

RELIGION AND GLOBAL MIGRATIONS

Edited by

JENNIFER B. SAUNDERS, ELENA FIDDIAN-QASMIYEH,
SUSANNA SNYDER

INTERSECTIONS OF RELIGION AND MIGRATION

ISSUES AT THE GLOBAL CROSSROADS



Religion and Global Migrations

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Jennifer B. Saunders • Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh • Susanna Snyder
Editors

Intersections of Religion and Migration

Issues at the Global Crossroads

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macmillan

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Religion and Global Migrations

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For all who understand what it means to migrate

FOREWORD TO *INTERSECTIONS OF RELIGION AND MIGRATION*

The geographic movements of religions and migrants have been historically intertwined. Many of the founders, leaders, and proselytizers of the major world religions have also been migrants. Resettling across the globe, migrants have taken along their faiths and practices and adapted them to living in their host societies. Although nation states have long sought to foster or impose religious homogeneity to unite their citizenry, diverse processes of international migration have sustained religious pluralism. Varying with the nature and extent of tensions and conflicts that have challenged their sovereign stability, state governments have gone back and forth in managing religion and migration by, on the one hand, favoring or restricting particular immigrant groups and their religions and, on the other, separating church and state and opening borders and citizenship to migrants of different cultures. Despite this long history of complicated interweavings of different religious and migrant threads into the cultural, social, and political fabric of nations, scholars began the post-World War II era trying to understand them as separate strands. Whatever the initial reasons for the disentangled studies of religion and migration—the editors of this volume point to the post-enlightenment secular bias of scholars anticipating secularization within modernity—the post-World War II persistence and reemergence of religion in the public sphere, the growth of migration stimulated by the intensification of global markets, and the preoccupations of political leaders with transformations and upheavals linked to migration and religion in much of the world have aroused greater interest among researchers and analysts in developing understandings of how religion and migration are interrelated.

A fundamental question for all scholars, including this volume's editors—Jennifer B. Saunders, Elena Fiddian-Qasimiyeh, and Susanna Snyder—has been how to frame the relation between religion and migration. What kinds of population movements and religious perspectives should be included? Most of the initial studies of migrants' religious experiences were written by social scientists and were comprised of case studies of individual migrant groups who had settled within advanced industrial nations and were identified on the basis of their national origins and religious affiliations. This volume innovatively broadens and deepens those early explorations by adopting a framework that enables a more comprehensive, comparative, and theoretical synthesis.

In selecting the chapters that comprise this volume, the editors have widened the field's geographic boundaries to encompass South–South as well as South–North dimensions of migration and religion. They have also included voluntary and forced migrations, which have generally been examined separately by social scientists following government categories that were created to manage, more than understand, migration. This expansive framing allows comparisons of how migration and religion are related within multiple national and transnational contexts, particularly where religions other than Christianity have predominated. It also brings into comparative perspective contexts within which migrants share and do not share the religions of both other migrant groups and members of their host societies.

Providing a key contribution to interpreting these variations, this volume focuses on the lived religious experiences of migrants as they obtain support from their religious institutions, texts, and narratives and adapt their beliefs and practices to varied social and political contexts. But recognizing that religion is only one of a number of perhaps equally significant social factors that shape migrants' experiences, the editors have adopted the analytic concept of “intersections” in order to draw attention to how migrants' religious and other social identifications become interconnected within the hierarchies and institutions of their host societies. Originally proposed by African-American feminists to account for the effects of overlapping forms of identification and oppression, such as the combination of racial and patriarchal subordination, the editors apply this concept more broadly to a range of migrants' experiences of discrimination and marginalization when their religious identity markers overlap particularly with those of race, national origin, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality within host

societies' power hierarchies of racism, xenophobia, patriarchy, heteronormativity, legal status, class, and other relations of inequality.

Widening the scope of their enquiry even further, the editors have included chapters that examine the migratory and religious perspectives not only of migrants themselves but also of advocates who seek to influence government policies that shape migrants' political reception and social incorporation. These chapters have focused particularly on how advocates have been influenced by—and sought to deploy—the ethical teachings and beliefs of their religions to inform and shape public responses to migration.

The editors' expanded framing of the geographic, analytic, and social dimensions of religion and migration studies has also led them to bring together authors with diverse methodological, epistemological, and ontological perspectives: migration scholars in disciplines including political science, geography, and gender and sexuality studies and religion scholars in the sociology of religion, religious philosophy, and theology. By bringing together these distinctive orientations the editors enable readers to bridge some key differences in the origins of knowledge and understandings of migration and religion. Social science studies of migration have primarily been about what migrants and their hosts do. But studies of religion have focused not only on what migrants and members of the host society do in their religious practices, rituals, and organizations, but also on what they think and believe: the meanings and persuasiveness of their personal faith and religious teachings. Going further, some of the chapters also explore how religious beliefs and institutions can and do inform advocates' efforts to shape government policies, particularly those that welcome rather than restrict immigration.

By adopting such a broad and open topical and intellectual approach to religion and migration, the authors have brought the perspectives of scholars who have positioned themselves at a scientific distance from the objects of their studies into conversation with those who have more closely engaged their migrants as subjects in order to represent their voices and contribute to the amelioration of their lives. Although the editors recognize that social scientists are likely to be "suspicious" of the aims of religious advocacy, they explain that bringing together ethical, faith-based, and social science perspectives is necessary to arrive at a full understanding of the multiple and richly interwoven patterns of religious, migratory, and social processes. The editors conclude by outlining how their framing will

guide not only their own future research agendas but also the issues that will be further explored and no doubt debated within the Religion and Global Migration publication series of which this volume is a part.

Migration Program, Social Science Research Council Josh DeWind
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As the foundation volume for the Religion and Global Migrations book series, this book reflects the aims of this series—hoping to invigorate a conversation across and between scholarly disciplines and areas of study—and has been enriched by the volumes published as part of our series so far. In addition to thanking the authors who have contributed to this volume, we also take this opportunity to thank the authors of the books we have published together so far, and those whose work we look forward to publishing in the future. We thank Burke Gerstenschlager for supporting us as we first developed the series at Palgrave Macmillan, and Phil Getz and Alexis Nelson for guiding this volume from proposal to publication. Our series' eminent editorial board—Peggy Levitt, Kim Knott, and Zain Abdullah—and Josh de Wind have actively supported this volume and the broader intellectual project to which we are aiming to contribute. Anna Rowlands and Patrick Kinsella have very kindly allowed us to include a number of photographs taken during a Caritas Social Action Network visit to the Calais camp in the Introduction to our volume, for which we are very grateful. We also appreciate the confirmation from our anonymous reviewer that this volume is a welcome addition to the conversations about religion and migration.

Additionally, we are grateful to Marie Friedmann Marquardt who was instrumental in establishing the book series, to our conversation partners in the American Academy of Religion's Religion and Migration Group, and to those people who have experienced different types of migration and who have shared their reflections and insights with us; we look forward to our continued conversations across time and space.

Finally, we thank our families, friends, and colleagues for encouraging us as we worked to bring this book to publication. In particular, Jennifer B. Saunders thanks her husband Marnin Forman and daughters Adele and Rose for their support throughout the long process of creating this volume. Susanna Snyder thanks her husband Michael Barnes and son Linus for allowing her evening and weekend time to work. Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh is, as always, grateful to Yousif M. Qasmiyeh and Bissan-Maria Fiddian-Qasmiyeh for their patience and encouragement.

CONTENTS

1 Introduction: Articulating Intersections at the Global Crossroads of Religion and Migration	1
<i>Jennifer B. Saunders, Susanna Snyder, and Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh</i>	
Part I Religion and Experiences of Migration	47
2 Religion as Psychological, Spiritual, and Social Support in the Migration Undertaking	49
<i>Holly Straut Eppsteiner and Jacqueline Hagan</i>	
3 Living Religious Practices	71
<i>Kim Knott</i>	
4 The Challenges of Migration and the Construction of Religious Identities: The Case of Muslims in America	91
<i>Zayn Kassam</i>	
5 Racialization of Religion and Global Migration	123
<i>Khyati Y. Joshi</i>	
6 Embodied (Dis)Placements: The Intersections of Gender, Sexuality, and Religion in Migration Studies	151
<i>Hugo Córdova Quero</i>	
	xiii

Part II Approaches to the Study of Religion and Migration	173
7 Home and Away: Exile and Diaspora as Religious Concepts	175
<i>Ellen Posman</i>	
8 Exploring the Contours of Transnational Religious Spaces and Networks	195
<i>Stephen M. Cherry</i>	
9 Migration: A Theological Vision	225
<i>Daniel G. Groody</i>	
10 The Moral Relevance of Borders: Transcendence and the Ethics of Migration	241
<i>Benjamin Schewel</i>	
Part III Religion and Responses to Migration	259
11 Taking Responsibility: Sociodicy, Solidarity, and Religious-Sensitive Policymaking in the Global Politics of Migration	261
<i>Erin K. Wilson and Luca Mavelli</i>	
12 Religion, Forced Migration, and Humanitarian Response	285
<i>Alastair Ager and Joey Ager</i>	
Bibliography	311
Index	351

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

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LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1.1 An image showing the exterior of St. Michael’s Church in the Calais camp France. Shortly after this photograph was taken, the Calais camp was demolished once again. © Elodie Perriot/Secours Catholique 3
- Fig. 1.2 Part of the interior of St. Michael’s Church in the Calais camp. This is one of a number of places of worship built and decorated by refugee and migrant residents in the camp. © Caritas Social Action Network 4
- Fig. 1.3 A statue commemorating Arab migration to Cuba from the Middle East, in the “Arab neighborhood” of Monte in Havana. Arab migrants to Cuba have historically been presumed to be Christians, and Qur’anic inscriptions are absent from Havana’s “Arab neighborhood.” © Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 5
- Fig. 1.4 The ceramics adorning the patio of this house on the centrally located 23rd Street in Havana document the religious convictions of the pre-Revolutionary owners of this building (pharmacists originally from the Middle East), declaring “There is no conqueror but Allah.” © Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 6
- Fig. 1.5 Against a backdrop of Islamophobia and the popular equation of Islam with terrorism, the Sahrawi refugees’ political leaders have distanced the Sahrawi from Islam during interactions with European visitors to the camps. This is the “invisible” mosque in the 27th February Refugee Camp, South West Algeria. © Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 14

Fig. 1.6	Since the 1970s, visitors to the Sahrawi refugee camps have repeatedly been informed that “our women have never veiled.” The <i>melhfa</i> worn by all Sahrawi women in the camps is commonly presented as a traditional and cultural item of clothing, rather than as one of the many forms of Islamic veiling adopted around the world. © Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh	15
Fig. 1.7	Temporary altar arranged for a community ritual, Atlanta, Georgia. © Jennifer B. Saunders	21
Fig. 1.8	Fellowship after <i>Sundarkand</i> recitation, Atlanta, Georgia. © Jennifer B. Saunders	22
Fig. 1.9	In Nogales, on the border between Mexico and the USA. © Susanna Snyder	26
Fig. 1.10	This image of Christ knocking on door of soul was painted by a refugee for St. Michael’s Church in the Calais camp. It adorns the entrance to the church, welcoming newcomers. © Anna Rowlands	29
Fig. 3.1	Living Religious Practices: Examples and Scales	73
Fig. 8.1	Contours of Religious Spaces and Networks. Source: Figure created by Stephen M. Cherry	202

Introduction: Articulating Intersections at the Global Crossroads of Religion and Migration

*Jennifer B. Saunders, Susanna Snyder,
and Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh*

Immigration crises dominate much of the news around the world as we are writing in 2016: a makeshift, and yet increasingly permanent, camp in Calais, France, houses the nearly 7000 refugees and migrants who are desperately trying to reach Great Britain; thousands of others are dying on overloaded boats crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Africa and West Asia to Europe; and Rohingya Muslims are being turned away from Southeast Asian countries unwilling to accommodate these refugees, who, as members of an ethnic and religious minority, are facing persecution in Bangladesh and Myanmar.¹ Policy debates have depicted migrants as

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criminals or potential drains on society rather than focused on the causes of the migrants' desperation such as war, neo-liberal economic policies, and religious persecution. Migrants and refugees have been vilified in some discourse to the point where at least one Republican presidential hopeful in the USA has suggested ending birthright citizenship, which is written into the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution.²

The camp in Calais demonstrates several noteworthy aspects of international migration, from the problems inherent in conceptualizing immigrants as a homogeneous group of people, to the desperation that drives migrants to risk their lives to settle in far-from-hospitable environments.³ Refugees and migrants from across the global South continue arriving in Calais as European governments reinforce fencing to prevent them from crossing the English Channel.⁴ In addition to this fencing, the camp in Calais has repeatedly been demolished by the French authorities, and the camp's inhabitants continue to face the reality and risk of eviction and dispossession. European political leaders frame this crisis as a threat to European security and identity while humanitarian groups try to provide basic necessities and alleviate the suffering of those living in the camps. Throughout these processes of ongoing and overlapping insecurity, refugees and migrants continue to make interim lives for themselves and the temporary communities they are creating in the camp, including by building shelters and places of worship (see Figs. 1.1 and 1.2).⁵

Questions about the role of religion in Calais and other immigration contexts often reveal answers that deepen and broaden our understanding of human migration. Furthermore, their answers demonstrate that religion can be central to migration at a variety of levels and across diverse spaces, from the individual, family, and community practices of migrants and those they leave behind, to the social and political contexts that characterize sites of origin, transit, and destination. Demographics show that religious minorities are more likely to migrate, activists and organizations working to aid migrants throughout their journeys are often motivated by religious narratives and ethical principles, and religious identities can shape migrants' experiences of interacting with local populations in receiving sites.⁶

Despite these multiple dynamics, academics have often overlooked the intersections of religion and human mobility due to secular biases.⁷ As scholars of religion have long been aware, however, for people who inhabit a religious tradition, every aspect of life may be connected to something beyond the measurable world, something that can be called "the sacred."⁸



Fig. 1.1 An image showing the exterior of St. Michael's Church in the Calais camp, France. Shortly after this photograph was taken, the camp was demolished once again. © Elodie Perriot/Secours Catholique

In effect, it is “the sacred” that motivates many people to act, feel, and think in certain ways that are not always comprehensible to those on the outside. It could, perhaps, have been academics’ skepticism or even rejection of the sacred that has until recently pushed religion to a corner in the study of migration.

In spite of this skepticism and at times explicit mistrust of religion, the 1990s witnessed an increasing interest in exploring religion in a broad range of fields of enquiry.⁹ In part, this coincided with widespread debates taking place within social theory throughout the 1990s and 2000s that extensively critiqued the long-standing assumptions that modernization and modernity would be characterized by the decline of religion and the corresponding entrenchment of rationality and secularization.¹⁰ This teleological vision assumed that modernization would lead societies away from the pre-modern “sacred” toward the modern “secular,” a vision that has been effectively disproved in light of the continued, and many would argue increasing, importance of religious belief, identity, and practice around the world.



Fig. 1.2 Part of the interior of St. Michael’s Church in the Calais camp. This is one of a number of places of worship built and decorated by refugee and migrant residents in the camp. © Caritas Social Action Network

Recognizing religion’s continued relevance, especially since the mid-2000s, migration scholars have examined the intersections between religion and migration from disparate theoretical, methodological, and religious perspectives, although, in disciplinary terms, this sub-field has arguably been dominated by social science frameworks.¹¹ In turn, scholars of religion, theologians, and ethicists have also explored the multiple connections between religion and migration in increasing numbers.¹² In addition to increasingly visible religious diversity brought to “traditional” countries of immigration after a series of new immigration laws were passed in the mid-1960s, religion was brought to the forefront of migration studies—at least in the USA—by seminal studies including R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner’s *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*. The formation of a “Religion and Migration” program unit at the American Academy of Religion in 2007 is but one example of the growing attention paid to this important, complex, and often politically charged issue.

As observers of the development of this field of research and practice, we argue that sustained consideration of the myriad ways in which religion and migration intersect allows us to examine simultaneously the complex roles that religion plays in shaping migration patterns and experiences, and, equally to recognize the malleability of religious traditions and practices in processes of (im)mobility and migration (see Figs. 1.3 and 1.4). Importantly, by centralizing the importance of religion in this volume, and in the Religion and Global Migrations Book Series of which it is a part, we neither intend to reify religion, nor to argue that religion is the only, or even necessarily the most important, factor underpinning experiences of or responses to migration.¹³ Rather, by exploring the ways in which religious identity, belief, and practice intersect, for instance, with race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality throughout diverse processes of migration, the volume aims to redress the abovementioned



Fig. 1.3 A statue commemorating Arab migration to Cuba from the Middle East, in the “Arab neighborhood” of Monte in Havana. Arab migrants to Cuba have historically been presumed to be Christians, and Qur’anic inscriptions are absent from Havana’s “Arab neighborhood.” © Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh



Fig. 1.4 The ceramics adorning the patio of this house on the centrally located 23rd Street in Havana document the religious convictions of the pre-Revolutionary owners of this building (pharmacists originally from the Middle East), declaring “There is no conqueror but Allah.” © Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh

imbalances by examining migration with religion at the center. As Ager and Ager write in Chap. 12, “religious dynamics [determine] the fundamental experience of migration” and should thus “be integrated with analyses of the migrant trajectories and experience, not seen as epiphenomenal to them.”

By integrating research undertaken by leading scholars working from within and about a range of religious traditions and disciplinary perspectives, this volume suggests that there are alternative ways of understanding the relationships, processes, and responses that characterize global migration. In this regard, we start from the premise that not all types of migrants, levels or directionalities of migration, and, indeed, not all religions are equally represented in studies of migration or in policy responses designed to address these.¹⁴ Importantly, these diverse traditions have different positions of power in different geopolitical spheres.¹⁵ Therefore, we suggest ways in which study of these under-represented issues and dynamics can expand our knowledge and deepen

our understanding. The next section highlights the diversity of forms of migration while what follows attends more specifically to the power imbalances that are inherent in these varieties of migration as well as in their study. The remainder of this introduction highlights significant ways in which reading different approaches to religion and migration together can aid us to see global migration in new ways. One of the overarching aims of this book and the broader book series is to advocate in favor of an interdisciplinary and multi-perspectival approach to the study of migration (and, indeed, of religion) that benefits from placing different theoretical, ontological, epistemological, and methodological viewpoints in conversation with one another.

TYPES AND DIRECTIONALITIES OF MIGRATION

By 2013, the United Nations estimated there were over 232 million international migrants worldwide, including those who cross international borders for employment, education, tourism, family reunification, and asylum.¹⁶ This figure does not include the people who have migrated within—rather than across—their national borders, such as rural migrants looking for work in urban areas, migrants displaced by public works projects or changing climates, or professionals in search of better opportunities. Bearing all of these categories and “types” of migration in mind, it is clear that not all people(s) who move across national and transnational spaces are equally “visible,” or of equal “interest” to different stakeholders as migrants *per se*.¹⁷ In effect, dominant academic and policy perspectives have framed the terms of discussions and debates about migration and migrants, with diverse bureaucratic labels having been imposed upon migrants.¹⁸ In contrast, the ways in which migrants conceptualize these processes, including the significance of religious identity, belief, and practice, and experiences, have largely remained invisible or unexplored to date.

For instance, state policies label and constitute certain migrants, including those at the camp in Calais, as hypervisible, deviant others whose moving bodies (and concomitant religious beliefs and practices) are to be controlled and/or feared. Indeed, the enforcement of border controls and the forced removal of migrants have displaced the notion of “entry” from the center of the immigration conversation to the extent that scholars increasingly talk of “the deportation regime” or “deportation nation.”¹⁹ With the securitization of migration being inherently

linked to (real or imputed) religious and ethnic identity markers, however, it is by now widely documented that such a regime remains unknown by many migrants, and not all mobile subjects' religious beliefs and practices are equally interrogated by state officials monitoring processes of international migration.²⁰ These processes have changed over time so that religious and ethnic groups that were once deemed undesirable, such as Catholic and Jewish European migrants at the turn of the twentieth century in the USA, are now often welcome a century later.²¹ In contrast, for those individuals and groups whose socio-economic profiles, combined with—inter alia—their religious, ethnic, and regional background, lead to their being denominated as “tourists” or “business people” who are to be actively welcomed in the country of destination at the present moment, borders and border controls are largely imperceptible. These professionals are usually not the “immigrants” who are considered problematic in receiving sites.²²

Scholarship too has tended to focus on migration flows from the global South to the global North (South–North migration), even when migration within and across the global South (South–South migration) is arguably more significant numerically speaking, especially when highly significant processes of internal migration are also taken into account.²³ As a result, little remains known about the roles of religion as diverse migrants travel and negotiate their interactions with diverse stakeholders within their regions of origin or in other regions of the global South.²⁴ While many of the case studies included in the book parallel the academy's dominant focus on South–North migration flows, others concretely focus on the religious dimensions of South–South migration flows,²⁵ and also from and to countries that prompt a more nuanced analysis of the South–North binary itself.²⁶

Indeed, the pervading focus on South–North migration is a particularly significant bias given the increasing diversification of countries of immigration, and the implications of this diversification with regard to religion: from the “classic” immigration countries such as Argentina, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the USA, and northern and western Europe, immigration and its effects have spread to non-traditional receiving nation-states such as India, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, and the United Arab Emirates. Before World War II, “classic” immigration countries had historically preferred Christian European migrants; indeed, many had established clear barriers to, and at times overt prohibitions

of, the immigration of non-Christian, non-European Others. Following the war, many of these receiving countries opened immigration to non-Europeans in greater numbers, and, as growing numbers of non-Christians were admitted, both migrants and hosts increasingly underwent processes of adjusting to religious diversity. This reveals an imbalance of power as Muslims, in one example, have tended to be “cultural, religious and ethnic minorities” in receiving sites, which “makes for vulnerability in interreligious and political conversation.”²⁷ Additionally, with an ever-widening range of countries (across the global North and global South alike) receiving significant, and diverse, migratory flows, the standard assumption that a Christian majority “host” population is accommodating religiously diverse immigrants no longer reflects the full reality of global migration. Tibetan Buddhist refugees in India, minority Rohingya Muslims seeking asylum in Muslim majority Indonesia, and Keralan Muslims working in the Gulf States, for example, disrupt Christian hegemony in migration contexts and in scholarly discussions of migration.

Corresponding to this diversification, the religious discourses around immigration policy and humanitarian aid are also clearly shifting from a Christian dominated one to one in which multiple religious traditions are not only contributing, but also demanding to be heard and considered to be legitimate interlocutors. Indeed, it is important to note that such debates and discussions have invariably been taking place around the world from diverse religious perspectives throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (and indeed before). There is therefore an urgent need to continue building upon existing research by identifying, and meaningfully listening to, a broader range of perspectives from migrants and scholars alike positioned within both non-Christian and marginalized Christian traditions, as we strive collectively to think more systematically and holistically about migration.

The reasons for the apparent absence or inaudibility of these non-Christian perspectives to date are manifold and include both different relationships to power and knowledge, and a different emphasis on religious thought outside of Christianity.²⁸ Additionally, Christianity has both explicitly and implicitly shaped academic discourse about religion in the global North, where many of the earliest connections between religion and migration have been made. We anticipate that this volume will create a space where the first steps can be taken for previously marginalized perspectives to be added to the conversations.