of migration theology is a commitment to those in need, a readiness to draw on the contributions of other academic disciplines, an integrative approach to thought and practice and to the themes of theology, and a determination to make the unique contribution of theology a real and present help to local communities.

Using the tools of migration theology this thesis determines pastoral outcomes for a faith community of former refugees from Kachin State, Burma.[1] As with liberation theology the theological process in migration theology is an important feature; the pastoral outcomes discussed in the last chapter of this thesis emerge through a process of theological enquiry. The theological endeavour of this thesis closely reflects the following description by liberation theologian José Míguez Bonino:

> [T]he professional theologian… conceives her or his task as being closely related to the life of the community: he/she tries to understand what is happening in the worship, the life, the suffering of the community and put it in the context of the Scripture and the tradition, and then to test it by bringing it back to the community.

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[1] The use of the names Burma and Myanmar is not straightforward. Ashley South notes: "The terms 'Burma' and 'Myanmar' are understood and used quite differently among different communities in and from the country. The use of 'Burma' generally signifies a rejection of the military government's legitimacy. Most opposition groups, including the National League for Democracy… and also the British and US governments – still use the colonial-era name for the country. To talk of 'Myanmar' on the Thailand border is to invite categorisation as an SPDC apologist. In contrast… [t]o talk of 'Burma' in official circles inside the country is to be identified as a supporter of the opposition, and perhaps an insurgent sympathiser." South observes that most of his ethnic contacts, in private conversation, prefer 'Burma.' Ashley South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma: States of Conflict*, Routledge Contemporary Southeast Asia Series (Oxon OX: Routledge, 2008), xv-xvi. Of note, this is not the position of the Kachin Christian Church in Porirua, who hold to a position observed by Martin Smith: "government officials argue that distinguishing (in spelling) 'Myanmar' from the Burmans… accentuates the multi-ethnic make-up of the country. This is a view several ethnic ceasefire groups have accepted." Martin Smith, *Burma (Myanmar): The Time for Change* (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2002), 13. This thesis will use "Burma" most regularly, leaving direct quotes in their original format.

In this sense, the theologian tries to articulate the cry of the poor and see whether the poor recognise in this interpretation the echo of their voice.[2]

Over the last two years I have had a close association with the case study community discussed in chapters two and three. This has included a pastoral leadership role alongside the connections made and relationships that have been built through this academic process. I also have a personal commitment to the needs of the people of Burma, particularly those who have suffered oppression and forced displacement.[3] Chapter two considers important factors relating to this bias and the implications of this in the study process. The discussion in chapter two concludes that a former pastoral role, prior to study, has significant benefits for ethnographic enquiry. Chapter one highlights the leading value in migration theology that asserts that a personal and empathetic commitment to communities of need is important for theological investigation of this nature.

This thesis will be presented in three chapters. Chapter one will give a survey and critique of migration theology in general and of the migration theology of Daniel G. Groody in particular. Daniel Groody is a leading proponent of and contributor to the theology of migration; his thought makes a significant contribution to the process and goals of this thesis. Chapters two and three follow a process of theological enquiry put forward by Jorge E. Castillo Guerra.[4] Chapter two begins the case study component of this thesis. This chapter examines two aspects of context: first, the subjective context of the Kachin Christian Church in Porirua; second, the general context (that is, that which relates broadly to the Kachin people of Northern Burma) will be considered, giving thought to the geopolitical situation in Burma and to factors relating to the forced migration of Kachin people. The goal in chapter two reflects what Christine

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[2] José Míguez Bonino, "Latin America," in *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, ed. John Parratt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 32.

[3] Including membership on the board of Partners Relief and Development, New Zealand. See www.partnersworld.org.nz.

[4] Jorge E. Castillo Guerra, "A Theology of Migration: Toward an Intercultural Methodology," in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*, ed. Daniel Groody and Gioacchino Campese (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 243-270. See the beginning of chapter two.

Lienemann-Perrin states, "[t]he prime task of theology in a situation of migration today is to analyze and describe the real-life situation of those affected in this age of globalization."[5]

Chapter three is broken into two sections: first, biblical themes and theological ideas are outlined that may contribute to the Kachin Christian Church in Porirua; and second, an examination of the pastoral outcomes that emerge through this theological enquiry. The book of Jeremiah is examined for its potential to contribute to important themes in migration theology and for its avenues of connection with the Kachin Church. In the study on Jeremiah three keys themes are discussed: prayers of lament, covenant fidelity and citizenship responsibility. These themes together with the contextual study of chapter two form a theological framework in which pastoral outcomes can be determined. The pastoral outcomes outlined in chapter three, in answer to the thesis question, include: an examination of prayers of lament as a spiritual discipline that will aid the spiritual maturation of the Kachin Church; volunteering in local schools is discussed as a means of responding to the grief of past experiences, contributing to the primary values of the Kachin Church and in direct response to the principles determined in the study of Jeremiah; and a reflection on a political demonstration organised by the Kachin Church during the period of study is offered, drawing conclusions on the role of migration theology in a New Zealand context.

This thesis concludes that migration theology has an important role to play in migrant communities. Pastoral outcomes must not be limited to the care and nurture of these communities, but must foster a double belonging that encourages forced migrants to have a leadership influence in both home and host society, responding meaningfully to injustices at home and contributing to the humanisation of the host society. These themes, discussed throughout this thesis, demonstrate that migration theology has a unique and vital role to play in the issue of migration.

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[5] Christine Lienemann-Perrin, "Theological Stimuli from the Migrant Churches," *The Ecumenical Review* 61:4 (December, 2009): 382.

The discussion on migration faces problems in the use of its terms. The issue of terminology is much more than a debate over semantics; the terms used are images that carry enduring definitions which can be used both positively and negatively in our interaction with the diverse problems of migration. Asylum seeker, immigrant, alien, refugee, overstayer, economic refugee and undocumented are all terms commonly used in the discussion on migration. The difficulty of these terms, and others like them, is the politicized basis to their usage, particularly their on-going usage for people wishing to settle in a host country. For example, an individual may have been through a refugee experience, but may now have citizen rights in a host country. For labels such as asylum seeker and refugee to be continued to be used defines a person in terms of an historical experience and their political status rather than their human identity. Roger Zetter is a leading contributor in the field of understanding the process, role and effects of labelling migrants.[6] He asserts, "[t]he vocabulary is varied in its scope but singular in its covert intention – to convey an image of marginality, dishonesty, a threat, unwelcomed…. These degraded labels indicate the increasingly pernicious power of labelling…."[7] The negative effects of labelling are widespread. Christine Lienemann-Perrin observes that people with foreign origins avoid politicized images and may either remain silent about their problems and suppress their experiences of marginalization, or they assimilate too quickly rather than integrate into their host culture.[8] Zetter contends that, "[b]y showing how labels ascribe simplified meanings and artificially discriminate between people whose needs for protection are paramount, we can explain why alienation, reluctance to conform to the label, and often dysfunctional behaviour, emerge."[9] Daniel Groody notes the ill effects created by dehumanizing stereotypes that are created in the labels given to migrants. He argues that labels often generate

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[6] See, for example, Roger Zetter's seminal paper, "Labelling Refugees: Forming and Transforming a Bureaucratic Identity," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 4:1 (1991): 39-62.

[7] Roger Zetter, "More Labels, Fewer Refugees: Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalization," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20:2 (2007): 184.

[8] Lienemann-Perrin, "Theological Stimuli from the Migrant Churches," 381.

[9] Zetter, "More Labels, Fewer Refugees," 180-181.

asymmetrical relationships, leaving migrants vulnerable to control, manipulation, and exploitation.[10]

> Categories such as legality and illegality, the documented and the undocumented, and the citizen and alien, not only fail to come to terms with a new global reality, but they also leave gaping areas of injustice in their wake…. Part of the task of theology of migration is to bridge the gap created by these labels, challenge the dehumanizing stereotypes created by these labels, and build up (in the words of Paul VI and John Paul II) 'a civilization of love' and 'a culture of life.' The task entails helping those on the move discover an inner identity that fosters their own agency rather than an imposed external identity that increases their vulnerability and subjugation.[11]

This thesis will use the generic terms migrant, forced migrant,[12] and migration commonly throughout, using other terms selectively.

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[10] Daniel G. Groody, "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees," *Theological Studies* 70 (2009): 643.

[11] Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 639, 644.

[12] "… 'forced migrant' increasingly replaces 'refugee' in the research literature. 'Forced migrant' better captures the complexity of contemporary root causes…. However, it reduces the focus on protection as the fundamental right of a refugee…." Zetter, "More Labels, Fewer Refugees," 189. 'Forced migrant' may also include those internally displaced, whereas 'refugee' is defined as one who is forced to cross borders.

Chapter One: Migration Theology

Chapter one outlines the discipline of migration theology with consideration to its history, the values prevalent among migration theologians and a focus on leading contributors. This chapter introduces the foundational principles and processes that chapters two and three use in the theological enquiry that determines pastoral outcomes. To clarify these foundational issues a critique of migration theology will be offered throughout the chapter.

The influence of liberation theology

The roots of migration theology lie in the theology of liberation. Very little is written on the contribution of liberation theologians to migration theology; this is surprising as the connections are both clear and pervasive. Several themes common amongst liberation theologians are shared in the theology of migration. Cited below is Gustavo Gutiérrez's recent contribution to migration theology. Gutiérrez is widely held as the preeminent Latin American liberation theologian; he has been a formative figure and contributor to liberation theology since the 1960s. A leading example of Gutiérrez's influence is seen in the shared themes of solidarity with the poor and a preferential option for the poor.[13] From this commitment come the notions of true humanity and the freedom of all people to have hope, that is, the knowledge that change is possible: as Gutiérrez states, "what is at stake above all is a dynamic and historical conception of the human person, oriented definitively and creatively toward the future, acting in the present for the sake of tomorrow."[14] To fulfil this commitment to the poor a theology from below is maintained. In this approach theology responds to the condition in which people live. Critical reflection is the mainstay of both liberation and migration

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[13] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation,* rev. ed. (London: SCM Press, 1988) xxv-xxvi. Guerra makes the observation that the practical motivations of migration theology with its preferential option for the poor have their roots in liberation theology. Guerra, "A Theology of Migration," 249-255. Peter C. Phan asserts that "[a] theology out of the context of migration must begin with personal solidarity with the victims of the abject condition of human, often innocent, suffering." Peter C. Phan, "The Experience of Migration in the United States as a Source of Intercultural Theology," in *Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization*, ed. Gioacchino Campese and Pietro Ciallella (Staten Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies, 2003), 149.

[14] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 21.

theologians.[15] Further to this is a commitment to social analysis; an interdisciplinary approach where, for example, history, sociology and demography can all contribute to theological enquiry.[16] The use of other academic disciplines by migration theologians varies widely. Guerra's method of study for migration theology[17] draws on the liberation theologies of Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino and their steps of "compassionate theology."[18] His method includes an interdisciplinary commitment as an integral and early step. An example of this is evident in the following outline of Gioacchino Campese's work:

> First, I will describe the situation at the U.S.-Mexico border, especially in terms of official U.S. border policy…. Second, I will offer a critical assessment of this policy following the insights of social scientists and human rights activists. Third, I will introduce the metaphor of the 'crucified peoples'…. And finally I will use this concept as a key to interpret theologically the current immigration and border predicament and explore its significance for theology today in the U.S.[19]

Is migration theology simply a department within the theology of liberation? Guerra argues that migration theology has a critical point of difference with liberation theology, and in so doing establishes itself with its own particular identity. Liberation theology, Guerra observes, remains singular in its context, formulating theologies from the perspective of a single place and/or people. Migration theology, by nature, must accept the "challenge of bicultural and multiple identities. For this reason a theology of migration must get rid of the logic of application in its relation with the theology of liberation."[20] By "logic of application" I take Guerra to mean liberation theology's

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[15] This is a leading theme of Gustavo Gutiérrez and is common in migration theology. For Gutiérrez's statement on this see, Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* 9-12.

[16] This is evident again in Gutiérrez's development of critical reflection. Tissa Balasuriya, a leading liberation theologian from Sri Lanka, argues strongly for an effective use of social analysis in theological enquiry. Tissa Balasuriya, *Planetary Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 8, 15-16; "Toward the Liberation of Theology in Asia," in *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Curt Cadorette, Marie Giblin, Marilyn J. Legge, and Mary Hembrow Snyder (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 38-39, 41.

[17] See chapter 2 of this thesis.

[18] Guerra, "A Theology of Migration," 251-253.

[19] Gioacchino Campese, "¿Cuantos Más?: 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 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 273-274.

[20] Guerra, "A Theology of Migration," 254.

focus on a single place and/ or people; migration theology's logic of application fosters a double belonging, reflecting on the needs of a variety of contexts in both home and host societies. For example, Guerra argues that migration theology must develop the capacity to reflect on different historical and cultural realities. To fail to do this will be to promote an isolationist perspective and will fail to integrate the variety of contexts with which migrants must contend.

> [A theology of migration] assumes a double belonging, or double loyalty,… and that causes the migrants the feeling of simultaneous reference to both contexts: the one of origin and the one of destination…. A theology of migration emerges as a theology that wants to deal, in a Christian way, with the 'in-between' situation of the migrants….[21]

These assertions by Guerra emerge as significant in relation to the pastoral outcomes discussed in chapter three, and in particular, in regard to the role of migration theology in a New Zealand context. The relationship between migration and liberation theology is one of strong interconnectedness. The emergence of migration theology as a distinct discipline is a recent development and further analysis of its historical roots and independent traits will be of benefit. The particular contribution of theology to migration is evident in what follows.

The role of migration theology

The issues surrounding migration are diverse and problematic. Forced migration in particular raises considerable debate; and what responses can be made – personally, locally and politically – are particularly challenging. "As one of the most complex issues in the world, migration underscores not only conflict at geographical borders but also between national security and human insecurity, sovereign rights and human rights, civil law and natural law, and citizenship and discipleship."[22] These points of conflict in the complex issue of migration require responses as diverse as the problems themselves.

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Daniel G. Groody, "Theology in the Age of Migration: Seeing the Image of Christ in the Eyes of a Stranger," *National Catholic Reporter,* 18 September 2009, 21-22.

The role of theology in the discourse about migration, up until recently, has been largely overlooked. A broad range of disciplines are readily applied to the issue of migration, including political and social science, economics, law, history, geography, psychology, anthropology and environmental studies. There is, however, very little research done on migration from a theological perspective. Groody notes that there has been some research done on migration and religion from a sociological perspective, but virtually nothing from a theological perspective, theology having no official recognition in the overall discourse about migration.[23]

Theology asserts a moral response in the discourse about migration. Our understanding of God, creation, humanity and redemption can all make a vital contribution to migration studies, helping to shape important outcomes. Gustavo Gutiérrez examines migration theology from the perspective of "the preferential option for the poor;"[24] from this perspective he draws conclusions under the theological themes of humanity and hope. In particular, that the migrants' human dignity includes "holding their destiny in their hands… that each person become the subject of his or her history;" and that "theology is always a hermeneutic of hope…. Hope is a gift of God that needs to be rooted in the daily life of each person."[25] Groody seeks to fill the theological void in migration studies arguing that, "migration is not only a social reality with profound implications but also a way of thinking about God and what it means to be human in the world, which can become an important impetus in the ministry of reconciliation and a compelling force in understanding and responding to migrants and refugees."[26] Groody asserts that without the moral demands of theology, "it is impossible to construct just policies ordered to the common good and to the benefit of society's weakest members."[27]

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[23] Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 640.

[24] Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Poverty, Migration and the Option for the Poor," in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*, ed. Daniel Groody and Gioacchino Campese (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 83.

[25] Ibid., 84.

[26] Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 642.

[27] Ibid., 645.

Migration theology seeks to be a mobilising force within the church, equipping

Christian people to respond to the issues of migration and the call of God. A key motif

in migration theology is the idea of the church itself as migrant. Often quoted is the

"aliens and exiles" teaching in 1 Peter and the idea of the "diaspora" community

highlighted 1 Peter and James. Steven Bevans asserts that migrants are able to "call the

church to recognize its provisional, pilgrim nature."[28] Peter C. Phan highlights the

ethical demands of a migrant church:

> [M]igration is a permanent feature of the church…. Like unity, catholicity, holiness,
> and apostolicity, 'migrantness', to coin a new word, is a note of the true church
> because only a church that is conscious of being an institutional migrant and caring
> for all the migrants of the world can truly practice faith, hope, and love, in obedience
> to Jesus' command.[29]

Samuel Escobar, reflecting on the massive influx of immigrants to Europe,[30] highlights

the need for the church to make a meaningful response. He argues that the demands

facing the church include, "the challenge to Christian compassion and sensitivity…

[and] the need for the churches to take a prophetic stance in the face of society's unjust

treatment of immigrants."[31] He also sees immigrant presence as a "factor of renewal of

missionary vision and vigor…."[32] Migration theology can resource the church as it

faces the demands of migration.

Using theology to contribute to migration studies allows migrants to navigate the

difficult terrain of settlement and integration. In new and foreign environments

migrants face many personal difficulties; struggling with identity, loneliness and

anomie, for example, are common. Lester Edwin Ruiz observes that people of

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[28] Stephen Bevans, "Mission *among* Migrants, Mission *of* Migrants: Mission of the Church," in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*, ed. Daniel Groody and Gioacchino Campese (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 100.

[29] Peter C. Phan, "Migration in the Patristic Era: History and Theology," in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*, ed. Daniel Groody and Gioacchino Campese (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 57-58.

[30] In particular Escobar reflects on the influx of migrants into Spain in the late twentieth century. Samuel Escobar, "Migration: Avenue and Challenge to Mission," *Missiology: An International Review* 31:1 (January 2003): 19.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 27.

migration struggle with belonging and the ethics of belonging; the profound questions migrants face include what community they actually belong to, which ethics and whose ethics are right for them.[33] Lienemann-Perrin explores the idea of diaspora theology observing that dislocated people may permanently feel out of place. There are many contributing factors to this feeling of isolation, such as language barriers, immigration policy and cultural values and practices. She observes, "[t]heir presence in their receiving country is constantly being contested. Often they remain involuntarily associated with their country of origin. They must constantly justify their presence and their apparently strange identity."[34] Phan observes the personal and corporate trauma of the migration experience, one in which individuals inevitably find themselves marginalized. He discusses the nature of being "betwixt and between;" amongst the difficulties faced spatially, socially, culturally and linguistically, Phan notes, "[p]sychologically and spiritually, the person does not possess a well-defined and secure self-identity and is often marked with excessive impressionableness, rootlessness, and an inordinate desire for belonging."[35] The theology of migration, in its pursuit to promote a functional double identity, can be used constructively to provide moral stability and direction, help build identity and a strong sense of community: "to be betwixt and between is not totally negative and need not cause cultural schizophrenia. Paradoxically, being neither this nor that allows one to be *both* this *and* that."[36]

The journey of migration can be arduous on many levels, not least on one's own theology. Forced migration frequently exposes migrants to vulnerable and oppressive environments; this may be a jungle providing very few of the basics for survival for an internally displaced person in Burma, or the demands of finding residence and work

[33] Lester Edwin J. Ruiz, "The Stranger in Our Midst: Diaspora, Ethics, Transformation," in *Realizing the America of Our Hearts: Theological Voices of Asian Americans*, ed. Fumitaka Matsuoka and Eleazar S. Fernandez (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2003), 226.

[34] Lienemann-Perrin, "Theological Stimuli from the Migrant Churches," 383.

[35] Peter C. Phan, "The Dragon and the Eagle: Toward a Vietnamese American Theology," in *Realizing the America of Our Hearts: Theological Voices of Asian Americans*, ed. Fumitaka Matsuoka and Eleazar S. Fernandez (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2003), 165.

[36] Ibid.

without documentation in a host country. These demands impact a person at every level, their health and wellbeing may suffer, their moral code and religious values and practices may be dismantled. Gemma Tulud Cruz observes that the demands on keeping one's faith – "faith in themselves, in others, and in God" – are among the most important challenges for a migrant, particularly migrant women.[37] Denise McGill records the story of a woman from Burma facing the demands of forced migration. Say Wah Htoo's story of forced migration from Karen State, Burma, through Bangkok, Thailand to New York State is a harrowing one. At the age of nine Htoo's family home and livelihood were destroyed by government forces. Her family members were killed or scattered. She was able to stay with her father and gained an education in a makeshift school. At fifteen she joined the army. Two years later her father died in battle and she joined the exodus of people leaving Burma and snuck into Bangkok. She soon became one of the millions of Asian women trapped in sexual exploitation.[38]

> 'I arrived in Bangkok, and it's a big city, and I've never been in the big city,' she explains. 'That's why I didn't know anything. I can do nothing. I tried to continue my education, and I found one guy, and he said he's going to help me. But he lied to me, and he persuaded me, and he – I don't know how to say that – he has his wife and his children, but he has me like a wife.' Htoo hangs her head and softly weeps. 'I have to live with him, and I got a baby.'[39]

McGill outlines the impact this experience had on Htoo's religious beliefs and the affinity that she found with one biblical image. Reflecting on her experiences in Bangkok Htoo remembers, "I felt problems. I wanted to blame God. I said, 'God is not taking care of me'…. She felt kinship with the biblical story of Joseph – a victim of injustice in a foreign land. But like Joseph, Htoo discovered God had not abandoned her. 'Later I humbled myself, and I knew that God planned everything for my good.'"[40] Htoo's story of migration continues as a resident of a small town in the USA. On arrival, despite – or maybe because of – her migration experiences and theological questioning, Htoo made attending a church a top priority. Christian faith and

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[37] Gemma Tulud Cruz, "Faith on the Edge; Religion and Women in the Context of Migration," *Feminist Theology* 15:1 (2006): 9-11.

[38] Denise McGill, "The Town That Loves Refugees," *Christianity Today* (February, 2007): 102.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 103.

participation in Christian community have been fundamental in her integration into her new life in North America.[41]

Through the journey of migration religious practices can be constructive in addressing the needs of individuals and communities. These needs can be diverse relating to an individual's spiritual, emotional, psychological and material wellbeing. Cruz has identified religion as having a multi-dimensional role for Asian migrant women. She notes, "[a]side from being oppressed (people) migrants are also uprooted people and religion helps them a lot to deal with the ruptures and discontinuities in their lives."[42] Cruz observes that the church is more than just a place of celebration, it is also a central means of resisting oppression; the church is "both a religious and a social centre, their refuge in times of crisis and their home when they want to shout for joy."[43] In recording the experiences of Liberian refugees in Ghana Elom Dovlo and Samuel Sondah observe that religion played a varied and vital role in addressing the needs of the community.[44] Although victims of war the Liberian Christians did not abandon their faith, rather the conflict acted as a means to "propel them into an active involvement in religious activities"[45] with many affirming that this was a time they needed God most.[46]

> Whereas the trauma of the civil war raised questions about the justice of God for them, their survival at the same time was seen as a miracle and then due to the mercy of God, and this negated any slipping away of faith. Their testimonies to this at church services brought them emotional release. That is why most of the refugees vowed to serve God, who has protected them through the carnage of Liberia.[47]

Religious activities occupied their time when they were unemployed and were put to good use for the benefit of the community, such as pastoral visitation and food distribution. Christian moral standards, such as peaceful behaviour and Christian

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[41] Ibid., 97-103.

[42] Cruz, "Faith on the Edge," 19.

[43] Ibid., 19-20.

[44] Elom Dovlo and Samuel Sondah, "Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land: Christianity among Liberian Refugees in Ghana," *Studies in World Christianity* 7:2 (2001): 214.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

marriage, became a strong and stabilizing influence on the camp as a whole. The role of religion in the peace and security of the camp and in the wellbeing of the people at large cannot be ignored.[48] Doris Peschke, speaking for the World Council of Churches, argues that "religion is a core, yet often poorly understood, vehicle through which the process of migrant integration occurs…. it is imperative that all involved actors make the effort to foster an active and positive role for religion in the integration process."[49] The practice of religion and its associated community life plays a vital role in the well-being of many migrants.

Migration theology has an important role in fostering and integrating faith and religious practices in the host country. Theology in this context has a bridge building function, bridging the gaps that are created through the migration experience and in so doing forming the double identity that contributes to effective resettlement. Lienemann-Perrin identifies this bridge building role in strengthening morality and building community.

> [Migration theology] deals with questions about creating identity in the midst of being alien. It also explores the search for community, for a common language, for a compelling morality. Often the location to which this theology relates is described as an 'in-between world,' a place where one does not quite belong anywhere and at the same time is everywhere. Diaspora theology no longer asks, 'Where do you come from?' but 'Where are you between?' Put positively, the diaspora becomes a bridge between two or more places (touching both of them).[50]

Doris Peschke further develops the idea of bridge building in religious communities promoting the idea of a healthy transnational identity.[51] This transnational identity is made up of components from both societies where, "[r]eligion may help to add plausibility and relevance to this process: for instance, in intertwining individual

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Doris Peschke, "The Role of Religion for the Integration of Migrants and Institutional Responses in Europe: Some Reflections," *The Ecumenical Review* 61: 4 (December 2009): 380.

[50] Lienemann-Perrin, "Theological Stimuli from the Migrant Churches," 384.

[51] Peschke, "The Role of Religion," 369. For more on the subject of transnationalism and the role of religion see, *Religion Across Borders: Transnational Immigrant Networks*, ed. Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzmann Chafetz (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2002).

biographies with religious narratives."[52] Peschke argues that this transnational identity is not simply the melding together of two cultures, "but something completely new, something that may prove valuable for both societies."[53] For this to succeed religion must not take the place of merely being a part of or a product of culture, but must inform, shape and challenge culture as well. A positive and formative transnational identity will only occur where there is an open receiving society, where local faith communities also acknowledge and practice such values.[54] The pursuit of a positive transnational identity combats the potential for marginalization. Here the moral impetus of migration theology turns to faith communities in host societies requiring them to be active players in the process of effective bridge building.

Transnationalism is a useful concept for the purposes of this thesis. This leading concept in migration theory explores the significance of society, identity, communication, resources and policy that migrants have, one, left behind in their home country and, two, now experience in their host country and the relationship between the two.

> Transmigrants are immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state…. They are not sojourners because they settle and become incorporated in the economy and political institutions, localities, and patterns of daily life of the country in which they reside. However, at the very same time, they are engaged elsewhere in the sense that they maintain connections, build institutions, conduct transactions, and influence local and national events in the countries from which they emigrated.[55]

Transnationalism asserts that there is interconnectedness between a migrant's home and host country that becomes a significant variable in the experience of settlement and integration. The extent and impact of these variables is a subject of strong debate.[56]

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[52] Peschke, "The Role of Religion," 369. The affinity between individual biographies and religious narratives is evident in the story of Say Wah Htoo and her connection with the story of Joseph, noted above.

[53] Ibid., 370.

[54] Ibid., 369-370.

[55] Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, "From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration," *Anthropological Quarterly* 68:1 (January 1995): 48-49.

[56] Caroline Brettell, "Introduction: Global Spaces/Local Places: Transnationalism, Diaspora, and the Meaning of Home," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 13 (2006): 328.

> Proponents claim that contemporary migration cannot be understood without studying the impact of migration on both sides of the border. The social, economic, and political ties linking migrants and non-migrants are so deep and widespread that they fundamentally change the ways individuals earn their livelihoods, raise their family, enact religious rituals, and express their political interests…. Critics claim that strong sending and receiving-country ties are nothing new, that only a small number of individuals actually sustain them, and that they will not last beyond the first generation….[57]

For the purposes of this thesis the concept of transnationalism affirms the idea of forming a double identity and important questions are raised: in what way can pastoral outcomes contribute to the significance of past experiences and help forge strong ties in the host country?; is a transnational identity evident in this migrant community?; if so, what form does it take and what role does it have?[58]

It is argued that the long-term faith experiences of an immigrant community impacts their transnational identity. For example Fenggang Yang and Helen Ebaugh argue that, "[it] is necessary to go beyond the borders of the host country and to take into account the relative status of different faiths in home countries. Majority/minority religious status in the home and host countries is an important factor that impacts the internal dynamics and overall changes in immigrant religious institutions."[59] Yang and Ebaugh studied the integration experiences of two Chinese faith communities in Texas, one, a Chinese Buddhist temple moving from a majority religion status in China to a minority status in the U.S., and the other, a Chinese Protestant church moving from a minority status in China and establishing in a majority religion in the U.S. Their study concluded that "the dynamics, strategies, and achievements of these immigrant religious groups are strongly influenced by their religious status in the home country and in American society."[60] The Chinese Buddhist immigrants, for example, commonly retained a

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[57] Peggy Levitt, "Transnational Migration: Taking Stock and Future Directions," *Global Networks* 1:3 (2001): 195.

[58] In chapters two and three these questions are addressed in the discussion and pastoral outcomes relating to children, celebrations for children and children's education.

[59] Fenggang Yang and Helen Rose Ebaugh, "Religion and Ethnicity among New Immigrants: the Impact of Majority/ Minority Status in Home and Host Countries," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40:3 (2001): 376.

[60] Ibid.

secure Chinese identity; their faith experiences in the host country had a stronger link to maintaining their Chinese culture than the Chinese Protestant church.[61] These observations assert the importance of studying the general context of a case study community, such as that discussed in the second part of chapter two of this thesis. These observations also raise important questions for determining pastoral outcomes: to what degree are religious observances tied to language and or culture?; does a commitment to language and culture inhibit positive integration in the host society?

The study of transnationalism and the social sciences in general make an important and contrasting contribution to migration theology. The discipline of transnational study has been undertaken primarily as a social science in the fields of sociology and anthropology. It is, by nature, an academic pursuit undertaken through empirical modes of study. The conclusions of transnational studies are largely focused on observation, critiques of previous studies or assumptions, and hypothesise future patterns of sociological behaviour. The studies of transnationalism and religion largely focus on the role of religion in the migration process and do not engage meaningfully with theological themes.[62] In contrast, the outcomes of the study of migration theologians is focused on moral imperatives that are both subjective, seeking personal transformation, and general, seeking the transformation of individuals, communities and even nation-states. This contrast is an important one, highlighting a key difference between the two disciplines, and also the contribution one discipline can have to the other. Theology and the social sciences, it is argued, need to develop a healthy interdependence.

> Social science without theology does not give us a perspective wide enough to account for the deeper relational and spiritual dimensions of human life that shape, define, and sustain human existence – a fact that becomes more evident especially amid crisis and trial. Theology without social science leaves us less equipped to read the signs of the times, engage contemporary issues, or speak to the pressing questions that affect large portions of the world.[63]

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[61] Ibid.

[62] See, for example, *Religion Across Borders*, ed. Ebaugh and Chafetz.

[63] Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 664.

Migration theology has a critical role to play in the discourse on migration and in practice, equipping all involved actors to promote justice and a positive integration process for migrants. Migration theology asserts a moral response to the issue of migration affirming the humanity of the oppressed, advocating for justice, providing affirming symbols of connectedness with the biblical narrative, equipping migrants through religious practice, community life and moral stability, and helping to bridge the many divides experienced in migration. The following is an outline of key contributors to migration theology.

Survey of contributions to migration theology

The history and range of contributions to migration theology is far from extensive. In the 1990s a small number of writers introduced a theological perspective in the discourse on migration. William O'Neill and William Spohn begin with a biblical perspective in their discussion on migration ethics. Of the command to remember the stranger and alien in our midst they observe that "[n]o command is repeated more frequently in the Old Testament, with the exception of the imperative to worship the one God."[64] They provide a comparative analysis of Catholic social teaching with two prevailing and contrasting modern philosophies, Enlightenment liberalism and communitarianism, or the contrast between the "politics of rights" and the "politics of the common good." They conclude with brief consideration of the moral demands and practical actions that arise from the enduring biblical imperative to love your neighbour, highlighting that the Old Testament command to look after the alien is indelibly linked to loving your neighbour, "[t]he alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself…." (Lev 19:34).[65] Drew Christiansen takes a similar approach, citing the biblical injunctions in Leviticus and the command to love your neighbour. His starting point, however, is God and the church's identification with the outcast and exile. The biblical stories of exile in Egypt and Babylon, together with the early life of Jesus' family as political refugees in Egypt, contribute to a shared

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[64] William R. O'Neill and William C. Spohn, "Rights of Passage: The Ethics of Immigration and Refugee Policy," *Theological Studies* 59 (1998): 84.

[65] Ibid., 84-106.

memory of exile with specific moral consequences.[66] "Thus, the memory of exile is vitally important because… it is knowledge of our uncertain common human condition, and the divine embrace of that condition."[67] This shared memory is worked out in a number of values: openness to the stranger; hospitality; and the Church's defense of and advocacy for migrants.[68] Christiansen gives brief consideration of these theological values before moving to a survey of Catholic social teaching and a response to international policy on migration. Both Christiansen and O'Neill and Spohn fail to thoroughly integrate their theological foundations with their arguments concerning philosophy and policy. Their use of theological and biblical themes is more a springboard to a discussion on migration from a moral perspective.

Gemma Tulud Cruz makes an important contribution to migration theology. The context dominating much of the work in migration theology is that of the U.S.-Mexico border and to a lesser degree migration in Europe and Africa.[69] The study of transnationalism and religion is also dominated by the U.S. context.[70] Cruz offers a detailed theological analysis of a migration situation within Asia.[71] Examining the many demands on Filipino women who have migrated to Hong Kong as domestic workers, Cruz formulates an "intercultural theology of migration." This theology is presented as a "feminist theology of struggle" that draws on several significant factors:

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[66] Drew Christiansen, "Movement, Asylum, Borders: Christian Perspectives," *International Migration Review* 30:1 (Spring 1996): 7-17.

[67] Ibid., 8-9.

[68] Ibid., 9.

[69] For an example of work based in the American context see, *A Promised Land,* ed. Groody and Campese, this work emerges as a core text in the study of migration theology. For an example of work in reference to the African and European context see, Amélé Adamavi-Aho Ekué, "Migrant Christians: Believing Wanderers Between Cultures and Nations," *The Ecumenical Review* 61:4 (December 2009): 387-399, and *The Ecumenical Review* Volume 61:4 in general.

[70] Ebaugh and Chafetz, *Religion Across Borders*, 3. "[M]uch of the theoretically informed work by sociologists has focused on the United States, the *sine qua non* of immigration countries…. much of the sociological literature on immigrant integration remains under the spell of the American experience." Barbara Schmitter Heisler, "The Sociology of Immigration: From Assimilation to Segmented Assimilation, from the American Experience to the Global Arena," in *Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines* 2nd ed, ed. Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield (New York: Routledge, 2008), 83-84, 100.

[71] Gemma Tulud Cruz, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration: Pilgrims in the Wilderness*, Studies in Systematic Theology, ed. Stephen Bevans, Miikka Ruokanen (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

the social context of Filipino domestic workers, taking into consideration both their Hong Kong context and the significance of their transnational connections with family, culture and religion in the Philippines; the various ways in which domestic workers experience domestication and how they respond to this; building on this examination of context Cruz introduces "markers" that serve as theological tools for interrogating the experience of struggle; she outlines the theological themes that require further reflection; and presents two theological models to interact with these themes – Delores Williams' theology of survival quality of life and Jung Young Lee's theology of marginality. The final and culminant section of the book discusses the points of convergence and divergence between the context of the Filipino domestic workers and the two theological models. Cruz's goal in this work is to clear a path towards an inclusive and more relevant theology for women in the Philippine context.[72] This work is noteworthy for its depth of critical theological analysis in a migration situation; Cruz's discussion of theological themes and her interaction with complementary theological models is particularly insightful and presents as an effective model for further theologies of migration. In contrast to other migration theologians, a principle weakness of this work is its apparent lack of first-hand research. Case studies are notably absent and in one instance when personal accounts are included it is from a secondary source and dated by thirteen years.[73] An associated weakness, again in contrast to other migration theologians, is the lack of thought given to practical outcomes that emerge from her feminist theology of struggle of Filipino women domestic workers. The targeted nature of the study is suited toward practical outcomes in matters of social justice, community life and religious practice, but this is lacking. This criticism, however, does not rest with Cruz's work in general; a chapter she has contributed to another work in the same year reads, at least in part, like the missing chapter of her book. [74] Here Cruz argues for both broad and focussed outcomes for

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[72] Ibid., 8-9.

[73] Ibid., 35.

[74] Gemma Tulud Cruz, "Expanding the Boundaries, Turning Borders into Spaces: Mission in the Context of Contemporary Migration," in *Mission After Christendom: Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission*, ed. Ogbu Kalu, Peter Vethanayagamony, Edmund Kee-Fook Chia (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2010), 71-83.

mission in the context of migration. She presses the responsibilities of local churches in both home and host countries to ensure that migrants are "equipped with the dispositions and skills" needed for their migration experience.[75] She sees local churches as "centers and sources of socioeconomic needs for immigrants"[76] and presents the challenge of sincere and authentic integration of migrants into church communities.[77] Cruz argues that "[m]ission, as it is in the biblical tradition, has inescapable social implications," mission must be "contextually liberative" and therefore needs to work to "conscientize and strengthen" the socioeconomic and political institutions of both home and host countries.[78] She concludes, "[o]nly when mission is both contextually liberational and interculturally dialogical can mission truly respond to the cry of today's stranger par excellence: the migrant."[79] The context from which Cruz works, as a theologian who is Filipino, and the methods of theology she utilizes provides a contrasting and valuable contribution to migration theology.

A significant influence over the last ten years in the formation of a theology of migration, on the American continent at least, has been through a small number of conferences dedicated to this theme. The first of these took place in Tijuana (Mexico) in January 2002 and was titled *Migration and Religious Experience in the Context of Globalization*. A book under a similar title was compiled, documenting the leading contributions to this conference.[80] Of particular note is a chapter by Dianne Bergant.[81] In this study Bergant makes a clear argument for theology that emerges from the biblical text; her essay provides a good example of biblical theology in general and of migration theology in particular. She notes that, "[i]n some circles what is called

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[75] Ibid., 80.

[76] Ibid., 82.

[77] Ibid., 77.

[78] Ibid., 79.

[79] Ibid., 83.

[80] *Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization*, ed. Gioacchino Campese and Pietro Ciallella (Staten Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies, 2003), 7-9.

[81] Dianne Bergant, "Ruth: The Migrant Who Saved the People," in *Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization*, ed. Gioacchino Campese and Pietro Ciallella (Staten Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies, 2003), 49-61.

biblical theology is really a use of biblical passages as proof-texts to legitimate some current reality. This technique does not read the biblical material within its own literary or historical contexts and, consequently, does not accurately deal with the theological meanings that the text itself might yield."[82] Bergant provides an important critique for biblical theology, she observes, "[i]t is not enough to see lines of correspondence between the ancient culture and a present day one. Frequently these lines serve as elements within the story rather than issues of theology."[83] In the case of migration theology she adds, "contemporary migration, whether voluntary or forced, is a political reality rather than a religious one. Therefore, we must explain it politically and look for political solutions to problems that engender it…."[84] Bergant draws important conclusions for migration theology; reflecting on her exegesis of the book of Ruth, she observes, "[i]n the biblical tradition, the migrant status itself is not the issue. Rather, it is the vulnerability that this status engenders that holds theological possibility."[85] This is the case in Ruth, but also in the wider biblical story.

> When Israel proclaimed, 'My father was a wandering Aramean' (Deut 26:5), it was acknowledging that rootlessness was at the heart of its identity, and any security that it might gain would be given by a provident God. Even when the nation was established in the land, its migrant origins served to remind them that true stability is found only in God. Thus, the migrant is a metaphor of the true Israelite.[86]

Further to her insights from Ruth, she notes that the story "demonstrates that openness to and incorporation of the vulnerable migrant is the way to restoration or salvation…. That the vulnerable should be agents of salvation demonstrates that the glory of victory belongs to God alone…. The migrant Ruth is a metaphor of this theological tenet."[87] Bergant determines a sound basis to the pursuit of a biblical theology of migration, one that is faithful to the biblical text. This will be taken up as a principal theme in the first section of chapter three.

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[82] Ibid., 49.

[83] Ibid., 57.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., 58-59.

[86] Ibid., 59.

[87] Ibid., 60.

Daniel Groody

A leading proponent of migration theology is Daniel G. Groody. Migration theology is integral to Groody's own experience of faith and to his theological enquiry. Groody argues that migration theology makes a fundamental contribution to both systematic theology and to migration theory. What follows is a summary of Groody's migration theology that will contribute to a critique of migration theology in general.

Groody's theology, his method of study and his desired outcomes emerge from empathetic experience, particularly the experience of those who are marginalised and oppressed. In introducing his method of study Groody recalls a defining experience as a graduate student in theology: on discovering that on the other side of the wall of his basement room where he had slept there had been a homeless man sleeping also, physically only a foot-and-a-half away, he reflects, "[e]xistentially… we lived in two different worlds. My reality was a comfortable home, a warm bed and a life of the mind; his was distress and discomfort, a brick mattress and a life of the streets. That experience changed not only the way I thought about theology but also the way I began to do it."[88] "It became clear that my own theological reflection needed to move to the other side of the cognitive wall."[89] From this perspective theological questions arose for Groody as to the value of his own perspective of God and how this may be enhanced when understood through the eyes of those in need. These questions are affirmed for Groody in Christ's identification with the poor (Matt 25:31-46).

> I pondered what the world might look like from his side of the wall: how he thought about life, what he learned about people and, more to the point, if and how he understood God…. I wondered if my neighbour's social location gave him a better vantage point than my own from which to understand theological realities.
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> Gradually I started 'migrating' from the comfort of my room, library and ideas about God in search of insight among the vulnerable of the world, the living 'texts' of the poor and the challenge of the living God.[90]

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[88] Daniel G. Groody, "A Theology of Migration: A New Method for Understanding a God on the Move," *America*, 7 February 2011, 18.

[89] Daniel G. Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating the Path to Peace*, Theology in Global Perspective, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2006), 182.

[90] Groody, "A Theology of Migration," 18.

Evident in the above quotation is Groody's integrated approach to thinking about migration. Migration theology, for Groody, is much more than a subject within systematic theology or a branch of liberation theology, it is a method and way of thinking about God and the world, it penetrates process and purpose, it affects the enquirer and the subject, and it is a thoroughgoing practical theology that is nothing short of a way of life.

Groody engages a strong moral impetus in his theological enquiry. He is critical of the "inner wall" that is evident between head and heart in the theological endeavour of many Christians. He asserts, "theology is not simply about 'faith seeking understanding' (St. Anselm) but also about generating knowledge born of love…. Theological reflection is short-circuited when inner walls leave Christians… short of a life-giving message because of sterile intellectualism, lobotomized fundamentalism, obsessive rubricism, privatized pietism or frenetic activism."[91] For Groody, the moral prerogative of theological endeavour has a purposeful and pastoral outcome. "More than factual retrieval, brilliant concepts or propositional truths, theology is about an engagement of faith with life that heals and empowers as it seeks to discern the fingerprint of God in a common sojourn from creation to new creation."[92]

The moral foundation to Groody's theology is realised in his theological method. Groody describes himself as a "border theologian," engaging in what he calls:

> '[T]heological ethnography', which studies Christian faith experience among cultural groups. The method for this approach is shaped primarily by Christian spirituality, or following of Jesus, and Christian theology, a reflection on that experience within the social context of a faith that does justice. The method is rooted in an attempt to understand the gift and challenge of Christian faith, beginning with those who live with acute human suffering, like undocumented migrants or victims of human trafficking.[93]

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[91] Ibid., 19.

[92] Ibid., 20.

[93] Ibid., 18.

Groody understands his method to be grounded in the incarnation, in the belief "that God migrated to humanity so all of us in turn could migrate back to God."[94] For Groody, this theological foundation is grounded in a way of life rather than a social scientific discipline from which one may easily be detached. His theological method is strongly relational; it is a method that seeks constructive outcomes. Groody summarises his process of enquiry as:

> 1) Immersion in the world, especially into the life of the poor; 2) 'interfluence,' or the ways in which the lived experience of the Christian faith and the deposit of Christian tradition mutually influence each other; and 3) an interpretation of life that seeks to deepen our relationship with God and each other. This method is not just about retrieval and application, nor the gathering of new information for human formation. Rather it is a vision of life that leads to transformation and the construction of a new imagination.[95]

The commitment to a practical theology with purposeful outcomes leads Groody to adopt migration as an integrative theme. Noted above is the use of migration as a metaphor to Groody's own process of enquiry, "'migrating' from the comfort of my room… in search of insight among the vulnerable of the world… and the challenge of the living God;"[96] and the use of migration as a metaphor for the incarnation, "that God migrated to humanity so all of us in turn could migrate back to God."[97] This metaphorical use of migration is extensive in Groody's thought. For example migration is used to describe a person's inability to be compassionate across borders and therefore circumvent the process of pursuing wholeness, "[t]o limit compassion to the borders of one's nationality, one's family, or even one's self is a migration toward disintegration."[98] Migration is an integrative theme through which systematic theology can be pursued: "I argue… that immigration is not simply a sociological fact but also a theological event."[99] Migration is applied as a symbol of the spiritual life, "[t]o be

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[94] Ibid., 19.

[95] Ibid., 19.

[96] Ibid., 18.

[97] Ibid., 19. "The incarnation has much to say about a God who crosses borders in order to forge new relationships and the challenge of all human beings to do the same." Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 649.

[98] Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 667.

[99] Daniel G. Groody, "Fruit of the Vine and Work of Human Hands: Immigration and the Eucharist," *Worship* 80:5 (September 2006): 389.

human means being on the way to God…, moving forward in hope between the borders of Christ's first and second coming, between the present life and the life to come…."[100] Migration is used as a symbol of transformative spirituality, "[d]iscovering they are loved and accepted enables many migrants to risk themselves, to migrate not only physically but also emotionally and relationally, into the new territory of faith in God and the service of others."[101] Migration also serves as an integrative metaphor for the church:

> The image of the church as migrant… carries with it a social responsibility. In the migrant the church sees not only an image of itself but also discovers its mission of mercy… through which it becomes a sacrament for the world.
>
> In becoming a migrant, the church comes to realize that its mission will take shape on the borders of the world…. By journeying to the margins and placing itself in solidarity with those who are crucified in history, the church will not only be a gift to others but also become something new through the reception of the gift of others.[102]

Groody's use of migration as an integrative theme is both pervasive and pastoral.

Christ and his incarnation are central to Groody's migration theology: "[n]o aspect of a theology of migration is more fundamental, nor more challenging in its implications, than the incarnation."[103] Just as Christ's incarnation is understood in the light of the theme of migration, migration theology, in turn, is used to understand Christ: "[t]he immigrant poor see their own story in the Jesus story, and from their story we can also reread the Jesus story."[104] Migration theology applies the incarnation as a model for mission: "[t]he incarnation, as a border-crossing event, is a model of gratuitous self-giving through which God empties himself of everything but love, so that he can more fully identify with others, enter completely into their vulnerable condition, and

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[100] Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 665.

[101] Daniel G. Groody, "Globalizing Justice: The Contribution of Christian Spirituality," *International Review of Mission* 98:2 (November 2009): 269.

[102] Ibid., 271.

[103] Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 649.

[104] Daniel G. Groody, "Jesus and the Undocumented Immigrant: A Spiritual Geography of a Crucified People," *Theological Studies* 70 (2009): 312. "For many compelling reasons, numerous migrants and refugees reframe their own story in the light of Jesus' journey." Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 651.

accompany them in a profound act of divine-human solidarity."[105] The movement of human migration, Groody notes, is toward "an upward mobility and the greater realization of human dignity,"[106] in the mystery of the incarnation, however, is the paradoxical nature of the divine migration of downward mobility into a world that is poor and divided. This downward migration leads ultimately to the cross.[107] Like the integrated theme of migration in Groody's thought the theme of the incarnation is also pervasive and pastoral.

The central theme of the incarnation applies the cross and Jesus' crucifixion as a key area of identification with the poor: "[t]he cross is the ultimate expression of God's self-giving love, God's solidarity with those who suffer, and God's power at work amid human struggle and weakness."[108] Groody takes Jesus' crucifixion as something much more than a historical event and uses it as a symbol for unjust suffering in all ages and the suffering of migrants in particular:[109] "[t]he reality of the journey of the immigrant today can be interpreted precisely as a way of the cross;"[110] "[i]mmigrants today experience an economic crucifixion in their undocumented status, a cultural crucifixion in their displacement, and a social crucifixion in their separation from their families and loved ones, and, for the many who die, an actual crucifixion."[111] The idea of the crucified God and the crucified peoples is "a central dimension of a theology of migration and has tremendous implications for those who are forcibly displaced, especially for addressing the inner wounds that migrants and refugees experience."[112]

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[105] Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 652.

[106] Ibid., 650.

[107] Ibid., 650-651.

[108] Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 651.

[109] Groody, "Jesus and the Undocumented Immigrant," 309-311.

[110] Ibid., 311.

[111] 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*, Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia 53, ed. Lieven Boeve, Hans Geybels and Stijn Van den Bossche, (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Press, 2005), 371. See also, Groody, *Border of Death,* 32-33, 108-109.

[112] Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 651. The crucified people is a leading theme in liberation theology; Groody's use of this theme is a further example of the close association of migration theology with

Groody develops the notion of crucified peoples not only as a pastoral tool, providing comfort, but also as a way of expressing the great sacrifice many people make in migration, and also as a way of confronting the many injustices in global migration.[113] He asserts, "the injustice related to such crucifixion [the sacrifice of undocumented Mexican immigrants] necessitates challenging the disordered reality and policies that result in the death of so many innocent people." Again, the moral demands of this theology are pressed in no uncertain terms, "[p]ut another way, the idea that the undocumented immigrants dying in the deserts are part of the crucified people implies that, unless we act to alleviate their suffering, we are like those who stood by and watched Jesus die on the cross."[114] Evident here is a migration theology rooted in liberation empathetic theology that seeks practical outcomes.

Groody's theology founded in the incarnation and, in particular, Jesus' crucifixion leads to a pastoral use of the Eucharist.[115] Groody determines an "integral link between social justice and the Eucharist and in particular between the option for the poor and the Eucharist."[116] Groody identifies migration as one of the key themes of the biblical narrative, including the Passover and exodus story; the Passover narrative being, for Christians, one of the major foundations for Eucharist.[117] The Passover narrative is used as an affirming point of identification for migrants, providing a story of hope that encourages the migrant on their journey to a transformed life (both physical and spiritual):[118] "[t]he Passover narrative and the Paschal mystery are a comfort to those who suffer because they help them see their story in the biblical story."[119] The Eucharist is used as a tool for community solidarity and understanding, allowing the

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liberation theology. For an example in liberation theology see, Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994).

[113] Groody, "Jesus and the Undocumented Immigrant," 301-13.

[114] Ibid., 313.

[115] See, in particular, Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*, 53-56, 207-208, 212ff.

[116] Groody, "Fruit of the Vine," 387.

[117] Ibid., 389-390.

[118] Ibid., 391.

[119] Daniel G. Groody, "Dying to Live: The Undocumented Immigrant and the Paschal Mystery," *Concilium* (December 2008): 116.

worshiping community not only a deeper understanding of Christ and an opportunity to remember his sacrifice, it is also a means of deeper understanding of the migrant and their sacrifice; "[t]he moral demands of the immigrant invite us not only to remember the Passover narrative but to undergo a narrative Passover, which means learning to live out a different story by seeing Christ in the eyes of the immigrant and seeing the immigrant with the eyes of Christ."[120] This point of solidarity is worked out in a practical way through the unified and inclusive practice of worship, "[t]he liturgy of the Eucharist is a place where we seek to develop a community that transcends all borders, that sees in the eyes of the immigrant stranger a brother, a sister and a real presence of Christ."[121]

Groody is committed to the fulfilment of the mission of the church through a theology of migration. His understanding of the church's mission is "to proclaim Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world and the one through whom people find the fullness of life."[122] Although this is the mission of the church "in every time period," how the church "comprehends, articulates and implements this mission is something that must be discovered anew in every generation."[123] For the fulfilment of the church's mission the integrative theme of migration is applied:

> I will look at migration as a metaphor for a spirituality of transformation, one that orients a pilgrim people towards a homeward journey and awakens in us a social conscience. My argument is that spiritual transformation is about homecoming, which is the movement towards authenticity, where a life of peace grows from the rebuilding of our relationships with God, ourselves and others.[124]

The dynamic interchange between the following three elements is critical for Groody for authentic mission: one, the personal terrain of the human heart; two, the global terrain of human experience; three, the universal terrain of the gratuitous love of God in the heart of Christ.[125]

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[120] Ibid.

[121] Groody, "Fruit of the Vine," 402.

[122] Groody, "Globalizing Justice," 259.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid., 261.

[125] Ibid., 270.

Another prevailing theme, evident above, is transformative spirituality. Groody returns to the theme of spirituality frequently in his writing. He states, "[w]hile spirituality in general deals with what people most value, Christian spirituality involves living out what Jesus most valued,"[126] in defining Christian spirituality in particular: "the way a person, in community, experiences, understands, and enacts a relationship with God;"[127] and in reference to its scope, "spirituality draws on experience and it encompasses the entirety of one's life, including the political, the social, the economic, the cultural, and the many other dimensions of life that shape it."[128] Spirituality was a leading theme in Groody's doctoral studies and emerges as an integrative theme in his first book as he engages the central theme of *corazón*, or heart.[129] Ever looking for a practical and lived expression of theology Groody presses for the need of transformative spirituality.[130] This need for transformation becomes apparent the more the church participates in the mission of God: "[a]s [the church] waits for a new creation, the church walks in the world as a pilgrim people, seeking to transform not only others through a life of teaching, preaching and service but also to undergo a continual process of conversion that leads to its own transformation."[131] The theme of transformation is evident as Groody documents the pastoral outcomes of migration theology, highlighting formative programmes that provide for the needs of migrants, from the basics of food, shelter and clothing, through to the deeper needs of becoming fully human, and the needs of advocacy against human rights abuses. These programmes are discussed in terms of the way of the cross, transformation and connection to Christ.[132] Transformative

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[126] Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*, 240.

[127] Groody, *Border of Death,* 80.

[128] Daniel G. Groody, "'A Heart as Wide as the World': A Christian Spirituality of Nonviolence," in *Religion, Terrorism and Globalization*, ed. Karikottuchira K. Kuriakose (Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 2005) 217.

[129] Groody, *Border of Death*, 7.

[130] See, for example, Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*, 239ff.

[131] Groody, "Globalizing Justice," 260.

[132] Daniel G. Groody, "Migration and Theology: A Reflection on God's Reign for God's Poor," in *Encounters with The Word – Essays to Honour Aloysius Pieris*, ed. Robert Crusz (Sri Lanka: Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, 2004) 63.

spirituality is a helpful tool for Groody to apply his integrative theologies of migration and incarnation. "Integrative spirituality" is used as a lead heading for the discussion of pastoral outcomes in chapter three.

A further theme in Groody's theology is the notion of true humanity. The value of human life is a critical point of departure for migration theology: "[f]irst, a theology of migration crosses over the nonhuman-human divide and so brings out the dignity of the human person…."[133] The value of humanity, Groody argues, begins with the theological premise that all human beings are made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1.26). This premise is used as a basis for immigration reform. On reflecting on the contribution of Catholic social teaching Groody states, "immigration reform must begin with an understanding of what it means to be made in God's image and likeness…. It is the cornerstone of a just and humane society to see that [migrants] are not merely workers but people…."[134] Groody outlines what he understands to be a "liberating human anthropology," where human beings, "(1) find their realization as persons only in relation to God, (2) in the end are measured more by their inner endowments than by their material or financial assets, and (3) are fundamentally relational creatures who need each other in community."[135] Discovering ones true humanity is integral to the meaning of conversion in the migration experience, "[c]onversion is nothing less than a passage from a death-like, dehumanized existence in a foreign land to a new life of meaning, freedom, dignity, and belonging…. Conversion is the process of becoming a new creation."[136] The value of human life and what it means to be human is used by Groody as a foil to the socio-economic and political forces that dominate the issues of globalization and migration.[137] It is here that Groody sees a critical role for theology, a role that cannot be adequately filled by other

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[133] Groody, "A Theology of Migration," 20.

[134] Daniel G. Groody, "Building a Civilization of Love: Catholic Social Teaching and Immigration Reform," *Sojourners*, March 2010, 24.

[135] Daniel G. Groody, "Globalizing Solidarity: Christian Anthropology and the Challenge of Human Liberation," *Theological Studies* 69 (2008): 266.

[136] Groody, *Border of Death,* 109.

[137] For example, Groody, "Fruit of the Vine," 400; and Groody, "Globalizing Solidarity," 250-254.

disciplines. In discussing the ill-effects of globalization and, in particular, documenting the needs of the poor and the prevalence of poverty, Groody argues,

> Christian theology's principal task in the modern world is not to reject globalization but to humanize it, to make it more risk-averse to human costs than to financial costs, and above all to challenge people to become more interested in the human and spiritual assets of the global community than in the financial and material portfolio of its individual members.[138]

Groody's migration theology is founded in a number of Scripture passages and biblical themes. Frequently cited in Groody's work is the foundational passage in Matt 25:31-46. In this passage Groody reads a Scriptural mandate for Christian social action and a mandate for identifying the poor with Jesus. He notes, "[a]rguably no text in the New Testament better describes the social location and Christological importance of the immigrant reality than Matt 25:31-46."[139] Seeing Christ in the needs of the poor in general, and in the needs of immigrants in particular, highlights a redemptive value in the plight of those in need: "[s]een in this light, immigrants are not simply suffering people who depend on the charity of others, but people who manifest in their flesh the real presence of Christ…. Immigrants are not just passive recipients of the church's mission, but, in a mysterious way, active agents in the world's redemption."[140] Groody acknowledges the scholarly debate over the meaning of "the least of these" in Matt 25, but notes, "the parallels between Matt 25 and the plight of Mexican immigrants to the US today are striking."[141] He outlines a number of these parallels and considers the moral imperative of seeing Christ in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked and the sick.[142] The gospel narratives are instructive for Groody, through which the integrative themes of migration and incarnation are readily applied. In reflecting on the Good Samaritan story in Luke 10:25-37, Groody observes, "[i]n becoming neighbor to all in the incarnation… God redefines the borders between neighbors and opens up the

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[138] Groody, "Globalizing Solidarity," 267.

[139] Groody, "Jesus and the Undocumented Immigrant," 316.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Daniel G. Groody, "Crossing the Line: A Spiritual View of the US-Mexican Border," *The Way* 43:2 (April, 2004): 59.

[142] Ibid., 58-66.

possibility for new relationships."[143] The story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 is shown by Groody to have many parallels with the migration experience and as a story that again holds a moral imperative.[144] The creation account in Genesis and the migration stories of Israel are given considerable significance in Groody's thought. Groody looks for anchors in the Bible to position his theology.

The strong relational and moral basis to Groody's theology leads to an integrated concept of bridging divides. In one unique contribution to migration theology Groody draws together the needs of migrants and four theological precepts to present a foundation for a theology of migration. "Crossing the Divide"[145] is quoted in several places above; a brief summary will be offered here. In this article Groody begins with background information regarding migration in general and notes the dearth of theological approaches to migration. The body of the article outlines a means of examining the theological territory of migration, seeking to highlight the moral demands relating to displaced peoples. Of note is Groody's use of four theological imperatives: first, "*Imago Dei*: Crossing the problem-person divide," this theological concept acts as a "two edged sword" that affirms the worth of all people and may be utilised to critique the oppression of the poor.[146] Second, "*Verbum Dei*: Crossing the divine-human divide," the central motif of the incarnation is employed extensively to understand the nature of God, the call to mission and as a means of solidarity with migrants.[147] Third, "*Missio Dei*: Crossing the human-human divide," following lessons from the preceding ideas a mission imperative is introduced, understanding that "Jesus demonstrates that compassion requires a reading of the Law that gives primary consideration to meeting human needs."[148] Fourth, "*Visio Dei*: Crossing the country-kingdom divide," one's experience of God in Scripture creates a renewed vision for the

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[143] Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 652.

[144] Groody, "Crossing the Line," 62-64.

[145] Groody, "Crossing the Divide," 638-667.

[146] Ibid., 642-648.

[147] Ibid., 648-653.

[148] Ibid., 653-659, 654.

nature of God in community.[149] To conclude, Groody outlines three "ramifications of migration as a theological concept:"[150]

> First, a theology of migration is a way of speaking about the meaning of human life within the economy of creation and redemption…. The migrant gives expression to the transitory nature of existence….
>
> Second, a theology of migration is a way of speaking about the significance of the incarnation in light of the issues of contemporary society and the injustices of the current global economy…..
>
> Third, a theology of migration is a way of speaking about the mission of the church within the context of a disordered political economy. It seeks to foster human dignity in the poor and vulnerable, to challenge any structures and systems of society that divide and dehumanize, and to uplift all efforts to build a more just and humane world.[151]

The thoughtful engagement of these central themes of theology equips Groody to embark on a practical and empathetic theology of migration.

Critique of migration theology

The above outlines the primary themes and foundational principles of migration theology with a focus on the leading contributors to this discipline. To further establish the principles that chapters two and three will use a brief critique of migration theology will now be offered.

Migration theology has a considerable and positive inheritance from liberation theology. This connection is understated in literature on the subject and migration theology would benefit from clarification of its links with and departure from liberation theology. Several of the strongest traits in migration theology come directly from liberation theology: a preferential option for the poor; a theology from below that begins with context, engages critical reflection and utilises social analysis; an understanding that God is the God of the poor; and a commitment to compassionate theology that engenders hope and is action oriented.

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[149] Ibid., 659-664.

[150] Ibid., 665.

[151] Ibid., 665-666.

The emerging distinctives of migration theology is a needed area of study. Guerra identifies an important point of departure from liberation theology. His idea of migration theology facing the challenge of multiple identities and having a double belonging as it engages with the diverse needs of migrants and their transnational identity is a helpful clarification of migration theology as an independent discipline. Further reflection on these distinctives is required. For example, liberation theology focuses on the empowerment of local communities, primarily through "church base communities."[152] These are small groups (generally of 20-150 people), from a particular locality who share common needs and mobilise in social action. These base communities are fundamental to liberation theology, but are not always possible in a migration context. Due to geographic dislocation and isolation migrant individuals and groups may not be able to establish mutual support in this way. Other strategies for survival, support and action are needed for migrants that are distinct from the practices of liberation theology and that are particular to their unique context.

Typical amongst migration theologians and of Daniel Groody in particular, is the use of integrated themes and metaphorical ideas. This is most clearly seen in the extensive use of migration and incarnation as themes that bridge Scripture, theology, context and pastoral outcomes. These leading themes are, on the whole, helpful and engaging. However, there are risks in overuse. From a linguistic perspective the overuse of the migration idea, and other themes such as incarnation and crucifixion, runs the risk of losing its strength of meaning and losing impact where it could be most appropriately applied. The overuse of these themes could also lead to them being inappropriately applied: of note, Cruz provides an extended critique of the notion of crucified people, questioning the place of valorising suffering.[153] Furthermore, the use of migration

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[152] See, for example, Dominique Barbé, *Grace and Power: Base Communities and Nonviolence in Brazil* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), 88-106, cited in Dominique Barbé, "Church Based Communities," in *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Curt Cadorette, Marie Giblin, Marilyn J. Legge, and Mary Hembrow Snyder, trans. by John Pairman Brown (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 181-191.

[153] Cruz, *Pilgrims in the Wilderness*, 146-171. In this critique Cruz builds on Jürgen Moltmann's criticism of the crucified people theme in liberation theology: "[t]he power exercised and manifested by the [domestic help workers], particularly in their strategies of resistance, is transforming power and not the power mired in talks about victimization, suffering, the cross, the crucified God, and the crucified people. It is not the romanticized power that is supposed to come out of patiently and passively bearing

parallels from Scripture is rightly criticised by Bergant (above) as lacking depth of theological analysis with the biblical text. Again, a more judicious and consequently selective use of the migration metaphor, and other integrated themes, will sharpen the impact of these worthwhile ideas.

Migration theology will benefit from the development of a strong biblical theology. Bergant's critique is particularly important for migration theology. Her assertion that a lack of biblical analysis leads to a poor use of biblical texts points to a particular need in the theology of migration. Many people facing the demands of migration today have a Christian/ biblical heritage. Many migrants look for support from churches and seek to interpret their experience from a Christian perspective. Carlos Mesters argues for a hermeneutical use of Scripture. Amongst low socio-economic church base communities in Brazil, he observes that when Scripture fails to engage the community context and the historical reality of that community, then that community "has no future and will eventually die."[154] He further argues that there is a failure in the use of Scripture when it is overly academic, or lacks pastoral sensitivity, or the teaching of Scripture fails to equip the community to read and interpret Scripture for themselves.[155] These arguments present the need for the theology of migration to develop a biblical theology that is consistent with the theological message of the bible, that impacts the social reality of migrants, and that equips migrants to read and interpret for themselves. To date there is little evidence of the development of a biblical theology amongst the leading contributors of migration theology: for example, Groody's work is typified by the use of a few leading biblical texts and tends to draw on traditional/ historical theologies; Cruz's work is typified by the use of contemporary theological models; neither present

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with the economic, political, and personal 'limitations' of our situation and cultivating 'the strength that is made perfect in weakness' or the 'energy' that supposedly sustains (but actually chains) people in their weakness as Moltmann states and portrays in Power of the Powerless." Ibid., 163.

[154] Carlos Mesters, "The Use of the Bible in Christian Communities of the Common People," in *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, ed. Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1981), 197-210, cited in Carlos Mesters, "The Use of the Bible in Christian Communities of the Common People," in *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Curt Cadorette, Marie Giblin, Marilyn J. Legge, and Mary Hembrow Snyder, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 45.

[155] Mesters, "The Use of the Bible," 45-49.

working examples of biblical theology. As Groody notes, "[f]ormulating theological concepts that do justice to the Christological spirituality of these immigrants is a complicated process;"[156] a thoroughgoing biblical theology will make a positive contribution to this process.

Chapter three makes a direct response to this argument for a biblical theology in a migration situation, engaging the book of Jeremiah. In this chapter I outline the rationale for choosing Jeremiah; within the obvious migration parallels in the Jeremiah story, Jeremiah holds considerable potential, as yet undeveloped amongst migration theologians, for a biblical theology of migration. The biblical themes and theological ideas that emerge from the study of Jeremiah contribute to the theological process that culminates in pastoral outcomes.

Migration theology is dominated by people in the Catholic tradition. The work of Catholic theologians and the context of Catholic faith communities make up the vast majority of theological enquiry in a migration context. Furthermore, Catholic social teaching has had a critical influence in the formation of migration theology. The development of migration theology as a distinct discipline is greatly indebted to the contribution of the Catholic tradition. Migration theology is in its infancy and will benefit from the input of other Christian traditions. Moreover, many forced migrants have a Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim or other faith background. Comparing and contrasting the varied experiences, influences and critiques from Christian and other faith backgrounds will contribute to a robust process of development for migration theology.

The use of the social sciences in migration theology is an area requiring further reflection. Amongst liberation and migration theologians there is agreement in the importance of social science to inform theology, but little attempt to provide any critical analysis on how to integrate the insights of sociology into the values and processes of theological enquiry. In particular the tools of ethnography and the skills of interpreting qualitative data have a lot to offer theology in the pursuit of pastoral outcomes.

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[156] Groody, "Jesus and the Undocumented Immigrant," 299.

Analysing the constructive integration of ethnography in the process of theological enquiry will make a valuable contribution in the maturation of the theology of migration.

Migration theology has considerable potential to impact migration theory and to contribute meaningfully toward the needs of migrants and their home and host communities. The moral impetus that migration theology engenders, with its notion of the value of all human beings and its commitment to solidarity with the poor, is a powerful tool for change in churches, migrant communities and toward social justice. Migration theology is an integrated discipline: integrating thought and practice; integrating the insights of other disciplines; and integrating theological and Scriptural themes to develop a practical theology of compassionate action with a preferential option for the poor. Highlighting the important place of religion and the way in which many migrants practise their faith in their migration experience is a particular feature of migration theology. The theology of migration promotes interdependence between host and migrant communities: migration theology looks to migrants for the valuable contribution they are able to make to society in general, to the church and religious practices and to what the migration experience can teach us about the bible, helping to shape a theology of migration that strengthens the growth of true humanity for all people.

Chapter Two: Context

Chapter two begins the case study component of this thesis. This chapter is an examination of the subjective and general context of the Kachin Christian Church in Porirua [KC[1]]. The chapter begins by outlining the process of theological enquiry that will be used throughout chapters two and three. The subjective context of the KC will be studied focusing on their faith, religious practices and factors relating to their refugee and resettlement experience. The objective in this section reflects what Daniel Groody states, "[p]utting people's personal and collective experience of God into written words is one of the great challenges of theology…."[2] The second part of chapter two discusses the general contextual issues that have influenced the KC prior to their refugee and resettlement experiences. The general context covers subjects that relate broadly to the Kachin people of Northern Burma. The objective here is what Ana María Díaz-Stevens argues is of primary concern, "an analysis of the social, cultural, economic, and political conditions in the so-called sending society that push the people to seek a new environment."[3]

Chapters two and three follow a process of theological enquiry that seeks to assert the principles of migration theology discussed in chapter one. An empathetic and practical theology is pursued that seeks solidarity with the poor. Other academic disciplines, such as ethnography and history, are integrated for the purpose of gaining greater understanding of the migrant community and determining pastoral outcomes. Biblical themes and theological ideas are discussed in the pursuit of a robust biblical theology of migration. In answering the thesis question this process seeks to demonstrate the

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[1] "KC" will be used throughout as an abbreviation for the Kachin Christian Church in Porirua, New Zealand. This abbreviation does not denote Kachin people or people from Burma in general.

[2] Daniel G. Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating the Path to Peace*, Theology in Global Perspective, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2006), xx.

[3] Ana María Díaz-Stevens, "Colonization versus Immigration in the Integration and Identification of Hispanics in the United States," in *Religion and Immigration: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Experiences in the United States*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Jane I Smith and John L. Esposito (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2003), 61.

important role of theology in a migration situation and what place migration theology has in a context like New Zealand.

The study of contextual factors in chapter two leads to significant conclusions for the purposes of this study. In the examination of the subjective context it becomes clear that the KC maintains a devout Christian spirituality in New Zealand. Their spirituality has a number of defining characteristics: prayer is their leading spiritual discipline and the mainstay of their faith; the Kachin and Burmese[4] languages and culture are fundamental in their spirituality and community life; freedom in faith and life is strongly influential in their aspirations and practices. A longing for their children's spiritual and educational wellbeing emerges as a symbol and focus of these defining characteristics. The study of the general context, such as geopolitical issues in Burma, demonstrates that the Kachin are characterised by a formidable independence. The final section discusses the influence of conflict, poverty and oppression. This chapter concludes that the KC can be described as carrying the "burden of freedom." This expression is used to sum up the contextual study. The burden of freedom experienced by the KC encapsulates the influence of their past experiences and the bearing of these experiences in their resettlement. The freedom of their New Zealand context affords many opportunities, in worship and other spiritual disciplines, in education and employment, in celebration and the freedom to now have hope for the future: the KC engage these freedoms with considerable depth of emotion, grieving for opportunities lost in past oppression, grieving for family members who do not have these freedoms, a

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[4] Like the terms Burma and Myanmar (see chapter one, footnote one) the names for the people groups of Burma, such as Kachin and Burman, is problematic. For the purposes of this thesis I note the following. "Kachin" refers to the people of or from Kachin State. Kachin State is made up of six main ethnic groups, the majority group being Jinghpaw. There is no "Kachin" language *per se*; rather, the languages of the various tribal groups are spoken; Jinghpaw is the most common language and predominates in the city areas. "Burman" refers to the majority people group of Burma; the term Burman is the most common in the literature on Burma; Bama (or Bamar), however, is a colloquial alternative. "Burmese" is used in this thesis to refer to the language originating with the Burman people group, also spoken in some (but not all) ethnic minority areas. Burmese is not a term that adequately refers to all people within the borders of Burma. In this regard Bertil Lintner notes, "there is no term in any language that covers both the Burmans and the minority peoples, as no such entity ever existed before the arrival of the British in the nineteenth century. Burma, as we know it with its present boundaries, is a colonial creation rife with internal contradictions and divisions." Bertil Lintner, *Burma in Revolt: Opium and Insurgency Since 1948* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1994), 41.

feeling of great longing for their children to be raised in faith and succeed in education and a longing to step up into the fullness of life in New Zealand, learning English and gaining employment. The freedoms of life in New Zealand are, on the one hand, celebrated; however, the weight of responsibility of these freedoms is also experienced as a burden. This burden of freedom is symbolised in and focused on their children and prayer is the primary spiritual tool in which they carry and express this burden. These conclusions form the basis for the theological discussion and pastoral outcomes of chapter three.

Process of enquiry

Jorge Castillo Guerra outlines a suggested process of enquiry for migration theology. His desire is to provide a methodological systematization of the values and objectives of migration theology. The following four step process follows Guerra's process in summary and form.[5]

First: the reality of migration. The discovery of the migrants' experience becomes the core material that gives meaning to the following analytical steps. This first step seeks an understanding of the migrants' faith, hope and love, and their practical experience of God; it seeks to understand some of their struggles and suffering. Step one is the sincere pursuit of dialogue and understanding, it is a commitment to solidarity and to forming community. This first step is clearly evident in Groody's method of inquiry[6] where precedence is given to empathetic experience and incarnation. Peter C. Phan also affirms the need of this kind of analysis. Reflecting on the needs associated with the first two steps in this process Phan observes, "[i]n addition to socio-political analysis,

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[5] Jorge E. Castillo Guerra, "A Theology of Migration: Toward an Intercultural Methodology," in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*, ed. Daniel Groody and Gioacchino Campese (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 260-262, with reference to 243-270.

[6] See chapter one.

intercultural theology must… dig deep into the humus of the immigrants' lives to find resources for their reflection."[7]

Second: interdisciplinary sources. Depending on the personal experience of a particular migrant community, that is determined in step one, a number of sources may be drawn from to contribute to a theology of migration. Migration theologians, to a greater or lesser degree, gather empirical data from sources such as political and social science, anthropology and history. Faith communities, local and central governmental agencies and human rights groups may also be sources that contribute at this point of enquiry. The goal of step two is to engage a "scientific and critical reading of the contextual reality of the migrants."[8]

Steps one and two are an ethnographically informed report on the KC. Ethnographic techniques such as participant observation, research, interviews and questionnaires are used. Analysis tools such as the recording of patterns in behaviour and comments, and various approaches to "triangulation"[9] are utilised to form conclusions and test ideas. Both the subjective and general contextual observations inform the ethnographic process: "[a] study becomes ethnographic when the fieldworker is careful to connect the facts that s/he observes with specific features of the *backdrop* against which these facts occur, which are linked to historical and cultural contingencies."[10]

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[7] Peter C. Phan, "The Experience of Migration in the United States as a Source of Intercultural Theology," in *Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization*, ed. Gioacchino Campese and Pietro Ciallella (Staten Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies, 2003), 161.

[8] Guerra, "A Theology of Migration," 261.

[9] "The term 'triangulation' derives from a loose analogy with navigation and surveying. For someone wanting to locate their position on a map, a single landmark can only provide the information that they are situated somewhere along a line in a particular direction from that landmark. With two landmarks, however, exact position can be pinpointed by taking bearings on both…. In social research, if we rely on a single piece of data there is the danger that undetected error in our inferences may render our analysis incorrect. If, on the other hand, diverse kinds of data lead to the same conclusion, we can be a little more confident in that conclusion." Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 183.

[10] Isabelle Baszanger and Nicolas Dodier, "Ethnography: Relating the Part to the Whole," in *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, 2nd ed. ed. David Silverman (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 12.

Third: theological systematization. Drawing on the information from steps one and two this third step engages theological sources that will contribute to the outcomes in step four. Using the sources of bible, traditions of the places of origin and of the host country, and theologies and experiences of the migrant community and other communities a theoretical framework emerges that integrates experience, faith and relationship that "prepares itself to take the next step, where it directs and fosters intercultural practices."[11] It is in this stage that a theology of migration is able to make a critical contribution to the issue of migration as the empathetic theologies of incarnation, humanity, hope, transformation and community are engaged to equip and strengthen migrant communities, and to provide a basis for human rights advocacy.

Four: practical theology. Migration theology is practically driven. The contextual and empathetic theology that forms in the first three steps now seeks "to empower economic, social, cultural, political, and religious rootedness."[12] This commitment "has to be accompanied by the task of humanization of the societies of destination, so that they are hospitable societies, facilitating full citizenship for the migrants."[13] These responses necessarily take many forms: it may be primarily in the spiritual transformation of the enquirer; responses may relate to faith and other community practices concerned with hospitality, spiritual growth and worship; practical endeavour may be focussed toward human rights advocacy at local or national levels; initiatives may arise or be supported that contribute to the presenting needs of migrant communities. Guerra sums this up as the pursuit of a society of *convivencia*, "the creation of common and harmonic spaces that make true encounter between human beings possible."[14] This fourth and final step culminates the theological process in answer to the thesis question, determining pastoral outcomes for the KC.

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[11] Guerra, "A Theology of Migration" 261-262.

[12] Ibid., 262.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 265 fn2.

Guerra's method can be summarised further into two distinct areas: context, both the subjective and general context relating to a migrant community; and theology, in particular the engagement of theological themes for practical outcomes. Chapters two and three follow this process of enquiry.

Subjective Context: Kachin Christian Church, Porirua

This section of chapter two, examining the subjective context of the KC, will first outline the case study community and the process of ethnographic study, and will then offer an interpretive summary of the key findings. Conclusions will be drawn that will provide the basis for discussion in chapter three.

Background

The KC is a Christian community made up of approximately thirty adults and twenty children. The adults of this community are made up of former refugees from Burma. Only three adults are aged over fifty (and are a part of wider family groups); approximately two thirds of the children are of pre-school age, most of them born in New Zealand in the last four years; only four are between the ages of eighteen and twenty five (and are single); the majority of the adults are aged twenty five to forty (and are married). There are both diverse and related aspects to their cultural background. All adults were born in Burma. Most adults are from Kachin State, Burma; a small number of the adults are from other states and relate to this community through their spouse or through friendship ties. The Burmese language is common to most of the adults, this however, is a second language for many; most adults were raised speaking Jinghpaw or one of the other six tribal languages that are unique to Kachin State and its border regions as their first language, or, for a small number in the community, their first language was another minority tribal language; most adults have competency in at least three languages (some speak six or seven languages with some degree of competency). The cultural origins (either the six tribal groups of Kachin State, or other region) have important significance for the community; for example, in maintaining their language at home and wearing their national/ tribal dress at special occasions. All adults have arrived in New Zealand in the last six months to five years. As a part of a

Refugee Services initiative these families have been located in one of two neighbouring suburbs in Porirua New Zealand.[15] Although those who have been in New Zealand the longest are noticeable for their ability in speaking English and in the completion of education and/ or in obtaining work, all adults in the community live in Housing New Zealand houses and all maintain a similar standard of living condition in terms of house furnishings, clothing and car. Christian faith is a uniting feature of the community, although two are Buddhist; most have been raised in a Christian family, and of those most were raised in a Christian home of the Baptist denomination (with a small number from Catholic homes).

My relationship with the KC began in the beginning of 2010. Members of the KC began attending the church of which I was the senior pastor with the outlook of joining this church and using its premises. I have had a pastoral relationship with the community since that time. In the middle of 2010 the Kachin Christian Church was formally welcomed into this Porirua Baptist church, most taking up formal membership after a process of membership instruction. My pastoral role has included participation in community events (Kachin church services, family and cultural events), pastoral visiting, leadership counsel and biblical teaching. About three quarters of the community attend the Sunday morning English speaking service with varying degrees of regularity. My role as senior pastor finished at the beginning of 2011. An informal pastoral role has continued since that time, and in particular, a continuing relationship through the undertaking of this project (throughout 2011).

I note the issues associated with being a researcher with a previous relationship with the case study group. This has both positive and negative potentialities. Negatively, respondents may answer questions in line with what they think I, as a pastor, would expect to hear, or out of a desire to impress or show favour; all of which may distract from a more honest or full answer. To combat these possible outcomes I employed a

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[15] To my knowledge, no other Kachin have been settled to other suburbs in Wellington. There is a diversely spread settlement of Kachin in Auckland. The Kachin Christian Church in Porirua has regular contact with the Kachin Christian Church in Auckland.

number of verbal cues during the interviews, for example "there is no right or wrong answer." Significant positive aspects are apparent in my relationship with the KC. David M. Fetterman discusses these issues stating that "[w]alking into a community cold can have a chilling effect on ethnographic research. Community members may not be interested in the individual ethnographer or in the work."[16] Fetterman notes the importance of trust as a researcher enters a community and of maintaining and building that trust with all respondents throughout the period of research: "[p]eople often accord ethnographers the same level of trust that they give to priests, rabbis, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, doctors, and lawyers. The ethnographer must guard this trust, for better or worse, like a treasure."[17] Thus, having a pre-existing trust relationship with the community can have a positive impact on the research process. Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson observe that the presence of the researcher will always have some effect on the actions of the case study group; being aware of one's presence and managing one's influence sensitively is the key to a profitable ethnographic process: "[i]t is now a central tenet of the sociological literature that people seek to manage impressions of themselves and of settings and groups with which they are associated."[18] Combined with the migration theologian's desire to have an incarnational presence in the community my pre-existing pastoral relationship makes an important contribution.

Motivation for this project came through my observations of the Kachin community. Devout faith throughout their refugee and resettlement experience was a noticeable trait of this community, together with their desire to sustain a strong faith community in the future. From a pastoral leadership perspective these two observations – long-term faith through demanding experiences and the high value of faith community life – raise many pastoral and theological questions. This thesis seeks to articulate these questions, through the thesis topic and enquiry process, and to formulate responses that will provide pastoral support.

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[16] Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step-by-Step*, 36.

[17] Ibid., 146.

[18] Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 177.

Ethnographic study process

The case study analysis went as follows. Informal discussions with community leaders led to their agreement to participate, in principle. After acquiring ethical approval from the University[19] I introduced the questionnaire and interview process at a community meeting. Interviews were scheduled. The first round of interviews, a total of nine, were conducted over the duration of one month, with twenty six respondents, in interview groups ranging from one to six (most interviews were of two - four people), interview times ranged from one and a half to two and a half hours. Obtaining interviews with twenty six respondents of the approximately thirty adults who make up this community achieved a representative sample. Attending corporate gatherings through the research period were important data gathering occasions. These events included KC church services, children's birthday celebrations, meetings of ethnic leaders from Burma and a political demonstration.

After the first round of interviews was completed a period of analysis was undertaken, from which tentative conclusions were drawn. These conclusions were then tested in a second round of interviews with select members of the community. In the ethnographic process these people were chosen as key person informants, that is, people identified as having critical insight and/ or special information; the interviews acted as a method of triangulation in which conclusions could be tested. Six interviews with 11 people were completed. The discussion below discusses the findings of the process in general; particular reference to the second round of interviews is included as necessary.

Language ability was a leading issue in data gathering and analysis. Only a small number of the KC could be described as having good conversational English. However, most have enough English to communicate adequately. Interview groups were important for communication: matching a capable English speaker with those of lesser ability in English was a useful tool in conveying the questionnaire and interview questions. The written and spoken English of the KC has a limited vocabulary and

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[19] The research was approved by the Department of Theology and Religious Studies ethics committee and conducted in accordance with the University of Otago Code of Ethical Conduct.

frequently uses incomplete sentences and incorrect grammar. This proved difficult when conveying meaning in presenting their responses. Where direct quotes are used below they maintain the original format;[20] quotations are edited only when this helps with accuracy of meaning. During the interviews I regularly read back to the respondents the notes I had been taking seeking their endorsement or correction and sometimes eliciting further response.

I note the risks in using a group interview format: respondents may not be willing to share due to the presence of others, and/ or of respondents answering questions influenced by others, and/ or of varying interpretations of questions from different English speakers. However, in observing and contrasting the data gathered in each group setting, I note the following: respondents in a given interview frequently gave different responses, showing a willingness to give their own opinion; consistency in responses from one group to the next showed a high degree of congruence in understanding the meaning of questions; and groups tended to be made up of people with whom there was a high degree of trust (with spouse, family members or close friends), with freedom of discussion and openness of opinion showing that the associated risks of the group interview format were minimal. Sue Wilkinson argues for a positive view of focus group research, arguing that groups enhance, rather than inhibit, qualitative research; these positive factors were common in the group interviews with the KC.

> [F]ocus groups are more 'naturalistic' than interviews (i.e. closer to everyday conversation), in that they typically include a range of communicative processes – such as storytelling, joking, arguing, boasting, teasing, persuasion, challenge, and disagreement…. There is a common misconception that people will be inhibited about revealing intimate details in the context of a group discussion. In fact, focus groups are well suited to exploring 'sensitive' topics…. In the context of agreement and support, one or more focus group members may enthusiastically extend, elaborate, or embroider an initially sketchy account….[21]

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[20] All quotations from KC members were taken during the research period. For the purposes of confidentiality their names are withdrawn.

[21] Sue Wilkinson, "Focus Group Research," in *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, 2nd ed. ed. David Silverman (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 180.

The process of data gathering included both closed and open questioning techniques. A questionnaire of twenty seven questions was issued to community members prior to scheduling interviews. This questionnaire included twenty one closed questions, most in a multi choice format. For example:

> For Kachin children born in New Zealand what is the most important thing for them to learn as they grow up? (Circle the one statement that you think is most important.)
> - To learn good English
> - To gain skills in order to get a good job
> - To learn to be kind to others
> - To know God and follow the Bible
> - To learn to be a good husband or wife
> - Other (please clarify)

These questions were productive in the analysis process, providing hard data, and the range of questions provided numerous opportunities to compare and contrast the responses given. A small number of open questions were included in the questionnaire. For example: Have you ever been angry with God? If yes, what caused you to be angry? These questions elicited a range of responses and discussion opportunities that allowed the respondents to articulate various faith and church/ religious experiences. During the interview process an open questioning technique was used for the purposes of gaining clarification of meaning and for drawing more information.

Two community members functioned as a control in the interpretation process. Most of the KC have been brought up in Christian families in communities that are largely Christian. One respondent had a Buddhist upbringing in a Buddhist community (he converted to Christianity as a refugee in Malaysia). Another respondent was brought up with a strong Catholic tradition (this person continues her Catholic commitment together with her commitment to the KC). The respondent with the Buddhist upbringing gave unique responses to a number of questions. For example, in response to "Which of the following statements best describes the bible?" he was the only person to choose "the bible is a book of rules." Overall, this question was answered overwhelmingly in favour of "the bible tells us about God." In response to the question "In your Kachin Church now which of the following best describes the reason why people go to church?" he was the only person to state "because they are expected to." Other responses to this question were overwhelmingly in favour of "to pray and to

praise God." He was also the only respondent to choose "to serve others" in response to the question "In your opinion which of the following is most important for children to learn?," all other respondents chose either "to read the bible and learn bible verses," or "to live good lives." There were also four other questions which he answered the same with only a minority of other respondents. Similarly, but not to the same degree, the person with a Catholic upbringing approached some of the questions differently. These observations serve as a means of ethnographic triangulation, pointing to a number of conclusions: they suggest that respondents were able to approach the questions from their own worldview; they demonstrate that the questions were not universally predictable; and, consequently, those questions answered overwhelmingly in favour of one category point to a dominant value of the KC.

The questionnaire focused on issues relating to personal faith. Included in the questionnaire was a table that asked the respondents to name the frequency in which they have participated in spiritual disciplines, privately and corporately, through three keys periods in their life: in Burma; in their refugee experience (all respondents spent months or (more frequently) years in Thailand and/ or Malaysia); and now in New Zealand. These spiritual disciplines included bible study, prayer, fasting, church service attendance, communion (Eucharist), evangelism and service to others. This table provided data on the changes to religious practices through their refugee and resettlement experience, and provided opportunity to reflect on the significance of these changes. Further to the responses in this table were questions that explored the respondents' experience and values relating to spiritual disciplines, such as church service attendance, believer's baptism and prayer. A number of questions asked the respondents to offer their view on priorities for themselves, for Christians from Burma settling in New Zealand, for Christians in general and for Kachin children being raised in New Zealand. The answers to these questions revealed a number of key values that are shared by the community. Some of these questions were confined to purely religious categories (such as personal holiness, understanding the bible and sharing their faith), other questions provided an opportunity to reflect on a combination of general and religious priorities (such as serving others, gaining job skills, learning English and understanding the bible). A number of questions probed the respondents' perspectives

on God and Jesus, their view of the bible and the existence of evil. The responses to these questions have allowed an emerging understanding of the community's view on some of the classical themes in systematic theology. The times of open questioning often allowed further reflection on the questions asked; examples from their various experiences were frequently offered. Listening to these stories was amongst the most productive and personally rewarding times in the questionnaire and interview process.

In the second round of interviews nine statements were given in which respondents were asked to agree or disagree, giving their reasons for each: for example, "Times of hardship make God seem distant;" "It's okay to be angry with God." These statements focused on areas that were deemed significant in the first period of analysis. The interview concluded with a brief set of questions that allowed respondents to elaborate on areas in which more information was needed, such as comparing and contrasting their family celebrations in New Zealand with their past practices in Burma.

The objective of the questionnaire and interview process was to provide a means for achieving step one, outlined above. More than simply data gathering these interviews allowed points of connection in which sincere dialogue could begin and trust could continue to be built. The process of enquiry sought to achieve an element of solidarity with the migrant community. The data gathering and analysis was a listening process that sought "to analyze and describe the real-life situation"[22] of those in a migration situation. More specifically, the questions were formulated to gain responses on this community's faith and experience of God, their religious practices and the significance of these for their on-going wellbeing in their resettlement experience.

Ethnographic study: Interpretive summary

The KC can be described as having a devout and confessing Christian faith. The image of God and Jesus that the KC relates to the most is "saviour." Jesus as saviour rates highly for the KC in contrast to Jesus as prophet, suffering servant, priest, king or

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[22] As quoted in the introduction to this thesis. Christine Lienemann-Perrin, "Theological Stimuli from the Migrant Churches," *The Ecumenical Review* 61:4 (December, 2009): 382.

teacher. Jesus is central to their faith and in particular Jesus as portrayed in the four Gospels. The Gospels rate as the section of the bible the KC "most enjoy reading" and individuals offered comments such as "Jesus is the most important" and "Jesus is first" when asked to rate varying priorities and commitments. Communion is among the spiritual disciplines practised with the highest degree of frequency, both in Burma and in New Zealand. "Bible study" and "understanding the Bible" rate very highly for the KC. Bible teaching is the second most important aspect of their participation in the KC church services (with prayer being the most important). One of the most telling questions (cited above) asked respondents to rate the most important for children to learn out of six options; five options were not directly religious in nature (for example, to learn good English); the KC overwhelmingly chose "to know God and follow the bible" as the most important for Kachin children to learn in New Zealand.

Although understanding the bible is very important for the KC they do not see this as an end in itself; an active faith, in varying expressions, rates very highly. Two questions asked the respondents what is "most important" for them personally in the coming twelve months and for Christians in general. In these questions "to share my faith with my family and friends," "to tell other people what God has done in Jesus Christ" and "to live a holy life" all rated much higher than "to understand the Bible." "To serve others" and "to help people in need" also rated slightly higher in these two questions. The KC has a faith that is both confessing and action focussed; their spirituality balances the importance of religious practices with a faith realised in daily action.

The KC can be described as being spiritually oriented; their faith is far from nominal or passive. Being an active member of a church community is rated by the KC as "very important" for Christians from Burma arriving in New Zealand. The KC services that I observed included a very high degree of participation, with around two thirds of adult attenders taking part in any given service. Participation included administrative tasks, service leading, group songs, solo items, bible reading, preaching, prayer and running the children's programme. Many of these tasks required considerable preparation prior to the service, with members of the KC often meeting throughout the week to prepare. When asked to reflect on why people attended church in Burma and why people attend

the KC services now, "because they are expected to" hardly featured at all, with responses overwhelmingly in favour of "to pray and to praise God"[23] for both the Burma and New Zealand contexts. One respondent revealed the high value of a religiously oriented life by rating their church experience in Burma as "more important" than in New Zealand, noting that without the religious instruction received as a child they would not have an adult faith today.

The majority of respondents described their participation in the KC community as "more important" than their church community in Burma. To a lesser degree participation in the KC was also seen as "more important" than their church experience in Malaysia or Thailand. A number of reasons were given for this. Language and culture were often cited when asked why the KC was more important. Responses like "this is the place we speak our language" were typical. Similarly, a desire for their children to be in environments where their native language is spoken and where the Christian faith is taught was a reason cited by several respondents. Many in the KC have become parents for the first time since leaving Burma; concern for their children's faith and language bringing a heightened importance to their involvement in the faith community. A few respondents linked the importance of faith and language for their children with having hope for the future, again adding to their commitment to the KC.

Shared language and culture is very significant for members of the KC, providing a deep sense of kinship within the community. Three respondents spoke of the absence of immediate family, "I am too far from my parents, and [at church here] people speak my own language;" with the KC becoming a surrogate family for them, "in Burma, [the church] is not really important, here it is most important, here [we have] no relatives, here the church is like our family;" "we need each other every Sunday, very important." One respondent observed that "here [in New Zealand] there are so many cultures;" for this person the KC is a cultural oasis. The Kachin community in Porirua is small and most have had a Christian upbringing. The KC and its associated activities is the

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[23] Other categories in these two questions were, "because they want to learn more about the Bible," "so their children can go to Sunday School," "to meet with the church community" and "other."

primary means in which Kachin languages and culture are shared, thus making a very strong tie between language, culture and faith. Language and culture as a key factor in the religious practices and personal spirituality of the KC strongly reflects the conclusions drawn in transnational studies of migrant churches in North America.

Further reasons given for the KC community being more important than previous church experiences concern a greater degree of liberty in both faith and life. Several respondents described their church life in Burma as being formal, where church attendance was the expected norm in their community. Church services were described as traditional; with hymn singing, set orders of worship and pastor led services being typical. In contrast the KC services are characterised by lay participation and up-tempo songs. Services follow a similar pattern but with a degree of variance. The feeling is relaxed and informal. These contrasting characteristics have engendered a higher level of interest and commitment. Even amongst those whose church experience in Burma was in churches with modern music and more participation, the level of participation and informality in the KC was noted as a valued characteristic. Of note, those who had modern music and higher levels of participation in Burma observed that this was a recent and valued innovation, something they wanted to maintain and build on in New Zealand.

Oppressive refugee experiences in Thailand and Malaysia have had a strong influence on church commitment in New Zealand. Stories of oppressive conditions in Burma and Thailand/ Malaysia were common in the interviews. These stories were related to private and corporate spirituality and in particular to the freedom now experienced in worship: "[i]n Malaysia we are not able to go to church: we are scared of the police and it feels like a jail; when we come to New Zealand, we can go to church, it feels like winning the lotto."[24]

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[24] This quotation was difficult to put together due to the language ability of the person speaking. This response was given in the largest group setting, an interview with six people; the translation of this quote was a fun moment with most of the group participating in getting the English correct; there was strong agreement amongst the group toward the sentiment it expresses.

The oppressive environments overseas have been significant learning experiences for the KC. A few respondents noted that church commitment was more important in Malaysia than in New Zealand. These people spoke of strong church support in difficult times: "[the church community was] more important in Malaysia, church helped people who didn't have job or understand language." The church community in Malaysia and Thailand had a strong social function. Respondents frequently talked about the help people received through the church, with gaining employment, knowledge of United Nations policy and procedures for refugees, help with food, clothing and language. For others the fear of going to church and being caught by the authorities severely curtailed church involvement and any associated benefits. One respondent said he kept quiet about his needs, not seeking support from the church because "everyone had great need." It is reasonable to conclude that these experiences, both of strong community in Malaysia and of restrictive and oppressive environments, have been formative for the personal spirituality and the corporate faith practices on the KC.

One insight in particular reveals the deep spiritual concern of the KC.

> [The KC is] more important… here we have all the food we want… we have money come in our bank account… we have no worry…. When we were in Malaysia and Burma it is hard, and we pray and pray, we need God…. Here there is danger, because we don't have worry, we could lose God. Church is more important here, so we don't lose God.

> Here, we do not need to worry about police, we don't have any worry, there is a danger we could forget about God.

Clearly evident in these statements, from two individuals, is the influential connection between the refugee and resettlement experiences of the KC and their commitment to their faith community. The inference is that the oppressive contexts of Burma, Malaysia and Thailand have stimulated commitment to God and to the church community. Most apparent in these quotations is an associated fear that in the ease of life in New Zealand commitment to God could wane. Commitment to the church community is given as the antidote to forgetting God in a prosperous and safe environment.

Liberty in faith and life is, therefore, a critical element in the faith practices of the KC. Liberty in religious expression through innovations in lay participation, informality and music; freedom in being able to attend church in New Zealand without fear of oppression; and concern over the negative spiritual effects of a free life in New Zealand, a life without fear and want, all engender a deep commitment to the faith community.

A number of changes in the religious practices of the KC indicate a further link between their refugee and resettlement experiences and the present formation of their faith. As noted above the questionnaire asked the respondents to rate the frequency with which they participated in twelve spiritual disciplines, itemising their experiences in Burma, in Malaysia/ Thailand and now in New Zealand. The spiritual disciplines included practices relating to private and corporate, Sunday and week day, prayer, bible, worship, evangelism and service of others. This question provided various interpretive insights; here I will explore those insights that emerge relating to the KC as a whole and the changes evident over time. Overall the KC has a life long history of commitment to spiritual disciplines. In summing up all the responses, those under the headings "sometimes" and "often" far outweighed those rated "never" and "rarely:" particularly in Burma and in New Zealand. Two observations are particularly noteworthy. First, there was a noticeable increase in the disciplines rated "sometimes" and "often" in New Zealand, in contrast to those under the same headings for their time in Burma. The reasons cited in the discussion above concerning church commitment being "more important" in New Zealand partly explains this factor. Second, there was a marked increase under the headings "never" and "rarely" during their refugee experience in Malaysia and Thailand. Several reasons were noted for this by the respondents: living in a non-Christian country where Sunday is not reserved for religious practices; the demands of work, where employers would demand long working hours with no flexibility on when a day off can be taken; being an undocumented migrant with no rights as an employee; having to bow to the demands of work in fear of not having enough, "if we don't work, we don't eat;" fear of employers; and fear of the police (stories of police waiting outside known Christian meeting places to apprehend undocumented migrants were typical during the interviews).

The decrease in spiritual disciplines during their refugee experience warrants further discussion. Living with fear of police and employers, and with the fear of poverty and having to work long hours are obvious reasons that corporate spiritual disciplines were markedly less (for example, church service attendance; communion/ Lord's supper; week day bible study outside the home; and prayer with others). This does not explain, however, a decrease in private spiritual disciplines, those practices that can be pursued in one's own time, alone or with one or two others (for example, fasting; week day bible study with family members at home; week day bible study, privately; and memorisation of scripture). "Prayer, privately" was the only discipline that increased between Burma and Malaysia/Thailand (it also increased slightly again in New Zealand). The impact of hardship on the spirituality of the KC will be considered below.

Of all spiritual disciplines prayer rated as the most practised and highly regarded. "Prayer, privately" and "prayer, with others" rated among the most frequently practised spiritual disciplines in Burma, Malaysia/ Thailand and in New Zealand.[25] As cited above, "prayer, privately" emerged as the most frequently practised spiritual discipline during the time of their refugee experience, and "to pray and to praise God" rated significantly higher than all other categories when asked why the members of the KC in general attend their church services. When asked to name what is most important to them personally in the KC services "prayer" again far outranked all other categories. Prayer was a key feature in the KC services that I observed, with time allocated for individuals to stand and share their personal prayer needs and with different people asked to lead in prayers for the group. Prayer also emerged as a key feature during times of hardship. Respondents frequently talked about impassioned, pleading prayers; crying, fasting and engaging others to pray on their behalf were common features of prayer in difficult times. In response to the question "have you ever been angry with God?" answers frequently turned on experiences of prayer. Further to their times of anger with God respondents also volunteered stories of God speaking to them – through people understood as prophets and through reflection on their experiences – as an

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[25] Of similar frequency were "bible reading at home," "church service attendance," "week day bible study outside the home" and "communion/ Lord's supper."

important outcome of hardship and anger with God. Thanks, praise and supplication for family and personal needs made up the primary categories of their prayers.

Significant answers to prayer were often described in terms of God granting safety in times of danger, or in God intervening and providing a way out during a time of hardship. Many respondents spoke of prayer in this way; the following outlines two examples. This first story describes a woman seeking out the help of a prophet to pray for a particular need.[26] The prophet had polio, it was explained, through which he was unable to use his hands and feet. In earlier times he had tried to work, weaving bamboo, but because of his condition he would cut his hands and was unable to work and had very little to eat. He prayed and "Jesus told him to pray for everyone, and you no worry for the food; when prayer is answered, people give him food to eat." This woman in need "had a big trouble… she was a prisoner in Myanmar… she done a wrong business, business with teak tree, which is illegal." Ten years imprisonment is the sentence for this offence. She was very afraid, "very sad, cry and cry, pray and pray every day." When asked if God answered her prayer she replied, "yes, good answer… only [had to serve] one month [imprisonment]…. [the prophet] prayed for her, told her to fast and pray, that man told her to pray in her heart… to her Father, the God will give her the answer, she really pray for that problem." The second example is a story a man relayed in which he believed God intervened in a remarkable way. In attempting to travel through Thailand as an undocumented migrant he was in a car accident with the agent who was attempting to give him and a number of others safe passage. There were no significant injuries; however they were caught by the Thai authorities, arrested and placed in an immigration camp. After one month of living in very difficult conditions without adequate food and no bed they were to be deported by boat back to Burma. "In the middle of the sea [we were] picked up by agents… they [somehow arranged] contact with Thai police… [we were] taken to Malaysia." He described how agents do not work in this way, that somehow they had pressure put on them to help them, to intervene and take them to Malaysia. For both of these people these experiences were dramatic answers to prayer.

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[26] This story was relayed through a translator.

Respondents frequently spoke of prayer being an emotional and fundamental response to difficulties. For many, prayer appeared to be their only resource in times of hardship. Seasons of devoted and emotive prayers could last for several months as they sought God for an answer, to resolve an issue and provide a way out of hardship or danger.

Experiences of prayer were described as opportunities to learn spiritual lessons. These lessons were particularly in relation to times of unanswered prayer and/or in times of anger with God. One respondent associated anger with God with an immature spirituality stating,

> Before, I didn't know more of Jesus, and I was angry; but now I know more of Jesus and am never angry. I would pray and pray about why Jesus give me problem, every day I pray, I ask why... now, I learn more about Jesus... [now I know about] Daniel's life, he prayed three times a day, but he go to lions, but he [was] saved... how to say... now I know that God has plan for my life.

This respondent made a similar parallel with the story of Joseph. In these biblical parallels this person has identified a spiritual lesson for their life, that God has a plan during difficult times, although difficult times may persist God's salvation will come. The following account relays a story in which the respondent has persisted in prayer, seeking God for a job and then to resolve a demanding work situation, identifying characteristics of God in parallel to a delayed answer to prayer, a consequent spiritual lesson and finishing with praise in response to God's intervention.

> When I was in Thailand it was very hard... I had no work and I prayed and prayed... I got a job, it was very, very hard... I was so tired... I prayed, 'why God, what about this job'... I prayed and prayed for a job... I prayed and I cried... God could not help me... God was hard... God answered me... I had to experience the hard things... God answered my prayer, after six months of the hard job I got another job, I wasn't so tired... I praised God so much.

A third example, in regard to a work situation in New Zealand, again refers to insights in difficult times: understanding the place of God, personal spiritual growth and purpose in times of on-going hardship.

> Now with my job, I am very tired, I ask God, why this job, why give me this job... I just ask my God, now I understand and I am happy now... because [at my work] nobody believe Jesus, I need to show them [the Christian way]; I just understand, at the time I am angry I am so ashamed, others can see me [living the] wrong way, I had to adjust my life straight... I am the light.

This same respondent described being challenged to pray more, both personally and with others, in response to seeing Muslim women pray in an immigration camp in Malaysia. She understood her commitment to prayer was answered through only having to stay in the camp a short time: "[When I was] in [the] camp in Malaysia, [I had been] caught by police, [I saw] the Muslim women praying so much every day, felt challenged to pray; God answered prayer, only in camp 45 days." Prayer is a sustaining and vital aspect to the faith of the KC, being a mainstay of life in general, of personal faith and of their corporate religious practices.

Anger or frustration with God arose for members of the KC for three key reasons. First, in observing what others have and wanting God to provide the same for them; one respondent gave the following account describing himself as "becoming bad," feeling ashamed of these desires and asking God to help him stop thinking this way.

> Yes [I have been angry with God], [when I was a] teenager, and now; sometime I want something, nothing happen, I pray every day…. Whatever I want I can't get it; somebody got no God, they look very good, they rich, they got everything; I believe in my God and I got nothing!

Second, for God to intervene and resolve a difficult situation; work and family examples were typical in this category.[27]

> Yes [she has been angry with God], because – she [always loves] God, always praying to God – but for example, now her two sons, daughter-in-law and one grandson, in Thailand camp, why? Now two year already, why God? I want for all children to come quickly to come to New Zealand, what happened to me?

Third, a general response to physical and emotional difficulties. One poignant response disclosed a number of searching questions of God and a struggling response to spiritual expectations.

> We want [something] now, [we know] it is not impossible [for God], '[God,] what mistake did I do to you?... Yes, [I have been angry with God] especially difficult time; … I [thought I would be] married to my husband the rest of my life…. My family have passed away because of civil war, my home gone; when I get married, [I thought] now I be happy, [but] what happened to me! (She is now divorced from her husband.) Some people have such a happy life, sometimes it looks like it is hopeless [for me], sometimes [I am] empty, nothing in heart… sometimes I am very angry with God, you neglect on me, how much I love you, you neglect on me, that is a difficult.

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[27] This story was relayed through a translator.

In response to the question "is God answering your prayer?" she replied:

> Sometimes I get answer from the God, I'm angry to my life, but I can forgive,
> sometimes I can't forgive; when I forgive… my heart is peaceful; how can I forgive
> them, they are very bad people? I was very angry; sometimes I kill the people in my
> heart, sometimes I kill my husband in my heart; now I slowly, slowly… forgive
> them, ninety per cent.

Associated with these times of questioning and hardship, evident in the above quotations, is a feeling of God being absent or of God neglecting them. Respondents frequently recounted these questions or feelings with a sense of shame, in their body language, tone of voice and/or in their explanations. Anger, frustration and questions of God were associated with immature spirituality, a feeling of being bad and/or of not living up to spiritual expectations.

How have these experiences of hardship, anger, frustration and questioning affected the faith and religious practices of the KC? It is not reasonable to conclude that these experiences have negatively impacted their faith or diminished their commitment to religious practices. The practise of spiritual disciplines has increased over time. Notably, prayer remains a leading discipline privately and corporately, and it is the leading reason for their corporate worship. A follow up question to "have you ever been angry with God?" was "have you ever given up on God?" of which no one replied in the affirmative. Anger and frustration toward God has not resulted in a decision to no longer have faith, nor has it been a reason for a diminished commitment to faith practices. It is much more difficult to conclude whether these experiences have been a means of maturing their faith. Arguably, the association of anger and questioning toward God with feelings of immaturity and shame is in itself an aspect of their faith that lacks maturity. I draw this conclusion in response to the many Psalms that include statements of anger and frustration without any association with immaturity and shame; rather they are an integral aspect to the prayer of the Psalms and other biblical texts.[28] Increased commitment to the KC, as noted above, is closely associated with their language and culture, and the spiritual and cultural nurture of their children. Is it

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[28] This theme is developed in chapter three. See Walter Brueggemann, "The Costly Loss of Lament," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36 (1986): 57-71.

unreasonable to conclude that increased commitment to the KC and to spiritual disciplines is an outcome of their experiences of hardship? The second round of interviews attempted to understand more fully the impact of hardship on the spirituality of the KC in Malaysia/ Thailand. Respondents largely disagreed with the statement, "Times of hardship makes God seem distant;" although responses revealed that hardship is a perplexing and challenging factor in regard to one's faith and experience of God. In contrast, respondents cautiously affirmed the statement, "Times of hardship make your faith stronger." I conclude that the upheaval of forced migration, the considerable challenges involved in surviving as a refugee, fear, oppression and lack of certainty were all significant in reducing both private and corporate spiritual disciplines in Malaysia/ Thailand. These experiences have made an influential contrast to life in New Zealand; the KC have a unique appreciation for religious freedom, their past experiences contributing to their desire to engage in corporate and private spiritual disciplines now in New Zealand.

The KC place a particular emphasis on their children. During the interviews the importance of hope and opportunity for their children was a dominant and recurring theme. As noted above, the language and culture experienced in their KC services is seen to have particular importance for their children. The needs of their children are a fundamental element in the subject of their prayers. Cultural events are often focused on the children. For example, large gatherings are frequently organised to celebrate a baby dedication or a first or second birthday. At these events many adults and their children from the KC are present – as many as possible; other friends and neighbours are invited. These celebrations follow a similar pattern. A small number of adults will remain in the kitchen preparing a large quantity of food, of which a number of adults have prepared over a two day period; most adults will sit on the floor of the main living room, filling up this space. These events rarely begin on time; rather, once most people and important guests have arrived a worship service begins. With minor variations this service proceeds as follows: welcome and introduction by a community leader; bible reading; opening prayer; one or more songs may be sung; one of the parents share their prayer concerns for their child; a family member or senior community member leads in prayer for the child; maybe a song; a short bible message is given; the preacher prays

for the child; a final song is sung; the formal time of worship concludes with a prayer, sometimes the Lord's prayer is said corporately. The service is a mixture of the Jinghpaw and Burmese languages.[29] With the formal part of the celebration over a covering is placed on the floor and the food is served. During the service older children sit and participate in the proceedings; younger children come and go as they please, particularly disruptive children are removed by a parent or caregiver; there is always a measure of noise from the children present. Of note on these occasions is the large scale of the celebration with high attendance from the KC and other important guests, the expense parents go to providing a large quantity of good quality food for everyone present, the religious focus of the events, all with the young child as the primary focus.

The KC celebrations for their children provide important insights into the community's resettlement. The second round of interviews sought further insight into family celebrations. Respondents were asked if the celebrations for baby dedications or children's birthdays were similar or different to practices in Burma. A number of observations were made. In large part these celebrations are a form of what they would like to have practised in Burma but could not. For example, some respondents commented that "we are not poor anymore," explaining that only rich people in Burma are able to have such celebrations; others stated that they are no longer oppressed and can now celebrate freely. Thus, the wealth and freedom experienced in New Zealand has provided the environment for reintroducing valued customs of old. Respondents were asked if the church community attended such celebrations in Burma, as is the case in the KC celebrations. Answers to this question differed: those from a small village community said yes; however, for most respondents, attendees at child celebrations in Burma included large family networks, and/ or members of the church parish (block of houses), the pastor and other dignitaries would be invited, but generally not the whole church. It may be concluded, then, that the KC takes the place of the village church or parish community and the large family network that have a central place in Kachin

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[29] I have attended about a dozen of these kinds of occasions (baby dedications, birthday celebrations and house blessings, all following a similar format). I have been the invited guest responsible for giving the bible message. An interpreter (one of the competent English speakers from the community) has always interpreted the message, line for line, as I have spoken.

society. Like the KC church services the celebrations for children are a combination of past practices – some of which have previously be limited through oppression, fear and poverty – and new innovations that have emerged in the context of community, wealth and freedom. Again, kinship and freedom are observed to have a significant role in the resettlement practices of the KC.

Can it be argued that the children of the KC members are both a symbol and focus of their life in general and of their spiritual aspirations in particular? A focus on their children is pervasive: concern for and hope for their children was a primary focus in their migration experience; spiritual practices and goals are inseparable from concern for their children; the dominant factors of language, culture and faith all have special bearing on their children; prayer needs are regularly dominated by the needs of the children, including thanks for God's protection for their children and seeking God's blessing for further protection and educational advancement; children are a principal focus in their weekly corporate religious practices; and children are a focus of their large scale, occasional celebrations. That the children of the KC are a focus of their life and spiritual aspirations is clear enough; I also conclude that they have a symbolic presence in the community as they represent and embody the values and goals of the KC. This idea will be developed at the conclusion of this chapter.

The spirituality of the KC has depth and dynamism, with many contributing factors feeding and sustaining their faith and religious practices. Their history of church-going and devout faith practices in Burma are significant factors in their current religious practices. The combination of language and culture in the KC services brings cohesion to the community. A focus on their children and the strong kinship ties felt between members of the community engender a strong commitment. Their experiences of God in tough times and the freedom now experienced in New Zealand give added vitality to their faith. Prayer as their shared leading spiritual discipline stimulates a living and collective faith.

General Context: Kachin

The second step in this process of theological enquiry is the utilisation of interdisciplinary sources. Many sources and subjects could be drawn from to explore the general context of the KC and the significance of these contextual factors for the community. For the purposes of this thesis my discussion in this section will focus on matters that have a significant bearing on the findings in step one. History, political and social science and human rights groups have all been informative in gathering data for this step.

The interviews in step one identified leading push factors that resulted in the forced migration of the KC members; these factors have provided the areas of focus for the following section. These push factors are not listed here in priority order; the frequency with which these factors were discussed and the tone and emphasis given to them had relatively equal importance. First, the issue of education and employment: respondents spoke of having no hope for employment, "even if I finish university I could not get a job;" "if you get a job, you cannot get promotion, we get less pay." Respondents associated this sense of hopelessness in gaining an education and/or in getting a job with wanting hope for their children and the basic need for money; "the youth and children have no job, young people do not want to live in Burma;" "money, really hard to find a job, 'cause no money, no job." Only one adult in the KC completed tertiary education in Burma; this was achieved over a long period of time and with many difficulties including numerous school closures due to government and military issues. The second leading reason for forced migration was the military regime. Respondents again associated this issue with hope for the future and for their children. One respondent spoke of traumatic experiences as a child, her father had been killed in the civil war and the Burma Army had "taken all the men and boys" from her village to "carry heavy load," to be porters for the army. For this young mother any sense of having a future could only be found outside of Burma. One woman spoke of a peaceful upbringing in a small country village and then stated, "very different from when I was born, war in front of me, bomb and gun in front of me… change, bad and bad." Political oppression was also associated with issues of human rights, "the political situation is bad; no human rights, no justice; you can't say what you want to, you cannot

say the truth." Other forms of oppression were also cited as reasons for leaving Burma. One respondent stated, "our village, a lot of drugs; my mum scared of drugs, my mum want me to be away, I don't want to stay either; scared of the mines; the army want money; everything makes you scared." Fear of government and military authorities was expressed in numerous ways during the interview sessions; "difficult to live in Burma, because of government problem, anytime we can get in trouble."

Geopolitics and Religion

These comments above, in regard to the forced migration of the KC, highlight key areas for further investigation. In reflecting on the reasons for the forced migration of the KC together with the general context of the Kachin[30] people geopolitical factors emerge as significant. The following discussion will describe how the geopolitical issues together with the religious history of the Kachin shape a culture of formidable independence. Identifying independence as a defining characteristic contributes to the theological framework from which pastoral outcomes are identified for the KC.

Gaining up to date and reliable information on Burma in general and on Kachin State in particular is highly problematic. There has not been a reliable census taken in Burma for more than sixty years.[31] Population statistics of Kachin people are dated and unspecific: Ashley South records statistics from the United Nation's "Myanmar Vulnerability Mapping and Monitoring System" stating,

> Kachin State had a population in 2003 of 1,335,000 people (2.53 per cent of the total for Burma). There were… about 175,000 Kachin in adjacent areas of northern Shan State, and about 32,000 in Mandalay Division. An additional 12,000 or so Kachin… people lived in a semi-autonomous zone in neighbouring China, and a few thousand in India.[32]

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[30] Note that "Kachin" refers to people from Kachin State in general; with "KC" specifying the Kachin Christian Church in Porirua, New Zealand.

[31] "World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: Kachin," <http://www.minorityrights.org/4490/myanmarburma/kachin.html> (6 July 2011).

[32] United Nation's "Myanmar Vulnerability Mapping and Monitoring System," June 2005, cited in Ashley South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma: States of Conflict*, Routledge Contemporary Southeast Asia Series (Oxon OX: Routledge, 2008), 151-152. Ja Nan Lahtaw adds, "people dwelling in Kachin state are Kachins comprised of six linguistic tribes, five Shan tribes, Bamar and other ethnic nationalities." Ja Nan Lahtaw, "Peace Initiatives among Ethnic Nationalities: The Kachin Case," in *Myanmar: State, Society*

Sources on Kachin State tend to be dated and conflicted. For example, in summing up the Christian population of Kachin State authors have specified, "the majority of whom are Christians,"[33] "[a]mong the Shans the proportion of Christians is negligible, and among the Kachins very slight, in spite of the work of Catholic and Protestant missionaries since the latter half of the nineteenth century,"[34] and "once again difficult to assess, it is generally thought that between two-thirds and 90 per cent of Kachin are Christians;"[35] none of these authors provide references or qualify their statements in any way. Edmund Leach observes these difficulties in research. In 1954 Leach published a seminal anthropological report on the Kachin.[36] Nearly four decades later he states,

> It was obvious to me in 1945 that there were huge gaps in our understanding of those [Kachin] societies, but political circumstances have made it impossible for either myself or anyone else to engage in anthropological research anywhere in the Kachin Hills area during the past thirty-seven years, so the gaps have never been filled.[37]

Recognising these difficulties, a fruitful starting point in this discussion is an appreciation for the political and environmental geography in Burma and the delineation of ethnic minorities. These observations help define Kachin culture. The current political boundaries of Kachin State with both its external neighbours (India and China) and internal states and divisions (Shan State and Sagaing Division) are clear enough; notwithstanding the outbreak of war between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Burma Army in June 2011. These boundaries, however, are a relatively recent

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and Ethnicity, ed. N. Ganesan and Kyaw Yin Hlaing (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007), 238.

[33] Martin Smith, *Burma (Myanmar): The Time for Change* (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2002), 16.

[34] Trevor O. Ling, "Religious Minorities in Burma in The Contemporary Period," in *Ethnic Conflict in Buddhist Societies: Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma*, ed. K.M. de Silva, Pensri Duke, Ellen S. Goldberg and Nathan Katz (London: Pinter Publishers, 1988), 177.

[35] "World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: Kachin," <http://www.minorityrights.org/4490/myanmarburma/kachin.html> (6 July 2011).

[36] Edmund R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1954).

[37] Edmund R. Leach and David Nugent, "Imaginary Kachins," *Man* 18:1 (March 1983): 192.

historical development. Ronald D. Renard observes of the Karen and Kachin, "[i]n pre-British Burma, minorities were not members of the great states."[38] Martin Smith notes,

> Burma's frontiers and divisions have always been loosely defined… ethnic minority peoples, such as the… Kachins… live in substantial numbers on both sides of the current borders, and in many areas constitute the majority… ethnic Burman influence is minimal in most border regions. Indeed in the case of the Shan and Kachin states, the first Burman-majority towns lie several hundred miles away from the present international frontiers.[39]

The environmental boundaries of Kachin State have had formative influences throughout the history of Burma. In contrast to the wet lowland and delta regions to the south, with its large rivers and tributaries, the forested highlands of Kachin State have comparatively little arable land and the dryer hill lands demand different cultivation practices. This contrasting environment has affected both population and political organisation in Kachin State. Population growth in the highlands has been considerably less than the lowland Burman throughout Burma's history. The more populous southern regions have been characterised by monarchical style leadership; the Kachin, in contrast, with settlements spread out and travel difficult in the mountainous terrain have been typified by smaller tribal organisational structures throughout their history.[40] Leach asserts, "[t]he contrast between the highlanders and the lowlanders is thus in the first place ecological. Even if the two categories of population spoke the same language one might well expect to find marked cultural differences between the two."[41]

The political boundaries of Kachin State in the contemporary era, formed during British rule and largely adhered to since independence in 1948, are argued to have had considerable detrimental results for the Kachin. Smith asserts that formation of

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[38] Ronald D. Renard, "Minorities in Burmese History," in *Ethnic Conflict in Buddhist Societies: Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma*, ed. K.M. de Silva, Pensri Duke, Ellen S. Goldberg and Nathan Katz (London: Pinter Publishers, 1988), 89.

[39] Martin Smith, "Burma's Ethnic Minorities: a Central or Peripheral Problem in the Regional Context?" in *Burma: The Challenge of Change in a Divided Society*, ed. Peter Carey (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), 99.

[40] See Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, 18ff. Eric S. Casino, "Burma and the Burmese: A Historical Perspective," ed. Bjorn Schelander (Center for Southeast Asian Studies, School of Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Studies, University of Hawai'i, 1997), 6-8.

[41] Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, 20.

minority states has had "lasting implications for all the region's minority peoples. In particular, it ossified an uneven pattern of development, which has continued well into the late twentieth century, much to the detriment of the borderland communities."[42] This view is supported by human rights groups who cite pitifully low government support for education and health.

> In addition to violent attacks against ethnic civilians, the military is also waging a war of attrition against the civilian populations in Burma…. Government spending on health and education is the lowest in the region, accounting for only 1.6 per cent of Burma's Gross Domestic Product…. Through repressive policies and practices, the regime has destabilized large areas of the country and forced thousands into displacement.[43]

These factors are further compounded by differences in political infrastructure. Under British rule, amongst the majority Burman, "the monarchy was abolished in 1886 and a form of Western-style democracy eventually introduced in the 1930s,"[44] the ethnic minorities, however, "were left under their traditional headman or rulers. Again, such divisions ensured different speeds of political and economic development."[45] Renard also points to the roots of British influence to understand the growth of ethnic conflict, "since minorities only became a topic of concern to the residents of Burma after the first Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-6 and the ensuing contact with the British."[46] Leach affirms this conclusion stating,

> When the British attempted to assume control in 1885… Kachin interference in local politics was ruthlessly suppressed. But though the early British administrators seem to have regarded the Kachins as mere dacoits and brigands, it is evident that the Kachins in question were strong upholders of the principle of legitimacy.[47]

British law was detrimental to both political and economic life in Kachin State: "[e]ven to the last – 1946! – British officials were engaged in surveying precise boundaries

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[42] Smith, "Burma's Ethnic Minorities," 100.

[43] "Displaced Childhoods: Human Rights and International Crimes Against Burma's Internally Displaced Children," a report by Partners Relief and Development and Free Burma Rangers, April 2010, 23.

[44] Smith, "Burma's Ethnic Minorities," 100.

[45] Ibid., 101.

[46] Renard, "Minorities in Burmese History," 77. On British influence on the formation of modern Burma see also, Robert H. Taylor, "British Policy towards Myanmar and the Creation of the 'Burma Problem,'" in *Myanmar: State, Society and Ethnicity*, ed. N. Ganesan and Kyaw Yin Hlaing (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007), 70-95.

[47] Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, 243.

between Kachin and Shan territory. The political dependence of Shan on Kachin or *vice versa* was excluded by edict; economic relations between the two groups, though not prohibited, were made extremely difficult."[48] These issues have only been exacerbated in more recent history. In 1989 the military government announced a controversial Border Areas Development Programme: after which, "in many minority areas the quality of life seriously regressed…."[49] Both external factors, such as governmental controls, and internal factors, such as tribal leadership have had an enduring influence on the isolation of Kachin people, contributing to segregation and a culture of independence.

British presence in Burma made other lasting and significant contributions to the formation of modern Kachin State. During British rule in the nineteenth century lowland Burman armies ceased activity against the neighbouring states and people from ethnic minorities were promoted to roles in civil service. The colonial powers also allowed missionaries to establish schools, hospitals and churches in the highland areas. Many Karens, Karennis, Kachins and Chins converted to Christianity during this time.[50] Smith observes that "Christian missionaries also promoted… the transcription of minority languages into writing for the hill peoples, galvanizing a sense of modern ethnic or national identity among people that previously had been scattered or politically disparate."[51] These benefits led to some borderland minorities viewing the period of colonial rule as a golden age.[52] The British also had a role in forming ethnic distinctives in their "formulation of the colonial Burma army along 'class' (i.e. ethnic) lines, with separate Chin, Kachin, and Karen battalions, [making a] precedent for ethnic-based forces."[53] All these factors have contributed to the formation of a defining and independent culture amongst the Kachin.

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[48] Ibed., 244.

[49] Smith, "Burma's Ethnic Minorities," 102.

[50] Christina Fink, *Living Silence: Burma Under Military Rule* (London: Zed Books, 2001), 18.

[51] Smith, *Burma*, 7.

[52] Fink, *Living Silence*, 17-18.

[53] Martin Smith, *State of Strife: The Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict in Burma* (Washington: East-West Center Washington, 2007), 13. See also, South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 19.

Religious distinction has been a long-term identifying factor of the Kachin. In regard to the longer history of minority groups in Burma Renard asserts, "[t]here is no indication that uplanders absorbed Hinduism or Buddhism from lowland centres."[54] Christianity has contributed to forging cultural distinctives that have served the growth of the Kachins' independent spirit. "The Christian religion has undoubtedly played a significant role in the development of modern identities for such minority peoples as the Chin, Kachin and Karen. In consequence, Western missionaries have sometimes been accused by Burman leaders of fuelling ethnic divisions."[55]

The social structure of Kachin society also demonstrates independence from outside sources. Ja Nan Lahtaw, an ethnic Kachin, observes that the strong bonds created in Kachin marriage function like an insurance policy or social security system in times of marriage and bereavement, where tribal/family members contribute significantly toward the given needs.[56] These strong bonds are also instrumental in the resolution of serious offence. Lahtaw notes that "[t]he British were aware of the strong social system of the Kachin and their traditional ways of dealing with conflict. Therefore, the British allowed Kachin customs to act as a mechanism for dealing with conflict among Kachin."[57]

Generations of conflict have had a galvanizing effect in the formation of Kachin identity. Instability has characterised Kachin State over its recent and long-term history. Domination and oppression from colonial powers and Burman leadership have prompted ethnic minorities to look to their own for leadership: ethnic minorities have "run much of the local economy and administration in outlying rural areas. Several, such as the… [Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO)], have maintained substantial

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[54] Renard, "Minorities in Burmese History," 84.

[55] Smith, *State of Strife,* 11.

[56] Lahtaw, "Peace Initiatives among Ethnic Nationalities," 245-246.

[57] Ibid., 246.

infrastructures and governmental organisations of their own."[58] The consequent fear
resulting from the long years of conflict has also contributed to the galvanizing effect in
Kachin identity. Reflecting on the Kachin situation, Lahtaw states, "deep-rooted fears
within individuals and groups lead to internal cohesion among like-minded groups. The
stronger a group becomes, the stronger their view of other groups as their enemy."[59]

Political independence is an unfulfilled promise that remains a goal of the Kachin
people and a leading cause of conflict. In 1941 up and coming Burman leader Aung
San (father of 1991 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi) sought the aid of
the Japanese for military training and ultimately led the Japanese invasion of Burma,
installing Japanese occupation during the war years.[60] Some of the ethnic minorities,
including the Karen and Kachin, sided with the British against the Japanese during
World War Two.[61] Perhaps the most positive effort toward a united and democratic
Burma occurred in the years immediately after World War Two. The British had again
taken control and had promised independence. General Aung San appointed several
non-Burmans to high ranking positions, made several trips to the highland areas to meet
with ethnic leaders and organised a conference for ethnic groups to form a political
structure that all groups could accept. Kachin representatives participated in this
conference; regrettably several minority groups did not take part. In this agreement a
federal union was agreed to in which ethnic states would have full autonomy over their
internal affairs. Of note, four ethnic states, including Kachin State, were created at this
time, with the Karenni and Shan states given the right to secede after ten years. Kachin
State was not given the right to secede because part of its territory had been under
Burman rule in the past.[62] Aung San, with several members of his cabinet, were
assassinated on 19 July 1947. Burma gained independence early in 1948. All hope of a
united and democratic government crumbled over the ensuing fourteen years,

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[58] Smith, "Burma's Ethnic Minorities," 105.

[59] Lahtaw, "Peace Initiatives among Ethnic Nationalities," 236.

[60] Metraux, "Burma's Modern Tragedy," 6.

[61] Fink, *Living Silence*, 22.

[62] Ibid.

culminating in the successful military coup by General Ne Win in 1962. During these years "ethnic minority leaders were successively squeezed out of any key role in national political life."[63] After 1948 the Kachin grew gradually dissatisfied, particularly with the attempt to make Buddhism Burma's state religion.[64] In 1961 the KIO was formed and Kachin State became a major area of conflict.

> Between 1961 and 1986 the KIO…claims to have recorded the deaths of over 30,000 Kachin villagers at the hands of government forces, and, by the early 1990's, over 130 000 Kachins (over 10 per cent of the population) had become internally displaced or refugees…. in 1994 a ceasefire was eventually agreed between the government and the KIO after the intervention of local Christian leaders.[65]

Burma scholar Christina Fink has written a commentary on the recent history of Burma drawing on interviews with many refugees. She affirms the claims of the KIO.

> Starting in the mid-1960s, the military regime ruthlessly implemented a policy known as the Four Cuts. The objective was to eliminate all forms of support to resistance forces by cutting their access to food, money, intelligence and recruits. Many villagers were forced to leave their villages and were often brutally treated and even killed whether they had anything to do with the opposition forces or not…. As a result of Tatmadaw [Burmese Army] campaigns in the Karen, Kachin and other areas tens of thousands of people lost family members, their land and their homes.[66]

In more recent history (since 1990) Fink observes that in the remote areas where fighting continued, "villagers were subject to forced relocations, forced portering, rape, torture, and the confiscation of their property. Civilians generally had to pay taxes both to the Tatmadaw soldiers and to the ethnic nationalist armies, and many fled to neighbouring countries as refugees and migrant workers."[67] South states that even where ceasefires were maintained chronic human and environmental abuse was widespread, including:

> Increasing militarisation… widespread land confiscation…. Chronically under-resourced welfare services…. Environmentally damaging and unsustainable natural resource extraction…. In many respects, the ceasefires have frozen – rather than

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[63] Smith, "Burma's Ethnic Minorities," 102-103.

[64] For more on the history of the struggle and desire for autonomy amongst the Kachin see, Lintner, *Burma in Revolt*, esp 88, 175.

[65] Smith, *Burma*, 16.

[66] Fink, *Living Silence*, 48.

[67] Ibid., 78.

addressed – the socio-political issues structuring half a century of armed conflict in Burma.[68]

The 1994 ceasefire recently collapsed with the outbreak of war with the Burmese military on 9th June 2011. There have been a number of media reports claiming the Burmese military have gang-raped eighteen Kachin women and girls, killing four of them, during the month of June 2011,[69] and an estimated 25,000 refugees at the China border.[70] Generational oppression and recent conflict has only served to reinforce the desire for political independence amongst the Kachin.

These many and varied factors outlined above have resulted in the Kachin having a formidable independence and a conflicted relationship with the Burman and other ethnic groups. In discussing the historical make-up of Kachin villages Leach observes, "[i]t is quite evident that… Kachins often value political independence more highly than economic advantage."[71] The Kachin share little in common with the majority Burman. Kachin State is a historically recent creation and is geographically distinct, both in distance from major Burman cities and environmentally. The Kachin do not share their first language, cultural practices or religion with the Burman. Generations of oppression and conflict have further ingrained a culture of independence.

With independence, mistrust may be added as a defining characteristic of the Kachin, particularly toward other ethnic groups from Burma. I use the word mistrust as a result of my observation of the KC and other ethnic minorities from Burma. Members of the KC are very cautious of any involvement with other ethnic groups, whether this is a combined Christian endeavour or uniting in political action. The reasons cited for this cautious reluctance is the fear of Burman spies in New Zealand (Burman police are known to be in New Zealand for continuing education) and a general mistrust of the motivations and sincerity of other Christian groups. Fink observes, "[p]eople in Burma

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[68] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 130-132.

[69] For example, "Burma Army Does Not Stop Human Rights Abuses in Kachin State," 7 July, 2011 <http://www.peacewomen.org/news_article.php?id=3908&type=news> (7 July, 2011).

[70] At the time of writing (February 2012), following a number of attempts at reform, the military backed government of Burma is currently in peace talks with Kachin leaders.

[71] Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, 234.

are reluctant to speak up because they are living under the seemingly omnipresent surveillance of military intelligence personnel and informers;"[72] of Burmese culture in general she states, "[s]uspicion has thus become the primary lens through which others are viewed."[73] It appears that this reality has engrained a culture of mistrust that remains for the KC in New Zealand living outside of Burma's military control.

In the second round of interviews respondents gave cautious acceptance of independence as a defining characteristic. It is possible that their reluctance to define Kachin people as independent is a factor evident in ethnographic study: "there is… usually an emphasis within ethnographic work on developing an *analytic* understanding of people's perspectives and activities, one that will usually be different from, and perhaps even in conflict with, how the people studied see themselves and their world."[74] Wishing to be careful not to dismiss the views of some in the KC, I believe there is considerable evidence to conclude that independence is a defining feature of Kachin people and of the KC. Together with the historical factors cited above and the mistrust observed locally, other observations may be noted. Since leaving Burma the KC members have not maintained regular or meaningful contact with their home church communities in Burma. This is in contrast to transnational studies undertaken in the United States where strong ties are maintained with the home church in the first generation of resettlement. For the KC regular contact with people in Burma is almost exclusively with immediate family members.[75] It must at least be held as a possibility that this is evidence of an independent character. The use of worship space is also evidence of their independence. The KC previously shared worship space with another ethnic group from Burma in Porirua. Seeking out an alternative venue for worship was precipitated by strained relationships with other ethnic leaders (of which mistrust was a contributing factor) and, significantly, out of a desire for a physical space in which they

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[72] Fink, *Living Silence*, 5.

[73] Ibid., 129.

[74] Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 231.

[75] Most KC members are able to use affordable phone networks through China to be in contact with family members in Burma, which they use regularly; thus one cannot conclude that cost or access prohibit regular contact with the home church community.

could shape their own cultural worship expression. Evidence suggests that independence is a leading character trait of Kachin people and of the KC.

Poverty and Oppression

Studying the general context of the KC seeks to understand how their life experiences and culture have influenced their migration and shaped their values and hopes for the future. Fundamental questions emerge when the geopolitical factors are considered: generations of conflict have resulted in devastating poverty; decades of military rule have inflicted a multifaceted oppression. The extent of these factors requires careful consideration: how far reaching is this systemic poverty and oppression?; what is the impact on families and communities in Burma?; how have these factors shaped the decisions and values of Burma's refugees? The following will explore these questions. When the subjective and general contextual issues are considered chapter two concludes that the KC are characterised by what can be described as the burden of freedom; now free of the restraints of poverty and oppression the KC look to the future with the burden of responsibility. The discussion under the heading "burden of freedom" at the conclusion of this chapter becomes significant as pastoral outcomes are discussed in chapter three.

The country of Burma is a place of widespread poverty. By 1987 "a Burmese child was more likely to be moderately or severely underweight than in many sub-Saharan African countries (UNICEF 2006)."[76] Many argue that Burma's poverty is primarily the result of corrupt and ineffective governmental leadership: "[a]fter many years of inefficient central planning and widespread controls, [Burma] was designated a 'Least Developed Country'… by the United Nations in December 1987."[77] Burma was once known as the "rice basket" of Asia, a country rich in natural resources and strategically placed for

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[76] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 77.

[77] Rolf C. Carriere, "Responding to Myanmar's Silent Emergency: the Urgent Case for International Humanitarian Relief and Development Assistance," in *Burma: The Challenge of Change in a Divided Society*, ed. Peter Carey (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), 209-210.

strong and prosperous economic relations with its closest neighbours. The extent of these potentialities has never been realised.[78]

Although Burma's poverty is widespread it is particularly severe in the ethnic minority regions. The geographic isolation and the forced restrictions on access into these regions have resulted in a humanitarian crisis. The United Nation's resident coordinator stated in 2006, "[h]umanitarian access to conflict and nearby zones is extremely limited. Protection needs are acute."[79] Martin Smith observes the impact on health in places such as Kachin State; he asserts,

> [M]any of the worst humanitarian indicators remain in ethnic minority areas….
> Burma has one of the fastest spreading HIV-AIDS epidemics in Asia; such
> preventable or treatable illnesses as malaria and TB are endemic…. In consequence,
> Burma has among the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the Asia-Pacific
> region….[80]

The effects of this crisis situation are widespread, impacting health, education and employment, and contributing to a volatile environment. David Steinberg observes that the dearth of educational standards is felt across the socio-economic spectrum: "over 70 percent of both poor and nonpoor populations have not gone beyond the fourth grade…. Employment is scarce for those who complete the bottom as well as the top of the educational curriculum."[81] He argues that sustaining peace in the ceasefire areas depends "on the delivery of better education, health, and living standards."[82]

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[78] Daniel Metraux affirms this conclusion stating, "One of the real tragedies of modern Burma is the fact that it is a land of immense economic potential with rich natural resources, good agricultural land and a strong educational tradition. Yet, despite this potential, Burma today is one of the most impoverished nations anywhere. Agricultural production has stalled, there is very little modern industrialization or use of high technology, the educational system is in a state of near total disarray, and the government, rather than investing in infrastructure and in the future of Burmese people, now pours close to half of public spending into the military. The overall economy is in a deep depression and there is no indication if or when we will see much revival." Metraux, "Burma's Modern Tragedy," 16.

[79] Charles Petrie, *An Understanding of the Humanitarian Situation in Myanmar* (Brussels: Presentation Burma Forum, 2006), 28, cited in Martin Smith, *State of Strife: The Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict in Burma* (Washington: East-West Center Washington, 2007), 53.

[80] Smith, *State of Strife*, 53.

[81] David I. Steinberg, *Burma: The State of Myanmar* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2001), 210.

[82] Ibid., 47.

The rise and prevalence of drug use and the drug trade has had devastating consequences across Burma: "Burma in recent years has become one of the world's leading centers for the production of heroin and methamphetamines."[83] Bertil Lintner, a researcher in the use and trade of illegal drugs in Burma, asserts that the drug problem is not only growing, but has reached devastating proportions in recent years: "[t]he potential heroin output soared from 54 tons in 1987 to 166 tons in 1995, making drugs the country's only growth industry."[84] Kachin State is one of the main growing areas, "close to the rapidly growing Chinese drug market."[85] A perception from the KC that does not emerge in most of the literature on Burma's drug trade is that the military government directly controls the trafficking of drugs. Typical in current literature is the assertion that drug lords, with or without government consent, control the drug trade.[86] Researchers have very little first-hand experience of what is happening in Kachin state and the level of suspicion and conspiracy theory amongst migrants from Burma may also cloud accurate perception of who is in control and who is collaborating with whom. Shelby Tucker is one author who argues that the Burmese government is in control of the drug trade. Of note, his argument is based on first-hand accounts from leaders in Kachin State: quoting Seng Hpung,[87] "frontline commanders of the Burma Army were involved in the trade…. The fortunes that [Burma Army] senior officers are making

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[83] Metraux, "Burma's Modern Tragedy," 28.

[84] Bertil Lintner, "Drugs and Economic Growth in Burma Today," in *Burma-Myanmar: Strong Regime Weak State*, ed. Morten B. Pedersen, Emily Rudland and Ronald J. May (Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2000), 165. For a thoroughgoing history of the opium trade in Burma see Linter, *Burma in Revolt*. This work includes accounts of the United States military using opium as a form of money during World War Two: "Lasang Ala, a Kachin war veteran, remembers: 'Packets of opium were air-dropped by Dakota planes…. The opium was distributed by the American commanders to their subordinates who used it for different purposes. First, it was given to villagers to pay for information about enemy movements. Secondly, whenever there was a shortage of cash opium was used as 'money' to pay for chickens, eggs, rice, salt and so on in the villages. Thirdly, Kachin soldiers under US command could be paid in opium if they asked for it.'" Ibid., 61.

[85] Lintner, "Drugs and Economic Growth," 165.

[86] For example, Metraux, "Burma's Modern Tragedy," 28. Lintner notes the criticism by the Chinese government in 1994, "the Chinese were said to be furious with Rangoon's connivance in the trade." Lintner, "Drugs and Economic Growth," 175.

[87] Member of the KIO ruling council, and KIO Deputy Foreign Secretary.

from narcotics is the main reason why the war continues."[88] Regardless of who is in control there is no doubt that the availability of drugs and the drug trade have had monumentally detrimental effects for the people of Kachin State. Gerry Stimson's report to the United Nations in 1994 asserts, "AIDS has ravaged many communities in Burma, especially in the border areas; surveys by UN agencies indicate that most of the intravenous drug users are HIV positive. In some parts of Kachin State, the infection rate is as high as 90 per cent."[89]

Christina Fink brings valuable insights through first-hand accounts of those impacted by Burma's poverty and oppression; in particular she records the impact on families. Of minority groups in Burma Fink observes, "parents must prepare their children for the fact that no matter how smart they are, many careers will be closed to them…."[90] This issue was prominent amongst the KC as they reflected on the hopes for their own children. Families in Burma are further strained as they grapple with conflicting approaches to living with oppression: should one conform or not conform?; which political party should a family support?; is it more expedient to side with an ethnic based political party or armed militia, or a political group with a broader emphasis?[91] "Thus, almost all families in Burma have felt the effect of military rule directly on relations within the family. As various members have chosen different ways of responding to the ongoing political crises, families have often been pulled apart."[92]

The impact of this systemic poverty and oppression on the people of Burma is immense. Many are forced from their homes and villages in fear for their lives; many more realise that a life of security and hope for the future can only be found outside of Burma.

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[88] Shelby Tucker, *Among Insurgents: Walking Through Burma* (London: Flamingo, 2001), 55, 57-58.

[89] Gerry V. Stimson, "HIV Infection and Injecting Drug Use in the Union of Myanmar: A Report to the United Nations International Drug Control Programme," (Bangkok: UNDCP, 1994), n.p., cited in Bertil Lintner, "Drugs and Economic Growth in Burma Today," in *Burma-Myanmar: Strong Regime Weak State*, ed. Morten B. Pedersen, Emily Rudland and Ronald J. May (Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2000), 184.

[90] Fink, *Living Silence*, 117.

[91] Ibid., 114-119.

[92] Ibid., 118.

"Burma is estimated to have at least 540,000 internally-displaced persons… there are over 155,000 refugees in official camps along Thailand's border alone, where up to two million illegal and legal migrants have also arrived since 1988."[93] Estimates of the numbers of Internally Displaced Peoples in Burma are wide ranging, Partners Relief and Development and The Free Burma Rangers place the figure at between one to three million.[94] Those who choose to leave Burma face a lifetime outside of their home country.

> A lucky few manage to escape to the United States, Australia or some other Western country to get an education or work, but once they become exiles from their own land, a safe return is either economically or politically very difficult if not impossible.[95]

The Burden of Freedom

The burden of freedom is a notion that encapsulates much of the discussion in this chapter. "Forced migrant" is indeed an accurate term, but may also be a misnomer. Ashley South provides an analysis of Burma's displaced people from an "actor-oriented perspective, focusing on the agency of displaced people, rather than viewing them as passive victims."[96] South asserts, "[i]t should be noted that migration itself often constitutes a coping mechanism." In this analysis he identifies three types of displacement. All three categories are strongly prevalent in Kachin State.

> *Type 1: Armed Conflict-Induced Displacement* – either as a direct result of fighting and counter-insurgency operations, or because armed conflict has directly undermined human and food security….
> *Type 2: State-Society Conflict-Induced Displacement…* – due to land confiscation by the *Tatmadaw* or other armed groups, including in the context of natural resource extraction….
> *Type 3: Livelihoods Vulnerability-Induced Displacement….* The main causes are inappropriate government policies and practices; limited availability of productive land; poor access to markets; food insecurity; lack of education and health services….[97]

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[93] Smith, *State of Strife*, 53.

[94] "Displaced Childhoods," 17.

[95] Metraux, "Burma's Modern Tragedy," 24.

[96] South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma*, 80.

[97] Ibid., 79-80.

South notes the resourcefulness of villagers in conflict zones, particularly those who have faced ongoing oppression and multiple displacements.[98] Although forced, one can also argue that migrants are decisive. Using the word decisive must not diminish any sense of the suffering migrants have faced; decisive, does however, draw in the conclusion above that Kachin people maintain a formidable independence.

These conclusions are advanced when the KC situation is considered. The KC have demonstrated considerable courage and determination through their refugee and resettlement experience: due to conflict, oppression and poverty the members of the KC have chosen to seek a future of freedom and safety. For all the terror and trials they have faced their independent spirit is also evident in their migration decision. The interview process demonstrates that South's Type 1 and Type 3 modes of displacement feature most prominently; with Type 3 most evident in comments around aspirations for their children. Where Type 3 emerges as significant further conclusions can be drawn. Most of the KC have family members who have chosen to stay in Burma. Migration has given the KC a means of coping with conflict, oppression and poverty; it has provided the means to choose freedom, security and hope for themselves and their children. This was by no means an easy decision. Many have left immediate family members, parents and children, with little expectation that they will see them again. Burmese migrants face many dangers as they leave for Thailand and Malaysia. Many KC members spoke of the fear of authorities, the difficulties and dangers of working as undocumented migrants and the uncertainty of achieving security in Thailand or Malaysia, or achieving refugee status with the United Nations; female members spoke of the fear of forced prostitution. All these uncertainties are faced in the choice of migration. The KC members are now in a place of relative freedom and security with the fear and oppression of Burma, Thailand and Malaysia behind them. The significance of their past experiences, together with the freedom they now have is felt very keenly by the KC. They feel the burden of their migration decision, grieving for family members in times of trial in Burma, Thailand and Malaysia; they feel the burden of responsibility as they now face an array of opportunities to advance their lives

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[98] Ibid., 88-89.

through education and employment; they feel the burden of responsibility to raise their children in the Christian faith in their New Zealand context. The KC experiences a strong sense of the burden of freedom.

Prayer is the primary spiritual tool in which this burden is expressed and experienced. Prayer is the leading spiritual discipline of the KC; it is a mainstay of their faith and brings an immediacy and living expression to their faith. Prayer is both a means of lightening the load of the burden of freedom, and also a means in which this burden is experienced. As the community turns to God in prayer, through a number of private and corporate disciplines, prayer becomes a tool of expression that engages their faith in a strong and present God, thus becoming a means of personal, inner strength. Equally, the expression that arises in their commitment to prayer regularly returns them to their burden of freedom. The corporate expressions of prayer in church services and small groups, and the commonality of the expressed needs perpetuate the burden of freedom. Thus, the burden of freedom is developed as an influential and corporate experience.

As discussed above, it is a conclusion of this chapter that the children of the KC members have a symbolic presence in the community. For the KC the burden of freedom they experience is demonstrated most clearly in the longing they have for, and the focus they put on their children. Their children represent and embody the values and goals of the KC. This is observed in the place children have in worship and celebration, and in the longing parents have for their children in their prayers and their hopes for education and employment. One aspect that brings me to this conclusion is an element of the interviews that is difficult to put into words. Not all communication, of course, comes through words and so cannot be easily recorded in this format; I refer to the poignancy that parents give to the focus on their children that reinforces the conclusion that children have a symbolic presence. When parents request prayer for their children it is most commonly accompanied by very expressive cues, such as a look of near anguish, a deep seriousness of verbal tone and facial expression. The repetition of these requests and cues, by individuals and across the community, reinforces that this deep concern for their children is much more than an isolated feature. I conclude that the children of the KC symbolise the history, decisions and hopes of the KC in a

meaningful and pervasive fashion; their children are the leading symbol of their burden of freedom.

To answer the thesis question the conclusions of chapter two become formative in the theological framework that will determine pastoral outcomes in chapter three. Understanding the devout faith of the KC, their commitment to prayer and the focus on their children all impact the pastoral outcomes of this study. An appreciation of the independent nature of the KC, their history of oppression and the burden of freedom they feel also informs the pastoral conclusions. The contextual study of chapter two forms a critical point of reference for the engagement of biblical themes and theological ideas in the progression to pastoral outcomes.

Chapter Three: A Theology for Resettlement

This thesis is using a four step process to determine pastoral outcomes for a former refugee faith community. Chapter two presented steps one and two discussing two areas of context. This third and final chapter presents steps three and four. Chapter three is introduced with a review of the bridging themes from chapter two. The third step in this theological process is then presented, in which biblical themes from the book of Jeremiah will be examined: prayers of lament are discussed as a theological resource for spiritual development; the call to covenantal fidelity, a major biblical theme epitomised in Jeremiah, emerges as a means of affirmation; and the call to citizenship responsibility presents the need for effective bridge building in new environments. Finally, pastoral outcomes are discussed: the place of prayer is considered, both for the strong spiritual presence this discipline has in the Kachin Christian Church [KC] community and also for how the prayer life of the community may be critiqued and developed for the purposes of spiritual maturation; and the role of the religious community is discussed as an important means of encouraging an integrated spirituality. Two areas are considered under the heading "integrated spirituality:" volunteering in local schools is discussed for its potential to address needs in the KC, in particular, as a way to constructively address the burden of freedom discussed in chapter two; and a reflection is offered on a political demonstration that was organised during the research period.

Bridging themes from chapter two

The conclusions of chapter two provide analytical themes for steps three and four in this process of migration theology. Steps one and two (chapter two) is a process of contextual study, listening and dialogue that seeks to determine the characteristics of a local community. This understanding of characteristics now integrates theological sources – bible, tradition, and experience – to formulate a theoretical framework that may be used for the final step of determining pastoral outcomes. The leading themes from chapter two that will be integrated in this chapter are as follows. The burden of freedom is an idea that encapsulates the experiences, hopes and desires of the KC that are set in contrast to and build on their refugee experience. Prayer, as the community's

leading spiritual discipline, is the primary means in which this burden of freedom is expressed, sustained and consoled. The children of the community are a focus and symbol of their burden of freedom. The KC has a strongly independent character, demonstrated in their courageous and sacrificial decisions in their migration experience, and now also seen in their resolute faith community life.

Jeremiah

I have chosen the book of Jeremiah as a resource for theological reflection. Typical in the literature on migration theology is the use of parallel themes from scripture. This may be in the form of taking a biblical story, such as the Israelites' exodus from Egypt or the journey into the Promised Land,[1] and highlighting similarities as connecting points for biblical teaching and spiritual development for a migrant community. Theological themes are also used in a similar way. For example, taking the theme of the incarnation, and drawing parallels with the migration experience for the spiritual nurture of a migrant community.[2]

There are noteworthy reasons to pursue this approach. First, it allows the bible to have a "word become flesh"/ incarnational presence for a community: as a faith community is able to relate their experience with the biblical story they are able to appropriate the presence of God and biblical affirmation and/ or correction from the biblical story. For example, chapter two highlighted the respondent who appropriated the stories of Daniel and Joseph to her own life to bring understanding and encouragement in difficult times. Jeremiah has a lot of potential in this regard: the story of Jeremiah includes God's interaction with the people of Judah during difficult times; this includes the migration of God's people into exile; and direct engagement with how God's people are to live in their migration context.

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[1] These themes are also prevalent in liberation theology.

[2] See the outline in chapter one of Daniel Groody's contribution to migration theology for examples.

Second, using readily accessible stories from the bible opens the possibility of probing broad theological themes for identified areas for spiritual development. Emmanuel Lartey notes this use of the bible in the formation of pastoral care.

> [Another] way in which study of Scripture has been related to pastoral care is through the discernment of deep structures within biblical literature. This is a process in which underlying themes and unifying conceptual threads are discovered through a close study of Scripture.[3]

The theme of covenantal fidelity is one such example from Jeremiah. The faithfulness of God's people in their covenant relationship to God is a major biblical theme that is epitomised in Jeremiah. This theme will be explored below. Addressing the underlying theological themes in the biblical text addresses the critique of Diane Bergant noted in chapter one. Bergant argues that simply finding parallel themes in the bible lacks exegetical integrity. More work is required, asserts Bergant, in probing the theological potential of the text in order to be faithful to the biblical story and in order to provide authentic biblical teaching.[4]

Third, Jeremiah has potential as a resource for constructive pastoral care. "Being 'constructive' involves seeking affirmations and assessments that are both descriptive and normative, expressing views both on what is and what ought to be."[5] Thus, in the movement to pastoral outcomes both affirmation and corrections are sought for the community, pointing the community to suggested areas of change and/ or development. In this regard the themes of prayer, anger with God and an integrated spirituality will be discussed below.

Fourth, exploring themes in Jeremiah allows the KC to approach an area of Scripture that they have previously found difficult. In the early part of the ethnographic analysis it was identified that the Psalms, Gospels and other New Testament texts were rated by respondents as the most read and easiest to understand parts of the bible; in contrast Old

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[3] Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2006), 33.

[4] Diane Bergant, "Ruth: The Migrant Who Saved the People," in *Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization*, ed. Gioacchino Campese and Pietro Ciallella (Staten Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies, 2003) 49-61.

[5] Lartey, *Pastoral Theology*, 15.

Testament stories and Old Testament prophets were rated as the least read and hardest to understand. One of the goals of using the book of Jeremiah is to allow the community to broaden its understanding and appreciation for the biblical text.

Finally, although Jeremiah is an obvious text for migration theology due to its parallel themes of exilic migration it is not a text that has been used extensively in the literature on migration theology. Jeremiah has potential as a key text for migration theology as it presents a story of migration of a vanquished nation. A lot of thought is given to the Exodus and Promised Land stories in migration theology. One inherent weakness of these stories is that they are from the point of view of victorious and conquering people. Although this may engender hope, encouragement and motivation for migrant people it does not address the root experience of forced migrants. People who endure forced migration today are not the conquering and victorious people of the world; rather, the root causes of forced migration are oppression, violence and poverty. Another goal in engaging the book of Jeremiah is to explore its potential as a text for migration theology.

My method of study for this step of theological analysis went as follows. After choosing Jeremiah as a text, for the reasons cited above, and identifying potential passages and themes for further reflection, I engaged a process of exegetical study for each key text. In this exegetical process I first sought to draw my own conclusions on the text, prior to consulting articles and commentaries.[6] Therefore, in the discussion below, biblical commentators are cited where they brought affirmation to the conclusions I had drawn, or where they challenged my conclusions, or brought new matters to light.

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[6] One exception to this was my prior reading of Walter Brueggemann's "The Costly Loss of Lament," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36 (1986): 57-71. Brueggemann's reflection on prayers of lament and his commentary on Jeremiah make a leading contribution to this thesis.

Costly Loss of Lament[7]: "Is the Lord not in Zion?" (Jer 8:19)

One of the more significant areas of data gathering in the ethnographic process was the question "Have you ever been angry with God?" and the ensuing comments, stories and conversation. The issue of anger with God has emerged as a significant experience for the KC, it has been formative in their spirituality and presents as a need for further reflection. The interface of this theme with the pastoral needs of the community is discussed below. Here I consider some of the theological implications of anger with God from a biblical perspective.

Anger with God may be characterised by the conclusion that "things are not right." This conclusion, when directed to God in faith, very often comes with the assertion that things should change, and, furthermore, God can act to bring about this change. Walter Brueggemann explores this idea examining prayers of lament in the Psalms. He notes:

> The lament Psalms… are a complaint which makes the shrill insistence:
> 1. Thing are not right in the present arrangement.
> 2. They need not stay this way but can be changed.
> 3. The speaker will not accept them in this way, for it is intolerable.
> 4. It is God's obligation to change things.[8]

Brueggemann's insights have special significance for the themes of this thesis. He argues that the lament form makes a vital contribution both to spiritual maturity and public justice. In regard to spiritual maturity Brueggemann considers a parallel in child psychology – "object-relations theory." The argument being, if a child is to develop ego strength, to develop a well-rounded independence and individuality, that is, a true self, a child must have initiative in relation to the parent. The parent, in turn, must be responsive to the child. The negative side of this theory is in the event that the parent does not respond to the child's initiative, the child's role becomes one of compliance and the true self is subjugated. In relation to spirituality Brueggemann develops the following:

> We can draw a suggestive analogy from this understanding of the infant/ mother relationship for our study of the lament. Where there is lament, the believer is able

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[7] This title is taken from the abovementioned article by Brueggemann. Ibid., 57.

[8] Ibid., 62.

to take initiative with God and so develop over against God the ego strength that is necessary for responsible faith….

I do not suggest that biblical faith be reduced to psychological categories, but I find this parallel suggestive. It suggests that the God who evokes and responds to lament is not omnipresent in any conventional sense or surrounded by docile reactors. Rather, this God is like a mother who dreams with this infant, that the infant may some day grow into a responsible, mature covenant partner who can enter into serious communion and conversation. In such a serious conversation and communion, there comes genuine obedience, which is not a contrived need to please, but a genuine, yielding commitment.[9]

Thus, without lament as a category for prayer our spirituality is robbed: one, of the opportunity to validate and address the strong feelings of anger, frustration and fear; and two, we are robbed of the opportunity to develop a responsive and mature faith.

In regard to public justice the lament form keeps the issue of justice visible and legitimate.[10] The absence of lament results in the "*stifling of the question of theodicy.*"[11] Lament begins with the assertion that things are not right, and leads to the assertion that change must be insisted upon. The lament form, then, brings the believing community to the necessity of action, and before a God who does justice. The loss of lament may relate strongly to subjugation; Brueggemann introduces a critical analysis in the failure to engage the lament form:

A community of faith which negates laments soon concludes that the hard issues of justice are improper questions to pose at the throne, because the throne seems to be only a place of praise. I believe it thus follows that if justice questions are improper questions at the throne…, they soon appear to be improper questions in public places, in schools, in hospitals, with the government, and eventually even in the courts. Justice questions disappear into civility and docility. The order of the day comes to seem absolute, beyond question, and we are left with only grim obedience and eventually despair.[12]

Brueggemann's insights, although aimed at a very general audience, are particularly salient for the KC. When the experience of the KC is taken into consideration probing

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[9] Ibid., 61.

[10] Ibid., 63.

[11] Ibid., 61.

[12] Ibid., 64.

questions are raised: has a culture of subjugation in Burma – unable to protest, publish or meet publicly – contributed to a spirituality of subjugation where a form of protest to God is deemed shameful, immature and unacceptable (as is the conclusion of many in the KC)? Has the absence of the lament form resulted in an underdeveloped spirituality in the KC? And, how can the use of the lament form be used for matters of social justice and for the pastoral nurture of the KC? These questions will be taken up in step four, "A Theology for Resettlement."

The use of the lament form, then, is argued to have an important contribution toward practical outcomes for faith communities. Brueggemann highlights the pastoral potential and necessity of the lament form: "[b]oth *psychological inauthenticity* and *social immobility* may be derived from the loss of these texts. If we care about authenticity and justice, the recovery of these texts is urgent."[13] The lament theme in Jeremiah will be explored here for its use in developing pastoral outcomes.

Jeremiah 14:19-22[14]
> *19 Have you completely rejected Judah?*
> *Does your heart loathe Zion?*
> *Why have you struck us down*
> *So that there is no healing for us?*
> *We look for peace, but find no good;*
> *For a time of healing, but there is terror instead.*
>
> *20 We acknowledge our wickedness, O LORD,*
> *The iniquity of our ancestors,*
> *For we have sinned against you.*
>
> *21 Do not spurn us, for your name's sake;*
> *Do not dishonor your glorious throne;*
> *Remember and do not break your covenant with us.*
>
> *22 Can any idols of the nations bring rain?*
> *Or can the heavens give showers?*
> *Is it not you, O LORD our God?*

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[13] Ibid., 67.

[14] Scripture citations are taken from *The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments: New Revised Standard Version* (London: Bath Press, 1997).

We set our hope on you,
For it is you who do all this.

The following discussion highlights exegetical observations that are pertinent to the development of pastoral outcomes and observations relating to prayer in particular. Jeremiah 14:19-22 is a succinct prayer of lament that follows a similar pattern to that identified by Brueggemann in the lament Psalms and also bridges into the theme of covenant that will be explored below. The lament opens in verse 19 with strong and accusatory questions firmly directed at God, "Have you completely rejected Judah? Does your heart loathe Zion? Why have you struck us down so that there is no healing for us?" These three questions introduce the lament: they lead into the context elaborated in 19b; provide a pretext for the statement of confession in 20; they complement the three direct propositions in 21; and act as a foil to the faith/ praise statement that concludes the lament in 22.

Notably the four characteristics of lament Psalms, identified by Brueggemann[15] are each evident in this short lament, in the same order:

1. *Things are not right in the present arrangement*: in 19 this comes in the despairing statement, "We look for peace, but find no good; for a time of healing, but there is terror instead."

2. *They need not stay this way but can be changed*: this aspect of the lament form is not strong in this passage, but may be noted in the repentant statement in 20, "We acknowledge our wickedness, O LORD, the iniquity of our ancestors, for we have sinned against you;" in accepting past sins the lament hints at the possibility of God turning to save the people, as the people turn to God.[16] The belief that change is possible is also evident in the three appeal statements in 21.

3. *The speaker will not accept them in this way, for it is intolerable*. This assertion comes in the form of three strong propositions in verse 21, beginning in the

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[15] Brueggemann, "The Costly Loss of Lament," 62.

[16] As in Isa 45:22, "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other."

NRSV with "Do not": "Do not spurn us, for your name's sake; do not dishonour your glorious throne; remember and do not break your covenant with us."

4. *It is God's obligation to change things*. The lament concludes with a faith/ praise statement in 22: affirming God's power in contrast to the idols of the world, perhaps indicating a repentant decision to turn away from idols, "Can any idols of the nations bring rain?;" and in sharp progression from the opening lines in verse 19 the lament affirms, "Is it not you, O LORD our God? We set our hope on you, for it is you who do all this."

This lament exposes the raw vulnerability of the human condition before God. It is an example of vulnerability appropriate before the throne of God and thus demonstrates the potential language of our own prayers. A number of points in this regard may be noted. Confronting the reader/ hearer of this lament is the emotional interaction the writer/ speaker is engaged in with God. The language, on the one hand, is strong, searching and demanding; yet, by contrast, it is also humble, repentant and faithful. It is the strong and demanding language that is first most noticeable with the potent language of question and appeal. For those unfamiliar with the lament form the opening questions in 19 are fearsome and direct: "Have you completely rejected Judah? Does your heart loathe Zion? Why have you struck us down…?" In these opening questions the responsibility of the fate of Judah is placed firmly in the hands of God. The lament thus affirms the faith position that all that happens in life is under God's watchful eye, that God is powerful and can bring change. The measure of faith inherent in these questions, and later directly affirmed in 22, must not be overlooked or understated. There is a great difference between an angry question that denies or doubts God's power or mercy and one that affirms the power and mercy of God. This lament, then, must be read as a whole, allowing the faith, hope and praise of 22 to inform the abrupt accusations of 19. This observation is important for a pastoral reading of this passage. One may conclude that an angry, searching question of God does not deny faith or the goodness of God; one's feelings of anger and lack of understanding may be validated by this prayer and given a platform for one's own prayerful expression before God. It may be argued that this lament exposes the raw vulnerability of prayer, found in this instance in the vulnerable honesty of addressing a powerful God using the language of question.

The vulnerability evident in this prayer is further exposed when the two principle subjects of this lament are considered: tragic experience; and the individual/ community before God. The immediate context of the lament exposes a potentially devastating vulnerability. Apart from the military oppression that forms the backdrop to much of Jeremiah, the beginning of chapter 14 is a response to a drought (first raised in Jeremiah 3:3). Verse 19 could be applied to either military oppression or famine, although the statement, "We look for peace, but find no good," suggests the experience of war; the reference to "rain" and "showers" in 22 suggests that drought is the presenting concern. William Holladay notes, "two traditional scourges, famine and sword, become real for Judah. The sword was at the moment only potential: it had been real in Ashkelon in 604 and would become real again in Jerusalem in 598. But famine loomed. And in all this [Jeremiah] saw the hand of Yahweh…."[17] The strong words of 19 portray great despair, even of life itself, in response to present experience.

Vulnerability before God is a leading theme. Despite the temporal matters of 19 (war and/ or famine) the lament affirms that they are in the hands of God, that their vulnerability is ultimately a matter between them and God. This is affirmed in the questions of God in 19, the confession of 20, the appeal of 21 and the faith of 22. Knowing that Judah is at God's mercy the lament moves quickly, in 20, to repentance, stating that their sin is against God, giving evidence to the community's vulnerability to sin and the destructive outcomes of sin. Inherent in the lament is an understanding that God is ultimately merciful. This is most noticeable in the propositions of 21: the requests "do not spurn us," and "remember and do not break your covenant with us," give faith to a God who will act in favour toward his people. The faith, hope and praise of 22 presents as a logical and important progression and conclusion to the prayer: if God is indeed merciful, if God will receive them in repentance and if God may be called

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[17] William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, ed. Paul D. Hanson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 443-444.

upon to remember the covenant, then faith, hope and praise become a natural and even necessary response.

The language of appeal warrants further comment when exploring the theme of vulnerability and its relationship to prayer. The three propositions of 21 make a threefold appeal to God; appealing to the name of God, the throne of God and the covenant of God with the people.[18] The faith of 22 is again evident in the appeal of 21. The lament affirms in 21 the faithfulness of God to his covenant relationship with Judah, it affirms in faith that God's name is to be upheld and that God's throne is to be honoured. The propositions form a request for God to act and bring needed change. Thus returning to the theme that things are not right in the present arrangement: God's name, throne and covenant are all at stake because of the state of God's people. This is daring language as the lament now raises the issue of the vulnerability of God's name/ throne/ covenant in the eyes of Judah and/or the eyes of the nations.

> The urgent, relentless petition continues. In v. 20, as in v.7, there is an admission of guilt. In v.21, as in v.7, there is appeal to God's self-interest. The full force of the appeal now no longer rests on Judah's guilt or on Judah's merit, or even on God's commitment to Judah. The force of the appeal is the enhancement of Yahweh and Yahweh's throne. The poet urges Yahweh to act only to maintain Yahweh's reputation.[19]

These categories are of great concern to the writer/ speaker and the use of appeal provides potent language in which to engage with God in prayer: the backdrop to the appeal is the tragic experience of the people; the appeal is used to bring the lament firmly before the majesty of God, refusing to keep the language in the devastation of the immediate context, or in the sin of the people; the language of appeal brings the covenant community to a place of faith before God and prepares the way for the progression to praise and hope.

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[18] John Thompson argues that "[t]here is a strange inconsistency in this plea, since it lays stress on Yahweh's obligations and overlooks the strong obligations of Israel to Yahweh." John A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison, Robert L. Hubbard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 386. This comment, however, overlooks the preceding verse confessing both contemporary and historical sins, which, in the brevity of this lament, may insinuate a commitment to repentance. That being said, Chapter 15 goes on to note the inevitability of punishment which suggests that any note of repentance was insincere.

[19] Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 140.

From this discussion it may now be concluded that the sharp progression, noted above, between the accusations of 19 and the praise of 22 is now more clearly a progression of thought and emotion. This is a critical observation for a pastoral reading of this text. The angry and accusing language of 19 progresses to words of peace and hope in 22. This progression has come about through an honest and even tumultuous struggle with God in prayer. The example of this lament points to the conclusion that honest, emotional (angry) and searching language, engaging thoroughly with temporal concerns, may serve as a pretext to confession, repentance, praise and faith. As noted above, the strong, searching and demanding language is complemented in this lament with humble, repentant and faithful language. The lament form suggests, evident in Jeremiah 14.19-22, that authentic faith and praise may be experienced through a process of honest and open engagement with God.

Identifying and articulating the theme of vulnerability in this passage takes up Diane Bergant's critique noted in chapter one.

> In some circles what is called biblical theology is really a use of biblical passages as proof-texts to legitimate some current reality. This technique does not read the biblical material within its own literary or historical contexts and, consequently, does not accurately deal with the theological meanings that the text itself might yield.[20]

Vulnerability is thus highlighted in the reading of this text, arguing that this is a principal theological theme, which contributes to an authentic reading of the text and may contribute meaningfully to a pastoral response.

Covenantal fidelity: "So shall you be my people, and I will be your God" (Jer 11:4)

God's covenant with Israel is a major theme of the Old Testament Scriptures that has a central place in the book of Jeremiah;[21] covenantal fidelity presents as a useful theme

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[20] Bergant, "Ruth: The Migrant Who Saved the People," 49.

[21] "Central to [Jeremiah's] proclamation is the covenant established by Yahweh with Israel." William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 26-52*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, ed. Paul D. Hanson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 78. "Jeremiah's reading is not shaped by power politics but by the categories of Israel's covenantal traditions of faith, which concern the holy purpose and power of Yahweh and the aches and hopes of the

for the development of pastoral outcomes. A dominant theme in the early part of the book (Jeremiah 2.1 – 4.4) is God's relationship with Israel, concentrating on the faithlessness of Israel over time and the call to repentance. Faithlessness on Israel's part and God's pending judgement continue as a central theme in chapters 4-10. The theme of the covenant can be assumed as present but unstated in these early chapters of the book with its focus on faithfulness and judgement. It is in chapter 11, however, where the covenant between God and Israel gets a thorough treatment for the first time; returning again in chapters 31-34 with the introduction of the "new covenant" to come. This concentrated treatment in chapter 11 is a helpful resource, allowing the reader a window into this broad theme of Jeremiah and the Old Testament through a short selection of verses. This exploration of a broad theological theme through an itemised text presents itself, therefore, as a useful resource for exploring pastoral outcomes that emerge from an authentic treatment of the biblical story.

In Jeremiah 11:1-17 Judah is solemnly warned that obedience is the mark of the covenant people. The command to obey God is given both historical and contemporary treatment with the relationship of obedience to covenantal fidelity firmly stated. Verses 3-5 return the reader to God's command given to Israel as God delivered them from Egypt, "Listen to my voice, and do all that I command you." These verses state clearly that it is listening and obedience that are the actions required of Israel in the covenant relationship: in listening and obedience Israel "shall be my people, and I will be your God, that I may perform the oath that I swore to your ancestors, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day." In 3-5 God's covenantal responsibilities are listed alongside those of Israel, affirming the two way nature of the covenant agreement.[22]

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faithful community." Walter Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down: A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah 1-25*, International Theological Commentary, ed. Fredrick Carlson Holmgren, George A. F. Knight (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 2-3.

[22] "Judah needed to be recalled to the historic Sinai event when God promised to supply the material and spiritual needs of his people in their infancy as a nation, in return for their undivided worship and obedience." Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 344.

The historical survey of Israel's disobedience to the covenant requirements are further developed as an example to avoid. Verses 6-8 restate the call for Israel to obey God and states again Israel's disobedience. These verses now introduce the contrasting parallel to 3-5: God's covenantal responsibility to provide "a land flowing with milk and honey" is earlier stated; now, in 6-8, the contrasting responsibility of God to respond to disobedience is given, "So I brought upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not."[23] This historical survey of the covenant is presented as an example to "the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem" (verse 6) as a warning and a renewed call to obedience, "Hear the words of this covenant and do them" (verse 6).[24]

The relationship of Judah with their ancestors is developed as a theme throughout this passage. As above, this theme is first used in the form of a historical survey of the covenant relationship, noting that obedience is the mark of the covenant relationship and the use of Israel as an example to avoid. Verses 9-13 develop the theme of Judah's relationship with their ancestors stating that although the command to obey God and be faithful to the covenant still stands (verse 6) they are one with their ancestors in their disobedience, "[t]hey have turned back to the iniquities of their ancestors of old, who refused to heed my words; they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken the covenant that I made with their ancestors" (verse 10). The contrast with Judah's ancestors continues in 11, now being assured of the same punishment in response to the same issue of disobedience, "[t]herefore, thus says the LORD, assuredly I am going to bring disaster upon them that they cannot escape…."

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[23] "The ruin and disaster that befell Judah and Jerusalem could therefore be understood as the inevitable and necessary negative aspect of the relationship implicit in the covenant." Ronald E. Clements, *Jeremiah,* Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, ed. James L. Mays, Patrick D. Miller (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 75.

[24] "[I]n a wide-ranging review of Israel's past history the prophet spoke of the solemn warnings issued during the centuries up to their own day without avail. The call was *Obey my voice*." Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 344.

The passage concludes in verses 11-17 with a statement of the hopelessness of Judah's position in response to their disobedience and further illustrates the extent of their disobedience. The situation is hopeless on two counts. First, Judah's situation has got so bad that the LORD has now resolved to execute the punishment that is due and will no longer be responsive to their cries, "though they cry out to me, I will not listen to them" (verse 11); and two, because of Judah's idolatry. The issue of idolatry emerges in 12 and continues through to the end of the passage in 17. It is predicted that Judah will undertake the futile action of seeking the help of other gods and that their gods "have become as many as your towns" (verse 13). That idolatry is a principal issue in God's resolve to bring judgement is made clear throughout the concluding verses, stating, finally, that Judah has provoked the LORD "to anger by making offerings to Baal" (verse 17).

The theological message of Jeremiah 11:1-17 can be identified in the relationship between the theme of the covenant with the historical survey of the actions of Israel and Judah. The reader is left with the message that obedience to the covenant has always been, and remains to be, the mark of God's people. This theme returns throughout the book of Jeremiah and is arguably a leading purpose of the book: "[t]he prophet thought of himself as one who called the nation to fidelity in her ancient covenant with God…. The nation must live in faithful obedience as required at Sinai; they must love God with all their heart and soul and flee from idols – if they are to possess the land (chap. 11);"[25] "[f]or Jeremiah… the only possible attitude that human beings can adopt to God is one of absolute obedience. This takes specific form in love and faithfulness…."[26] In Chapter 11 contemporary Judah is shown to be one with ancient Israel: in the call to obedience as the mark of covenantal fidelity; in their disobedience; in ensuing judgement; and ultimately in the lesson to be learnt from their bad example. The enduring message of this passage that may be used for pastoral outcomes is, therefore, that obedience is the mark of God's covenant people.

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[25] Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 297-298.

[26] J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament: From its Origins to the Closing of the Alexandrian Canon*, 3rd ed. trans. by John Bowden (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1989), 347.

Citizenship responsibility: "Seek the welfare of the city I have sent you" (Jer 29:7)

Jeremiah has been chosen for this study in migration theology because of its parallel theme of forced migration and the opportunity to probe this theme for theological insight. Jeremiah 29:1-14 is a passage with obvious parallels with its theme of living in a foreign environment. Jeremiah 29 presents many possibilities for exploring pastoral outcomes for a theology of migration, primarily through the pastoral questions that are addressed in the text. As discussed in chapter one many questions are raised for forced migrants as they confront the rigours of resettlement: how are they to remain faithful to their values and practices whilst establishing a mutually agreeable relationship with the host country? For people of faith, searching questions are raised: where is God?; is God in control? The KC, however, find little reason to question the place and power of God. Their devout faith unswervingly affirms God's presence in their new environment and their independent spirit guards against temptations that may exist in the host country. The pastoral needs for the KC centre on the need to integrate their faith with their daily challenges of family life, language learning, education and employment. Jeremiah 29:1-14 will be explored here as a theological resource to this end before developing this theme for pastoral outcomes below.

In Jeremiah 29:1-14 the exiles from Jerusalem are instructed in how to live under a sovereign God in a foreign land. Two principal themes emerge: first, the theme of God's control over the situation, past, present and future; and second, the responsibilities of the exiles. God's control is the first thing that confronts the reader as soon as God's words are uttered by the prophet. In verse 1 the passage is introduced as a letter sent by Jeremiah to the exiles "whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon." This is contrasted only a few lines later in 4, the prophecy begins with God's words, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles *whom I have sent* into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon…" (emphasis added). The LORD is established in this verse as the instigator of the exile, Nebuchadnezzar is thus seen as the LORD's instrument. Throughout the narrative in Jeremiah, prior to chapter 29, there is a long progression of prophesied terror and the call to repentance;

the reader of Jeremiah is trained to see the exile as God's righteous judgement. The reader is also trained to identify God's forbearance and mercy.[27] There have been many calls to repentance, with the promise of God's healing and help (Jer 3:22; 4:1-2; 7:3-7; 22:3-5). Even now, with God's judgment meted out as promised, a path of obedience, provision and ensuing hope is given. Jeremiah 29 is notable for its plan and purpose. Exile may be God's judgement, but God has not left his people. Just as Nebuchadnezzar is God's instrument the exile is also a place for the people of God to prosper. Moreover, the text is full of hope: the people are to pray, they are to number their days and look to the allotted time in which the exiles will return. As before the call to faithfulness in seeking God is accompanied by considerable promise. Thus, Jeremiah 29 emerges as a helpful theological resource presenting God as having a sovereign and controlling presence in the life of the exiles.

The second principal theme in Jeremiah 29:1-14 is the responsibilities of the exiles. Four commands are listed each with a secondary clause: i, build houses, ia live in them; ii plant gardens, iia eat what they produce; iii take wives, iiia have sons and daughters; iv take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, iva that your sons and daughters may bear children. A concluding and summarising command is then given at the end of verse 6, "multiply there, and do not decrease." The theme of prosperity is continued in verse 7, now with the horizons stretched to include the host nation, "[b]ut seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." Spiritual disciplines and practical activities are in view: the exiles are instructed to pray for their host nation; and "seek the welfare of the city" will at least include the business/ household practices already mentioned, "build houses" and "plant gardens." There are to be, therefore, no isolationist policies as the exiles go about looking after their own, "for in its welfare you

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[27] Walter Brueggemann develops the idea of "the pathos of Yahweh" in relation to Israel. "The juxtaposition of covenant claim and pathos makes clear that God is, in the life of Judah, more complex, free, and less controllable than a simple scheme of retribution would suggest. It is this greater complexity in the character of God that the rich rhetoric of the book of Jeremiah seeks to articulate. The theological richness of Yahweh's character evokes and requires a subtle rhetoric that is full of ambiguity, passion, and incongruity. The book of Jeremiah is so powerful and compelling because it has a mode of expression appropriate to its astonishing subject." Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down*, 5.

will find your welfare" (verse 7). Brueggemann identifies the citizenship responsibilities inherent in this passage: "the community is invited into the larger public process of the empire. Such a horizon prevents the exilic community from withdrawing into its own safe, sectarian existence, and gives it work to do and responsibility for the larger community."[28]

Affirming that God is in control the exiles are to take a long range and spiritual view of all that is happening. They are to resist the instructions of false prophets, "[d]o not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream…" (verse 8). The exiles are to trust that God is over these events, "[o]nly when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise…" (verse 10). Belief that God will restore the fortunes of the exilic community is to dominate their thinking and motivate them in a process of dedicated prayer.

> For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile (Jer 29:11-14).

From this text two key activities emerge that are to be characteristic of the exilic community, one, the work of settlement (build homes, plant gardens and bear children) and two, the discipline of spiritual seeking, devoted in prayer, seeking the LORD with all their heart. Both of these activities recur in Scripture at critical points and can be argued as transcending the specific context of the exiles in Jeremiah's time. For example, the work of settlement and the instruction to multiply was given to the new creation in Genesis 1:28, to Noah and his children (Gen 9:1), and in the form of a promise to Israel as they entered the promised land (Deut 6:3). Although the context is far removed from the original creation in Genesis 1:28, or from Noah setting forth from the Ark in Genesis 9:1, or from the victory and hope associated with the promised land,

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[28] Brueggemann, *Exile and Homecoming*, 258.

God's instructions to the exiles in Babylon are remarkably similar: settle and prosper.
The community of God's people, in Jeremiah 29, are simply being returned to familiar
instructions on citizenship responsibility. "[P]lant gardens and eat what they produce"
and "bear sons and daughters" parallel the first instructions that God gave to
humankind: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28); "See,
I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and
every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food" (Gen 1:29).[29] What is
added in Jeremiah 29 is concern for the welfare of their foreign host. This concern is
bracketed by two considerations: one, God's ultimate concern for the exiles, "in its
welfare you will find your welfare;" and two, the faith that God is in control, even in
defeat and exile. Thus, citizenship responsibility is a leading theological theme in this
text; in parallel with the Genesis citations above this theme may be summarised as
"settle and prosper."

Important pastoral observations emerge from this text. The command to settle and
prosper returns the exilic community to the creation story, to the new creation for Noah
and to the creation of new life in the promised land. In this way the exiles are taught to
think of their new environment in the positive category of new creation and with the
consequent purpose and hope that emerges from this perspective. The two thematic
commands of Jeremiah 29:1-14 serve a pastoral function for the exilic community.
Like the command to settle and prosper, the command to "seek the LORD" or "wait on
the LORD" also transcends the context of the exiles in Jeremiah's time. These
commands return the exiles to familiar words and practices (for example, Psalm 27:14,
40:1; Isaiah 55:6). This continuity of command has an obvious pastoral application.
On the one hand everything has changed, Judah and Jerusalem have been overrun and
God's people now live in a challenging new environment; on the other hand, through
the prophet the people are told that critical points of continuity remain. Settle and
prosper and seek the LORD are commands that remind the exiled community that they

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[29] Jack Lundbom makes a similar reading of this text stating: "It is a new creation. The exiles must be
fruitful and multiply, just like their ancestors who were slaves in Egypt." Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-
36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell
Albright, David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 359.

are still God's people and that they are to continue with the actions that characterise God's people. Continuity serves the community in giving them purpose, and continuity is presented as an emblem of hope and peace.

Pastoral outcomes

This section culminates the four-step theological process of chapters two and three. This process has been used to form a response to the thesis question, determining pastoral outcomes for the KC through a critical use of migration theology. As stated at the beginning of chapter two this fourth and final step seeks "to empower economic, social, cultural, political, and religious rootedness."[30] This commitment "has to be accompanied by the task of humanization of the societies of destination, so that they are hospitable societies, facilitating full citizenship for the migrants."[31] There are many possibilities that could be explored at this point of the study. For the purposes of this thesis, seeking to build on each part of the study, the pastoral outcomes will be discussed under two headings: prayer and an integrated spirituality. These headings provide a means to probe the significance of the context discussed in chapter two and allow a meaningful interaction with the biblical/ theological discussion in the first part of this chapter. Prior to these headings being discussed is a further insight from Walter Brueggemann regarding the outcomes that may emerge from a study of Jeremiah; this is outlined as a bridge from contextual and biblical study to pastoral outcomes.

Brueggemann argues that the Jeremiah text speaks with considerable force, one in which we must take our present experience and submit it to the text for discernment. In the hermeneutical process, Brueggemann argues, "[i]t is our situation, not the text, that requires new interpretation."

> [T]he text is so powerful and compelling, so passionate and uncompromising in its anguish and hope, that it requires we submit our experience to it and thereby reenter our experience on new terms, namely the terms of the text. The text does not need to

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[30] Jorge E. Castillo Guerra, "A Theology of Migration: Toward an Intercultural Methodology," in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*, ed. Daniel Groody and Gioacchino Campese (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 262.

[31] Ibid.

be *applied* to our situation. Rather, our situation needs to be *submitted* to the text for a fresh discernment.[32]

Brueggemann notes that this is particularly important to allow a God centred interpretation of our current situation; an interpretation that allows the hope of God to be a present reality and not to be left in despair.

> If we fail to hear the [Jeremiah] text, we may succumb to a fraudulent discernment of our situation. Like ancient Jerusalem, we shall imagine that the present is decided by the policies of the empire and not by the pathos of the holy, faithful God. Like ancient exiles, we may imagine that our situation is occupied only by despair and alienation, that God's arm is shortened and there is none to comfort…. Everything depends on the text, for without this transformative, critical, liberating, subversive speech, we shall live in a speechless, textless world that is always misunderstood.[33]

The three passages from Jeremiah explored in the first half of this chapter will be used to give expression to the pastoral imperative that Brueggemann outlines in the above quotes. Key interpretive questions need to be asked: what, from the Jeremiah text, demands our attention in the way that Brueggemann suggests? And, in what ways can these biblical priorities shape pastoral outcomes? In response to these questions lament will be used as a means of appropriate and liberating speech before God, a means of spiritual seeking, allowing the migrant community to find expression, hope and spiritual maturation in their vulnerability before a sovereign God; God's call to covenant fidelity will reassure the migrant community of God's enduring call to obedience throughout history, and to be returned again to hope in a God who is in covenant with his people; and the call to citizenship responsibility will allow the community to think in the terms of new creation and to receive again, as God's people have repeatedly done, the call to settle and prosper, and be encouraged to live this out in meaningful ways.

These responses, which will be outlined below, form a practical theology, becoming a means of addressing the needs of the community. Pastoral goals will be achieved in focusing on the concerns of the community in meaningful ways, providing spiritual and practical tools to address the burden they feel, and, as appropriate, to ease or release that burden. In this way forming an empathetic theology that serves the community in their resettlement experience.

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[32] Brueggemann, *Exile and Homecoming*, 18.

[33] Ibid., 18-19.

Prayer

A focus on prayer in forming pastoral outcomes allows critical insights from each part of the theological process to be integrated to serve the pastoral needs of the KC. Prayer will be a means of affirmation and will also challenge the community in their spiritual development; it will serve as an important means of addressing their presenting needs in a form that affirms their strongest spiritual values. Under the heading of prayer the lament form will be discussed as a means of validating and expressing their challenging experiences. Lament will equip the community with a robust spirituality, using the language of question, repentance, appeal and praise to seek God in a spirit of hope and faith.

Two key areas identified in chapter two emerge as significant for the pastoral needs of the KC: first, prayer was identified as the leading spiritual discipline of the community; second, closely related to the practice of prayer was the theme of anger with God. "Have you ever been angry with God?" and its associated discussion proved to be one of the most fruitful and insightful discussions in the contextual analysis. In individual and group contexts it was immediately clear that anger with God was important as either a current or historical issue. It became clear that members of the community had grappled with this issue, many of them concluding that it is shameful and unacceptable to have feelings of anger with God. Although there are exceptions I summarise the community's position of this issue as "I have been angry with God; it is not alright to be angry with God." In reflection on the prayers of lament in Scripture, with the many forthright questions that expose feelings of anger, I conclude that anger with or before God is neither shameful nor unacceptable. Rather, these feelings of anger, that expose one's vulnerability in the world and before God, can be used constructively in an honouring and appropriate approach before God. Equipping the KC with this understanding and means of prayer will be instrumental in the pastoral nurture of the community.

The study of the general context of Kachin people provides further argument for the importance of prayers of lament. Emmanuel Lartey affirms that a study of context

provides a means of discerning the presence of God and for further discernment of the pastoral needs of a community.

> Contextual analysis can be understood as a way of discerning and seeking to hear what God may be saying out of the different exigencies of the human condition as experienced in different contexts. It is also a means of understanding the reality of the human experience that pastoral theologians seek to care for. Careful attention to historical, socio-economic, cultural and political circumstances is crucial for theological discernment….[34]

In the analysis of the general context it was identified that conflict, oppression and poverty have been formative influences in the lives of Kachin people. A sense of hopelessness dominates in response to these issues. For example, not being able to obtain education or being suitably employed if one were to receive an education dominates the minds of people growing up in Kachin State; fear of the military regime and ongoing conflict and oppression are a part of Kachin experience and culture. Migration, with its associated grief, fear, hardship and uncertainty, has been a means of escape and a coping mechanism in response to hardship at home. The findings in the contextual study illuminate the trauma of forced migration and further illustrate the pastoral needs of the community. As Lartey raises above, how can this understanding of context be used to discern the presence of God and respond pastorally to those affected by these experiences? How can a devout Christian community express these experiences in a way that is affirming, constructive and healing? The lament form may be utilised as a response to these questions.

The book of Jeremiah has been examined above as a useful tool to respond to the pastoral needs of the KC. The themes of Jeremiah interface well with the values and experiences of the KC. In particular, prayers of lament provide salient points of connection. As a form of prayer the lament form may be used to connect with the KC's leading spiritual discipline. The lament form includes searching and forthright language that expresses anger, question and frustration. Importantly, the lament form does not remain entrenched in anger, question or frustration, but constructively progresses to self-examination through confession and repentance, affirms an honouring approach to God by appealing to the attributes of God and progresses to a position of faith, hope and

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[34] Lartey, *Pastoral Theology*, 42.

praise in who God is and ultimately in what God alone can achieve. Taught and used appropriately the lament form is a constructive pastoral tool.

A community taught to use the lament form is thus armed with a means of expression that may be healing, bringing the community before a God of comfort.
In response to Jeremiah's lament in Jeremiah 14 Jack Lundbom reflects, "[m]ass killings, whether from war or terrorism, shock the imagination and render numb the sensibilities of those who come upon such horrors."[35] Scriptural words of lament can be used to awaken our sensibilities and provide needed words that express and respond meaningfully to the shocking events faced in the world.

Illustrating Brueggemann's assertion above, the lament form is a tool in which the KC may submit their experience to the Jeremiah text and before the nature of God revealed in Jeremiah. The lament form, in its forthright and searching language, confronts and challenges the community. It confronts the community with language they have previously deemed inappropriate or shameful; it challenges them to express their experiences and deepest feelings before a God who may be addressed in this way. At the same time it asks the community not to remain in these words of despair, but lifts the community beyond the challenges of daily life to hope in a God who is over all things, in whom we may extend our hope, faith and praise. Used as a pastoral progression that exposes our vulnerability to the things of this world and before a sovereign God, that leads the community to the potentialities of healing and release in faith in a God who cares, submission to the textual example of the lament form is a significant pastoral response to Scripture.

The message of hope is a leading theme of Jeremiah and an appropriate conclusion to draw for our present day reading of the text. This insight is important as misleading interpretive parallels may be drawn. The terror forewarned and faced by Judah and Jerusalem in the story of Jeremiah is clearly stated as God's righteous punishment in

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[35] Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright, David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 714.

response to the disobedience and apostasy of the people. Concluding from Jeremiah that present day hardships must therefore be God's response to personal disobedience would be unhelpful and misleading. Rather, the leading theological theme that emerges from our reading of Jeremiah is hope.

> Alongside [the] threatening and forewarning activity… the prophets also had provided Israel and Judah with a message of hope, looking beyond the defeat and national humiliation to eventual renewal and restoration. Prophecy… can be adequately understood and interpreted only in relation to the events to which it was first addressed. Yet, once it had written form, it took on a more timeless and enduring significance and meaning.[36]

Thus, the use of the lament form, in its progression to faith, praise and hope, is an authentic reading and use of the Jeremiah text.

Thought and sensitivity is required when considering how this material may be presented to the KC. Prayers of lament challenge the prevailing assumption that it is not alright to be angry with God. This may be perplexing and unsettling for members of the community. Furthermore, use of the lament form asks the community to address and express past and present issues of trauma and hardship. Pastoral sensitivity is required. A productive approach could be to start with the positive goals of using the lament form, demonstrating the appeal to the nature of God and the words of faith, praise and hope. Itemising these words of prayer could be used to affirm the community's devout faith and affirming prayer as their leading spiritual discipline. My role as researcher, and also my pastoral involvement with the community, could be used in the presentation of this material. For example, in a presentation setting (a community forum, small group or church service), I could describe the research process highlighting the question, "Have you ever been angry with God?" Some respondents concluded in the interviews that it was not alright to be angry with God because "God is good all the time." This phrase could be used in a presentation setting in contrast to the phrase "The world is not good all the time: bad things happen." Appropriate questions and discussion can now ensue: "How do you think God feels about the bad things that happen in the world?," "How does a God of love and justice feel about the bad things that are happening in Burma?" That these things are against his will, that God is

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[36] Clements, *Jeremiah,* 2.

unhappy and angry about oppression and hardship may be discussed at this time.

Concluding that it is okay to be angry "with" God, or "alongside" God, as opposed to

angry "at" God may be a useful way of presenting the lament form as acceptable

language. Furthermore, discussing God's power to bring change will relate to the

community's devout faith and provide further affirmation of the language of lament

through question and appeal. The goal at this point in the discussion/ presentation is to

bring the community to a place where they can consider the appropriateness of the

language of question, even in forthright terms. Jeremiah 14:19-22 could now be

examined, highlighting the emotion in the language, the progression in thought and

what is ultimately a God honouring approach to prayer. This first presentation setting

could conclude with thoughts on what the lament form says about God: God is

concerned about our experiences of oppression and hardship; God finds it acceptable

that we talk in this way; God understands our vulnerability in the world; God shares our

concern that things are not right and that change should occur; and we are able to hope

in a God who can bring change.

Providing the community with practical means for exploring the use of the lament form

is a needed and logical next step. Two summary forms of the lament could be used to

help the community write their own lament prayers. First, the four step progression that

Brueggemann identifies as common to the lament form.

1. Thing are not right in the present arrangement.
2. They need not stay this way but can be changed.
3. The speaker will not accept them in this way, for it is intolerable.
4. It is God's obligation to change things.[37]

Alternatively the four types of language identified in the reading of Jeremiah 14.19-22

could be used.

1. Questions of God.
2. Repentance/ confession before God.
3. Appeal to the nature of God.
4. Faith, praise and hope in God.

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[37] Brueggemann, "The Costly Loss of Lament," 62.

Focusing on one of the above summaries, community members could be encouraged to write a sentence or two (or more) on a relevant theme or issue under each of the four headings.

Returning to the pastoral goals of the lament form in the presentation is an important pedagogical imperative. These pastoral goals include: reminding the community that God cares about their experiences, the vulnerability they face and the concerns they have; that the bible shows us a way of expressing these feelings and concerns that allow us to pray insightfully and honourably before God; and in our expression of hurt, concern and anger we share with a God who is responsive to the trauma people face.

Other forms of presentation of this material may be utilised. What is outlined here as teaching sessions for groups of adults, could also be shared in individual or small group pastoral counselling sessions. A more private environment would afford the opportunity to share more openly and thoroughly the presenting experiences that raise questions and feelings of anger and frustration; more time could be given to hearing individual concerns or hesitations in the use of lament; and there would be more opportunity to explore the pastoral effect of reflecting on a God who cares, comforts and does justice.

Liturgical practices could be encouraged in the life of the community. Periodically people could present prayers of lament in their worship settings (family, small group or church service). Writing and storing these prayers should be encouraged to reinforce the use of the prayer form in the community and as a record of the prayers and concerns of the community over time. A small group or family could maintain a prayer journal, diary or folder of the collected prayers as a pastoral resource affirming the shared concerns of the community before God.

I will conclude this discussion on prayer as a pastoral outcome with an overview of the way in which prayers of lament address the findings of this theological process. The lament form includes an honest reflection on context as a starting point for prayer. Whether this is under the heading "things are not right" or "the language of question

before God," the person engaging the lament form has their past and present experiences validated in a meaningful way: in faith they are listened to by God; in public prayer or in private pastoral counselling their questions and experiences of hardship are listened to by the community. The lament form insists that our contextual concerns are appropriate before the throne of God; indeed, inherent in the prayer of lament is the raw vulnerability of the human condition before God. Prayers of lament address the findings in the study of Jeremiah. The theme of covenant in Jeremiah 11 returns the present day reader to the rights and obligations of both God and the people as (new) covenant partners. The lament prayer in Jeremiah 14 includes these rights and obligations in the language it uses, adopting a repentant and confessing approach on the part of the people, and appealing to God to remember the covenant. Spiritual seeking was a theme identified in the passages under study, either in the various forms of language in lament or in the call to "seek the LORD with all your heart" in God's address to the exiles in Jeremiah 29. The lament form provides a method of approach for the reader of Jeremiah to submit to the example of the text and to seek God. In the discussion on citizenship responsibility in Jeremiah 29 the exiles are taught to understand that God is in control, that his purpose is being realised and they are taught to put their hope in God. Again, the lament form can be used to give expression to these biblical insights. The examination of Brueggemann's argument for the use of lament raised the question of subjugation and the concern that the KC may suffer a subjugated spirituality as an outcome of their upbringing in a subjugated society. One goal of a sensitive and thorough presentation of the lament form is to address this issue of subjugation, giving permission to the community to take initiative in relation to God, using lament as a tool for spiritual maturation.

An integrated spirituality

The term "integrated spirituality" is used here in reference to a spirituality that is not confined to traditionally religious categories, such as church going, prayer, bible reading and so on. An integrated spirituality is inclusive, understanding that the concerns of God and biblical themes include all aspects of life; thus, work, education, politics, family and leisure are all encompassed in one's commitment to Christian spirituality.

Using the heading "integrated spirituality" is useful in developing the findings of the theological process for pastoral outcomes. The stated goals for this process at the beginning of chapter two include the fostering of intercultural practices and the humanisation of the host society. Two issues in this regard will be discussed below. First, in response to the community's concern for their children and to the principles learnt in Jeremiah 29 volunteering in local schools will be considered as a contribution to a healthy resettlement process. Second, a reflection is offered on the experience of the KC organising a political demonstration during the time of research for this thesis. An integrated spirituality will encourage the KC to think in practical terms in response to the biblical text, finding tangible expressions of their desire to match faith with action. These outcomes broaden the scope of what is considered pastoral to include not only the care and nurture of the migrant community, but also encourages the migrant community to have influence in the host society.

The notion of the community experiencing "the burden of freedom" is considered in this section. This thesis concludes that the burden of freedom is a phrase that adequately encapsulates the leading experiences and concerns of the KC: this includes their past hardship in their refugee experience, the related grief of leaving their home country, the opportunities in education and employment in New Zealand, the focus and concern they have for their children and the responsibility they feel as people of faith. The burden of freedom highlights the desires and concerns of the community that they now have in response to their past experiences and the opportunities that they have in New Zealand. One aspect of the burden the community feels is the unrealised potential of living in New Zealand. As new New Zealanders with young children there are many aspects of their hopes and desires that are just beginning, such as raising a family and gaining employment. Resourcing the KC to meet their goals and to look toward the future with hope will make a valuable pastoral contribution to the community.

Critical to the success of this theological process is allowing the process of enquiry to form a theological framework for practical outcomes: reflecting on what an integrated spirituality can mean for the KC will be instrumental in reaching this goal. The examination of the subjective context concluded that the KC is a close-knit community

with a strong sense of kinship; and language and culture are very closely related to faith in God and to the faith community. The study of the general context concluded that Kachin people are characterised by a formidable independence. Amongst the many positive aspects to these conclusions is a concern that requires pastoral reflection. A close-knit and independent community that is united in minority languages has a danger of existing for themselves and adopting an exclusive character. Lack of confidence in speaking English and mistrust toward other ethnic groups from Burma contributes to a tendency to be withdrawn. The goals of the KC members include developing good English, obtaining job skills and gaining good employment; they strongly desire their children to be successful in this regard. A tendency toward being exclusive and/ or withdrawn will be a barrier to reaching these goals. Jeremiah 29 can be used constructively in the step to pastoral solutions to this issue.

The study on Jeremiah 29 identified God's command to settle and prosper, both as a theme of the passage and representing an enduring command throughout Scripture; Jeremiah 29 adds the helpful instruction to the exiles to work for the benefit of their host country. These biblical ideas may be used to encourage the community to think in terms of new creation in their resettlement and to think critically and act constructively in response to the biblical text and to their current context. Within the broad theme of settle and prosper the command to "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you" (Jer 29.7) encourages an integrated spirituality that responds to the command of God by engaging in practical and productive ways in and with the host society.

Volunteering in Schools

Volunteering in local schools will now be considered as a pastoral response to the study of context and Scripture. Encouraging the KC to take a volunteer role in a local school complements their current context and personal values. Most of the KC children are under the age of five, being born to their families since arriving in New Zealand; thus, many families face the prospect of their children beginning at primary school in the coming months and years. This is a new and significant step in their resettlement experience. Taking an active role in their children's education provides a practical way for the adult members of the community to express and contribute to the concerns,

hopes and goals they have for their children. In the event that a number of adults from the KC were to take a volunteer role, as "parent help" for example, there is likely to be a need for an advocate, particularly at the beginning of the process, to help both KC and local school discover the mutual benefits of such an arrangement and to facilitate the practical measures of guidelines, expectations and boundaries. A community leader, pastoral leader or representative from Refugee Services may be able to fill this role. The humanisation of the host society and fostering intercultural practices are goals for step four of this process. The advocate who initiates and facilitates volunteering in schools will be actively working for the fulfilment of these goals. Schools may be hesitant to encourage parents with low ability in English to volunteer; migrants from Burma find New Zealand schools daunting and confusing. However, there are a number of mutual benefits in eradicating these barriers: schools get the opportunity to build a working relationship with an important part of their school community and are able to explore ways in which parent volunteers can contribute to the learning goals of the students; the KC community can develop their social and language skills, support their children and make meaningful steps toward an integrated spirituality that seeks to settle and prosper, seeking the welfare of their host country.

Volunteering in schools is a practical means of addressing the burden of freedom. Encouraging an active role in schools where KC members can feel a part of the school community and be invested in their children's education addresses key aspects of the burden the KC feels. Where there is such a high level of concern for their children volunteering in schools allows the parents to be an integral part of responding to their concerns and limits any sense of abandoning their concerns to unknown adults in an environment of which they have little understanding. Living in the freedom that New Zealand affords brings a burden of unrealised potentialities. Giving the KC avenues for integration and opportunities to develop language and social skills is a practical step toward realising their goals of resettlement. Furthermore, finding an accepted and responsible role in the education system allows the KC to experience the high contrast to their own lack of education in Burma and respond meaningfully and in a way that can bring healing to the regret and grief their past experiences have caused.

Story telling could be employed as a way of introducing the KC to Jeremiah 29 and its lessons and challenges. It is here that the tendency in migration theology to explore biblical parallels can be most effective. The story of the forced migration from Judah and Jerusalem can be usefully compared to the forced migration from Burma. The story telling medium can highlight the feelings experienced in forced migration. For example, fear and uncertainty and the related questions about the future can be highlighted from the Jeremiah text and related to the experiences of the KC. In the presentation of this story the KC can be shown how Jeremiah 29 addresses the question of "is God in control?" and the theme of hope that emerges in the text. A practical outcome of God's sovereignty and the hope God engenders in the exilic community is the list of commands in verses 5 to 7 that I have summed up in the theological theme of settle and prosper. Therefore, in the context of a presentation setting (with community leaders, in a small group, community forum or church service) the KC can relate their migration experience with that of Judah, and through this story identify God's command and control, and the hope this brings. A reflection on what it means to be in a time of new creation in New Zealand – to settle and prosper and seek the welfare of the city – may now follow. This is the formation of an integrated spirituality where the KC draw together their present needs, their community values – that have been shaped by past experiences and religious convictions – and respond to the biblical text by building bridges with the wider community.

The close-knit nature of the KC can be employed as a tool to develop an integrated spirituality. The strong feeling of kinship felt within the community provides encouragement, support and accountability. If the intent of an integrated spirituality was accepted by the community, becoming a shared goal of the KC, there would be many avenues for the success of these goals. For example, in sharing the goal to build bridges with the local school parents could be paired up as volunteers in classrooms. This would provide mutual accountability in seeing through the expectations of the volunteer responsibility; it would also aid communication with school staff and children as the KC communicate more confidently and competently in pairs or small groups, where they can help each other in speech and understanding. Having an advocate/

facilitator appointed to help this process will have greater effectiveness when a number of the KC share this goal.

These conclusions highlight the strength of religion in the resettlement process that was discussed in chapter one. Two key areas are identified in this regard. First, religion is an important identity symbol that can "help the immigrant maintain an ethnic identity;"[38] second, religious beliefs and practices can be used to form a healthy integrative community. Using Jeremiah as an instructive text for the KC can contribute to both of these areas. Jeremiah 11 reinforces the message of covenantal fidelity, returning the community to the message of obedience to God and engaging in the responsibilities of (new) covenant partnership. Jeremiah 29 exposes the community to the call of God to new creation and the challenge to express this call for the benefit of the host country. Thus the Jeremiah text affirms and strengthens the KC's devout spirituality and desire to be faithful to God; it also challenges their tendency to be withdrawn, and to see that integrating and contributing to their host society is an important response to the biblical text.

As this dual role of maintaining ethnic identity and resourcing healthy integrative practices is achieved the KC can be a place of welcome and nurture for new immigrants. On the one hand the practice and celebration of ethnic identity becomes a place of familiarity and security for new immigrants from Kachin State. The sharing of ideas and practical assistance for new immigrants welcomed in to the family atmosphere of the KC is invaluable for a former refugee new to New Zealand. On the other hand, maintaining the challenge to embrace healthy integrative practices in the wider community resists an isolationist tendency and models important goals and processes for new immigrants. Where this dual role is achieved new immigrants can be guarded from the overwhelming nature of early resettlement and also encouraged, in a timely manner, to integrate well. Important pastoral goals are therefore achieved through healthy community culture.

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[38] Helen Rose Ebaugh, "Religion across Borders: Transnational Religious Ties," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 32: 2 (2004): 216.

Political Demonstration

During the period of research for this thesis I was able to observe and participate in a significant community event. This event was insightful in regards to the ways in which it brought together a number of the pastoral outcomes discussed in this chapter, encouraging the community to respond to a God who does justice, building bridges with other community groups and contributing to an integrated spirituality. In June 2011 a seventeen year cease fire collapsed between the Kachin Independence Army and the Burma Army. In Kachin State, particularly along the southern border, fighting broke out. An estimated 25 000 people were displaced, retreating to the China border for safety. These people, unable to gain entry into China as refugees, were living in sub-standard conditions without adequate food, water, shelter or clothing. Many villagers in Kachin State were living in fear, some retreating to the relative safety of the jungle and the hills for periods of time. There were reports of eighteen women gang raped by the Burma Army in June, four of them left dead. These events caused considerable heartache and concern for the KC. Many KC members have left Burma because of direct encounters of oppression and torture at the hands of the Burma Army; all adult KC members have left Burma as a response to the fear, oppression and poverty experienced as a result of actions by the Burma Army and the military backed government. Some members responded to the current conflict by relaying their own experiences as examples of what can and will be happening now in Kachin State. Others expressed great concern for the trials being faced by their own family members; one KC member lost contact with her displaced family, not knowing of their whereabouts or wellbeing.

Responding to these events in a meaningful way was an immediate desire of the KC. In my pastoral and leadership capacity within the community I had the privileged position of uniting with them in their response to the conflict and their concerns. Two matters became areas of focus. First, as there was almost no coverage of these events in the English media worldwide, there was a great desire amongst the KC to communicate the news from home. Second, the KC wanted to act in practical ways to raise funds to send home, particularly to the displaced people at the China border.

For the purposes of this thesis I will reflect on events that encouraged an integrated spirituality. In response to the conflict at home the KC bridged their spiritual practice of prayer with practical action. Their natural response to pray took on similarities to the lament form, including, in particular, the assertion that things are not right and appealing to God for help. These prayers included an explicit request seeking God for guidance on what actions could be taken. Prayer accompanied all responses the KC made to the conflict: prayer and practical action were very closely linked. Responding to the conflict encouraged practices that contributed to the "humanisation of the host society." As a response to the lack of media coverage the KC explored avenues of communication with politicians and media outlets. One particularly meaningful encounter in response to the communications made by the KC was the invitation to meet with a Member of Parliament to express their concerns and discuss possible action. This MP received a group of seven KC members, and myself, in his parliamentary offices in central Wellington. He listened respectfully, gave practical advice and offered his support and presence at a political demonstration. The impact this had on the KC cannot be understated. Compared to the oppression in Burma, the absence of freedom to meet politically or religiously and the distance of Kachin people to Burma's politics and politicians could not be held in greater contrast than what the KC were now experiencing. Where the burden of freedom is felt in response to unfulfilled potentialities of living in a country with freedom and opportunity, these events made a valuable contribution to easing that burden and realising some of the potential the KC long for. Communicating directly and sensitively with a Member of Parliament in parliamentary offices and now preparing a political demonstration with his support were practical actions that made a pastoral difference for the KC. One member commented to me after we had finished writing a letter to send to local MPs, "thank you, I feel all loose now," which was his way of saying that he didn't feel uptight anymore.

Making a response to the conflict and concerns in Kachin State in an integrated fashion was a positive experience for the KC. The political demonstration itself was an event organised and attended by the KC, other ethnic minority groups from Burma, other supporters and Members of Parliament and their support staff. Having observed and

studied the independent nature of the KC and their hesitation and mistrust toward other ethnic minority groups, their need of support to respond well to the conflict at home was a useful tool in building bridges with other groups. This was also experienced in their fundraising efforts. The KC promoted and organised a Burmese meal with their local church. This provided a means to promote the needs in Kachin State and raise finances as people made a donation toward the food. Sharing in this event and receiving the generous donations of their New Zealand church congregation brought considerable joy and further contributed to building bridges with other groups.

Successful outcomes from these events further reinforced the integrative practices employed by the KC. There was positive media coverage of the political demonstration in one leading New Zealand newspaper[39] and a nationwide radio station. The politicians who attended the demonstration spoke knowledgably of the situation in Burma and vowed their support. Good progress was made networking with politicians and their support staff. A significant amount of money was raised in their fundraising efforts. Throughout the months of June and July 2011 the KC moved from feelings of great anxiety for the people of Kachin State and uncertainty in how to respond, through to feelings of joy, celebration and encouragement in reaching goals and making a tangible response to the needs at home. Their feelings of concern are still very much maintained as the conflict in Kachin State is far from resolved, however, the integrative practices that formed a practical response made a valuable and penetrating pastoral contribution.

Migration theology in a New Zealand context

Doing migration theology in a New Zealand context raises a significant question. Internationally both migration and liberation theology are undertaken, predominantly, in communities where oppression is a daily experience; for example, in the context of being an undocumented migrant in the United States or as a church based community in South America. As an island nation in the South Pacific New Zealand does not face the

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[39] "Demonstrators call for NZ Govt to help Burmese," *Otago Daily Times*, 27 July 2011, <http://www.odt.co.nz/news/politics/170925/demonstrators-call-nz-govt-help-burmese> (8 February, 2012).

issue of undocumented migrants like nations in Africa, Europe, Asia or America. Refugees in New Zealand are, largely, those who have arrived in the quota refugee system, are now living in a place of safety and opportunity with a level of support (through social welfare, Refugee Services and other agencies) that is among the best in the world. What contribution can migration theology make in this context? Refugees arrive in New Zealand with considerable needs, emotionally and materially, and many come with strong faith convictions and a history of religious practices. Discerning pastoral outcomes for migrant communities, as this thesis has outlined, is a leading role migration theology can take in New Zealand and similar contexts internationally.

The resurgence of conflict in Kachin State was insightful for a reflection on migration theology in a New Zealand context. Rather than the KC reflecting and acting on oppression faced in their immediate and personal context, they were responding to needs in their home country. This is a good example of the important contribution that migration theology can make, noted by Jorge Guerra in chapter one. Guerra argues that migration theology must accept the "challenge of bicultural and multiple identities. For this reason a theology of migration must get rid of the logic of application in its relation with the theology of liberation."[40] Migration theology must integrate the variety of contexts with which migrants must contend. As quoted in chapter one:

> [A theology of migration] assumes a double belonging, or double loyalty,… and that causes the migrants the feeling of simultaneous reference to both contexts: the one of origin and the one of destination…. A theology of migration emerges as a theology that wants to deal, in a Christian way, with the 'in-between' situation of the migrants….[41]

The KC's response to the needs in Kachin State demonstrates a former refugee community working through a reflection on praxis process, seeking outcomes that impact the bicultural and multiple identities noted by Guerra. In this example of migration theology distinct gains were made in the humanisation of the host society and in achieving integrative practices. These integrative practices included effective bridge building with other ethnic minority groups, national and community leaders, media

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[40] Guerra, "A Theology of Migration," 254.

[41] Ibid. 254.

outlets, human rights organisations and New Zealand churches. The concern of the KC in this situation was simultaneously both for their host country, in raising awareness and funds, and for their home country, making a meaningful contribution to the needs at home through the distribution of funds.

Jeremiah 11 may be used in the continuing process of reflection on praxis. The praxis model promoted in liberation theology does not stop with a set of outcomes, but encourages a community to continue to reflect on action taken, leading them to further points of action. Jeremiah 11 can be used to affirm the steps that were taken by the KC and encourage further reflection on future possibilities. Jeremiah 11 asserts that obedience is, and has always been, the mark of God's covenant people. Reflection on what obedience to God means in the Kachin State situation affirms the actions of the KC: they prayed diligently, asserting God's sovereignty; they took actions that promoted justice; they acted sacrificially, "loving their neighbour" in practical ways. In retrospect several questions can now be raised. In response to a God who does justice, what further actions can be taken? How can the community continue to love their neighbour (internationally) through actions taken in New Zealand? What has been successful in past actions that may be used again? Jeremiah 11 highlights the covenant partnership between God and God's people; prayers of lament may be used to reflect on this relationship. In these prayers questions and concerns can be raised before God engaging the heartfelt concern of the presenting context. Under the steps of lament identified in Jeremiah 14 the language of repentance could be used to state the actions the KC now determine to take in their commitment to obedience. Reflection on God's covenant responsibility through the language of appeal affirms the faith of the KC and brings them to hope ultimately in what God can do. These steps bring the prayer to conclude with praise as an appropriate response to the theological reflection on praxis that has been undertaken.

The KC's response to conflict at home was also insightful in regards to the transnational identity that is forming amongst the community. The studies on transnational identity discussed in chapter one observe that migrants who have a religious background are characterised by maintaining contact with their local church in their home country. This

was not found to be the case with the KC. I have not identified any continuing contact with home churches amongst the KC outside of immediate family members. Transnational studies identify various networks between migrant and home church, including the sending of funds, pastoral services such as prayer and visiting pastors/ teachers. Although the KC have had a number of Christian teachers from Burma visit in Porirua, these have not been directly related to the home churches in Kachin State. The sending of funds from New Zealand is predominantly to family members or for emergency relief. Unlike the transnational studies in the United States the KC have discontinued their ties with their home church. The context of great need in their home State, however, demonstrated a dynamic transnational identity amongst the KC, one which contributed to the primary goals of migration theology. The integration of a variety of contexts, evidence of a double belonging and the humanisation of the host society were all evident as the KC sought to respond to the needs at home. Doris Peschke's argument for a positive transnational identity was outlined in chapter one, where she aspires to a transnational identity that "would not be just an amalgam of two cultures but something completely new, something that may prove valuable for both societies."[42] She asserts that "[a] precondition for establishing such an identity is an open and tolerant receiving society where the local faith communities also acknowledge and practise such values."[43] These characteristics of a transnational identity were all evident as the KC responded to the needs at home. For example, a number of New Zealand churches contributed meaningfully to the cause, interacting in a positive way with the KC; and ties were strengthened with other minority groups. This transnational influence extended far beyond church communities as Members of Parliament responded positively, renewing their commitment to the needs in Burma, and positive national media coverage was generated.

Influence within the host society, like that observed as the KC responded to the conflict at home, emerges as a fundamental contribution of migration theology. I argue that

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[42] Doris Peschke, "The Role of Religion for the Integration of Migrants and Institutional Responses in Europe: Some Reflections," *The Ecumenical Review* 61: 4 (December 2009): 370.

[43] Ibid., 370.

pastoral outcomes must not be restricted to the care and nurture of the migrant community. Rather, an important pastoral response in the use of migration theology is to encourage and equip the migrant community to have a position of leadership influence in the host society. Christine Lienemann-Perrin argues for this stating:

> Diaspora ethics will resist the temptation to settle down into a social niche and will use that resistance as a basis for building an alternative world to the world of the host country. Diaspora theology criticizes ethnically centred ethics, of the sort, for example, that is widespread in the ethnically homogenous minority churches in the USA.[44]

This is a further example of the important role migration theology can have in a context such as New Zealand, where isolation from conflict and world events requires awareness raising and leadership toward action. Resourcing migrant communities and local churches to take up this role is a vital contribution of a theology of migration.

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[44] Christine Lienemann-Perrin, "Theological Stimuli from the Migrant Churches," *The Ecumenical Review* 61:4 (December, 2009): 385.

Conclusion

To conclude this thesis I will recall the study process and themes; a critique of the process of theological enquiry will be offered; and concluding remarks will be given on the role of migration theology in a New Zealand context.

This thesis has offered pastoral outcomes for the KC in Porirua, through a critical use of migration theology. Chapter one outlined the background and literature on migration theology providing a critique and concluding that migration theology has an important role to play in the issue of migration internationally. In particular, a theology of migration engenders a moral impetus in migration studies affirming the value of all humanity and promoting solidarity with the poor. The integrative approach of migration theology is strategic in its engagement with other disciplines and organisations for the effective promotion of social justice. The integration of theory and practice encourages a thoughtful reading of Scripture that equips local communities to face the needs of their context in practical ways.

Chapter two began a four step process of enquiry examining the subjective and general context of the KC and of Kachin people. Chapter two concluded that the burden of freedom was a phrase that adequately summed up the presenting context of the KC: this phrase encapsulates their past experiences and their desire to fulfil the potential of living in New Zealand society; it reflects the burden the adults feel toward their young children now facing a life of opportunity in New Zealand. This chapter also identified prayer as the leading spiritual discipline and independence as a leading characteristic of the KC.

Chapter three offered exegetical observations on three key passages from the book of Jeremiah. This section identified prayers of lament and the themes of covenantal fidelity and citizenship responsibility for further reflection in the process of determining pastoral outcomes. The final section of chapter three discussed a number of pastoral outcomes that build on the theological framework established in the study of context and Scripture. Prayer and an integrative spirituality were chosen as headings to discuss

these outcomes. Prayers of lament were promoted for their pastoral quality in engaging the vulnerability of the human condition and leading the praying community through to a point of affirming faith in who God is and what God can do. Volunteering in schools was suggested as an action that integrated several threads in the theological process, equipping the KC to respond meaningfully to the grief of their past experiences in having limited education, engaging with the education of their children of which they have such high concern and promoting integrative practices with their host society. A reflection on the KC's response to conflict in Burma and the organisation of a political demonstration raised important insights on the transnational identity forming amongst the KC and the significant role migration theology can have in a New Zealand context.

The integrative practices and goals of migration theology are arguably the most significant contribution of this discipline. This is evident particularly in the pursuit of the humanisation of the host society and the promotion of a dual identity or a double belonging in migrant communities. Migration theology can have a unique and valuable role in equipping migrant communities and local churches to promote awareness and means of action in response to matters of injustice locally and internationally. This role is particularly important for a theology of migration in a New Zealand context.

Guerra's four step process of enquiry was selected as a means of answering the thesis question; I will now offer concluding thoughts in critique of this process. This process has proved effective for determining pastoral outcomes in a way that embraced the values and goals of migration theology. Qualitative research methods provided a means of establishing solidarity with a migrant community and for determining the salient points of their presenting context. The role of qualitative research is understated in the literature on migration theology; the use of these research methods for the purposes of theological reflection requires much more attention for the discipline of migration theology to mature in the years to come. The second step of historical and sociological study of the general context of Kachin people proved difficult for lack of recent and first-hand research due to the isolation of Kachin State in recent decades. However, this study proved effective in allowing the findings to reflect back on the study of the subjective context: the conclusion that Kachin people are characterised by independence

and the findings in regard to poverty and oppression brought clarity to the subjective context and provided important points of reflection for pastoral outcomes. The third step of biblical study and reflection on theological themes proved to be vital in the step from context to pastoral outcomes. This thesis focused on the role that select biblical passages can have for an authentic reading of Scripture and a genuine engagement with the themes of theology. This focus proved fruitful for pastoral outcomes (step four) as the themes of prayers of lament, covenant fidelity and new creation all promoted pastoral initiatives in response to the presenting context of the KC.

This four step process has been effective for the purposes of presenting an academic thesis: there are weaknesses, however, in regard to the practical administration of pastoral care. In retrospect, I have found Guerra's process to have limitations. I argue that Guerra's four step process is too prescribed and a more organic or cyclic approach to determining pastoral outcomes, more akin to the reflection on praxis model in liberation theology, would prove useful. The formative factors of Guerra's process are helpful and must be maintained: the interaction between context and biblical text is the point in which pastoral outcomes emerge. As context and text are engaged in a meaningful way these two factors intersect and spark practical and pastoral outcomes. The professional theologian has an important role in ensuring that context and text are explored thoroughly, sensitively and authentically; furthermore, the theologian can raise the required questions that equip the community to move to pastoral outcomes and to further the process by returning the community to again reflect pastorally on context and text. Thus, the four step process presents as too complete, lacking an open-endedness that better reflects the experience of communities with high levels of needs and concerns. This thesis, then, in answering the thesis question, is best thought of as leading to the next cycle of further implementation and reflection on context and text.

This thesis demonstrates the valuable role of migration theology for both migrant communities and their home and host societies. Migration theology can be most effective when processes of reflection are targeted towards practical outcomes. When a migrant community grasps the vision of having a double belonging and they are equipped to have a leadership influence in these societies, fruitful reflection on the

formative factors of context and biblical text can be promoted. When theological reflection is targeted toward the goals of solidarity with the poor, justice in the world and pastoral care, context and biblical text can usefully converge for practical outcomes. These outcomes can serve migrant communities at their points of need and equip integrative practices that contribute to justice and the humanisation of the host society; as these outcomes submit to the biblical text they equip Christian communities with a faithful and practical spirituality.

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