



INTERVARSITY  
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**Outnumbered & Over-run  
or Open-hearted & Open-armed**

*Thinking Theologically about Global Immigration*

*Dr David Montgomery: IFES Ireland*

# From a Beacon to a Wall



I will build a great great wall on our Southern Border...

Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses....



# Crisis & Opportunity

- Economics & Infrastructure
- Law & Order
- Health & Education
- National Security
- Love, Compassion & Witness
- Church enrichment
- Societal Flourishing through Integration





# Biblical Overview

Over 150 references to 'stranger / foreigner' in Scripture

# A marginal issue?

*After the command to worship the LORD, the most commonly repeated command in Scripture is to take care of the 'alien and stranger' in your midst.*

# Genesis

- Creation (c.f. Acts 17:26)
- Dispersion: Blessing or Curse?
  - Gen.9-11: Blessing / Nationhood / Babel

*“The List of Nations is placed out of sequence in Gen.10 so that we see this diversity as coming under the blessing of Gen.9, rather than the curse of Gen.11” B.K.Waltke*



# Headliners

An Immigrant



A Trafficked Slave



A Nomadic Exile





# The LAW

## The Immigrant or Sojourner

- Included in dozens of laws.
- An ever-present part of Israelite society
- Given rights and protection under the Law

# Israel's History

- Immigrants/Exiles in Egypt
- The role of the 'outsider': Rahab/Ruth
- David's Vision (1.Kings 8)
- Israel's immigrant population (2 Chron.2)

# Israel's Wisdom

In the Wisdom literature, compassion and hospitality to the foreigner is a characteristic of the Righteous Life:

*Job 29:31; Psalm 94:6; 146:9*



# The Prophets

- Exile
- True Religion
- The Coming Kingdom: (Micah 4:1-5; Isaiah 56:3-6; 60:10)

# The Gospels

- Jesus's wider ministry:
  - His mission: Luke 4:25-27;
  - His interactions: Luke 17:18; Mark 7:24-30; Matt.8:11
  - Esp. w Samaritans: the despised immigrants (Luke 9; John 4)

# The Gospels

- Jesus himself:
  - Advent / Incarnation: the Divine Immigrant
  - The Refugee (Matt.2:13-18)
  - The Stranger (Matt.25)



# The Church

- Grows through Persecution-dispersement (Acts 8:1; 11:19)
- Also grows through Pax Romana (ease of travel)
- The Church as 'aliens and strangers' (1Pet. 1:1,17; 2:11)
- ...and 'citizens of heaven' (Phil.3:20)

# The END

- Multicultural cohabitation (Rev.7: 9-10)
- The glory and honour of the nations (Rev. 21:26)

## Vinoth Ramachandra

“This eschatological horizon should keep Christians from presumption. We just do not know which aspects of any culture – including our own – will be there”





# 'Ger' & 'Nokri'/ 'Zar'

- All can be translated 'foreigner'
- But very different connotations

# ‘Ger’ & ‘Nokri’/’Zar’

- Foreign = from another place
  - Resident foreigner
  - Given basic rights
  - To be welcomed & protected alongside widows & orphans
- Foreign = strange / morally negative
  - Often political enemies
  - Introduce foreign gods
  - Can refer to Israelite idolatry

# Ger's rights: Therefore

- Gleaning
- Tithes
- Sabbath
- Cities of Refuge
- Work
- Fair wages (Deut.24:19)
- Rest/ working conditions
- Protection/Security



# God & the Ger

- He loves them, (*Dt. 10:18*)
- He protects them, (*Ps. 146:9*)
- They can worship him, (*Lev. 17:8; Dt. 26:11*)

# God's people & the Ger

- Love as you love yourself (*Lev.19:34*)
- Love God? Love the Ger ! (*Dt.10:18*)
- Do not withhold justice (*Dt.27:19; Mal.3:5*)
- Pay wages on time (*Dt.24:19*)

# God's people & the Nokri/Zar

- Foreigners who invade / oppress (*Jer.51:51*)
- A sign of Judgement (*Lam.5:2; Ezek.7:21*)
- Impose or seduce into idolatry (*1Sam.7:3; Jer. 3:13*)

# God's people & the Nokri/Zar

- Assimilate through inter-marrying (*1 Kings 11:8; Ezra. Nehemiah*)
- Moral *nokri* – a term with no ethnic dimension, simply 'behaviour foreign to God's people' (*Prov.2:16; 5:20; 7:5*)



# Past, Present and Future

- PAST
  - They were to remember that they had been foreigners in Egypt,
  - Similarly, these other ‘Gerim’ had abandoned their homeland as economic migrants or political refugees and sought security among God’s people.

# Past, Present and Future

- PRESENT

- Gerim were an integral part of Israel's population (*2 Chr.2:17-18*)
- *“In daily life there was to be no barrier between the alien [ger] and the Israelite’ (AH Konkel)*

# Past, Present and Future

- FUTURE

- They would again experience displacement in Exile: No Divine Right to their own country
- The Final Kingdom Vision was to involve the nations. Even *Nokri* would be converted and have a place there (*1 Kings 8:40-42; Is.56:3,6; 60:10*)

# 'Je Suis Ger'

- We are all 'Gerim' on God's earth: (*Lev.25:23; Ps.39:12*)
- Expanded in NT (*1Pet.2:11*)







## Contemporary Application

# Differentiate between

- Personal Moral Imperatives
  - Compassion, Hospitality, Justice, Love, Advocacy, Witness
- Government Responsibilities
  - Quotas, Policies, Security, Law & Order

# Our Responsibilities

- Avoid and Oppose Irresponsible Rhetoric:
  - Generalisations, Stereotypes, Racism, Economic Self-interest
- Recognise weaknesses of political myopia:
  - Dogmatic Protectionism will stagnate a nation (Jer.48:11)
  - Diversity will enrich and help it flourish

# The Hard Issues

- Balancing Questions of Humanity & Mercy and Questions of Legality and Justice

Bogus Language  
Schools

Terrorism

Sham Marriages

Benefit Tourism

Human Trafficking



# BUT

*Motives & Circumstances of Immigrants, or  
Motives & Agenda of Governments do not  
trump how God's people are to treat those  
who reside as neighbours*

# SO.....

- Pray for Government & Policymakers
- Act on behalf of the Vulnerable
- Change the Wind...

# Practically [courtesy of Jubilee Centre, UK]

- Research facts
- Engage media
- Offer Language classes
- Build inter-church relationships
- Set up advice service
- Provide practical support
- Practice hospitality
- Share faith & values in word & deed

# Rethinking.....

- OUR MISSIONAL FOCUS
  - *“Think of the cost in time and money of sending a missionary from the West to the Arab world: Training, Language, Contextualisation, Living wage, years to be accepted: all for very limited fruit.....”*



# Rethinking.....

- OUR MISSIONAL FOCUS
  - .... *Now compare that with the cost of befriending and investing in relational evangelism with some of the tens of thousands of Muslims coming to the West. It may simply involve crossing the street.*
  - [Jamil: IFES MENA]

# RETHINKING

## OUR POLITICAL FOCUS

What is the Biblical Basis  
for Border Controls ?



# WHAT'S AT STAKE?

- This Issue will Reveal
  - How we understand the generosity of the Gospel
  - How well we know the heart and character of God
  - How much we are committed to the Kingdom

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