
Pro Rege

Volume 47 | Number 4

Article 7

June 2019

Who Is My Neighbor?

Matt Vos

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Vos, Matt (2019) "Who Is My Neighbor?," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 47: No. 4, 27 - 35.

Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol47/iss4/7

This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pro Rege by an authorized administrator of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.

Who Is My Neighbor?



by Matt Vos

Migrants and Citizens: Justice and Responsibility in the Ethics of Immigration. Rajendra, Tisha M. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017, 169 pp.

“Who is my neighbor?” is an increasingly complex question in a global society growing smaller and arguably less neighborly by the day. Technological “advances” bring us close to others that previous generations would never have met, raising new questions about what it means to be neighborly. Just recently I engaged in a “we chat” communique with our adopted (Chinese) daughter’s foster mother, who lives in northern China. She and her family cared for our daughter for the first year of her life. Is she our neighbor? As I write, I sit in a *Starbucks* sipping coffee purportedly from central Africa. Who grew it? Who picked it? Are they my neighbors? Pondering this, I spill coffee on my shirt—something bought at

Dr. Matt Vos is Professor of Sociology at Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, Tennessee.

some discount clothing store like *T. J. Maxx*. The tag inside sources it in Bangladesh. Are the people who wove its cloth and sewed its seams my neighbors? And finally, I work in a college, with an office in a building that was built mostly by Spanish-speaking people with brownish faces—from Mexico, I presume. Are they my neighbors? Did my connection to them end when they vacated the finished building? Do I have any responsibility to them? Come to think of it, most of the material goods I enjoy come to me via materially poor others whose labor makes such articles possible. But who are they to me?

In the United States, “who is my neighbor?” has reached fever pitch. Heated debate on immigration calls for in-group loyalty and promotes sharp division between warring political groups, as well as between citizens and migrants, between “us” and them.” Prominent government officials lobby funds for expensive walls to fortify the binary between virtuous “citizens” and those undesirables beyond our borders. Migrants are suspect, nefarious, shadowy—people who want “our” resources. They want a free ride. They bog down our system. And they are illegal. Or so the dominant narrative proclaims.

In Migrants and Citizens: Justice and Responsibility in the Ethics of Immigration, Tisha M. Rajendra, Associate Professor of Theological Ethics at Loyola University, calls us to examine the narratives we sustain about the migrants who would live among us. Are the stories we tell accurate? Are they complete? Does our discourse about “us and them” adequately reflect the historical realities which shaped the relationship? Do our proclamations about those who would cross our borders do justice to the social complexities of a global society? Are borders, citi-

zanship, rights, and justice really simple binary us-and-them matters, or do our dualisms replace complex narratives with simpler ones? In the end, Rajendra explains, immigration, and the myriad debates that surround it, hinge on cultivating right relationships. Offering the book as a work in Christian ethics, Rajendra writes, “I mean to show that the responsibilities that ancient Israel had to the resident aliens in their midst were rooted in a conception of justice as right relationship—with God, with the resident aliens, and with one another”(10). Accordingly, the central purpose of this book is to identify and illuminate the complex contexts for our relationships with others.

While framing migrant narratives in a Christian perspective gives this book its distinctive character, its balance and its attention to false narratives on both sides of the migrant divide (exclusionist and inclusionist positions) are what make it more than just another reiteration of abstract themes of justice. And, as the title suggests, the book leads us not simply toward universal proclamations about justice, but to thinking more carefully about *who* has responsibility to distribute the mercy that God requires of people. Calling attention to universal human rights is a good thing, but it’s also quite meaningless if no one actually attends to such rights. “Be well-fed and clothed” means little if no one offers food, clothing, shelter, and safety.

Migrants and Citizens is organized into six chapters. The first four review some of the ways we’ve come to think about migrants, immigration, and human rights in general, and then explore strengths and weaknesses of dominant theories that address them. Chapters five and six follow with a “constructive proposal for a theory of justice that responds to the relationships between migrants and citizens” (93). In formulating her theory, Rajendra takes as a starting point the legal materials about resident aliens described in the Hebrew Bible and moves to an “account of justice that is rooted in the relationship between God and Israel and the complex of historical relationships among God, Israel, and the various strangers in the biblical narratives” (93). Not only are the Israelites to care for the marginal ones

among them—indigent people with no claim to their land—but they are even commanded to love them (Deuteronomy 10:19). To abuse, neglect, or show indifference to the suffering of the *ger* (Hebrew for stranger) is a rejection of *who* God is and *how* God is. To neglect the stranger is to step away from being the people of God. And, Rajendra observes, “The Hebrew Bible’s relational perspective on justice is also reflected in the new covenant of Jesus Christ, which changes relationships between members of the community and strangers” (94).

The Sinai covenant, Rajendra explains, is addressed to a people with membership, belonging, and a claim to the land they inhabit. The Pentateuch, she notes, is unique among various ancient Near Eastern texts in the way it includes strangers in its legal requirements. In relating to strangers, as in all things, God’s people are to be like God. Accordingly, the new land they’ve come into must not become a means by which they assume a “this is ours—hands off” practice such as they were subject to in the old land they just left. In Egypt the Israelites labored and were oppressed without being able to consume and benefit from the fruits of their toil. In Egypt they sat by the “flesh pots” of their masters, living in poverty amidst plenty. Thus, as God’s people, when the Israelites come into a land of their own, they are explicitly commanded to remember that they were strangers (*gerim*) in Egypt, and that their new and improved situation is because of God’s goodness, not something of their own making. After all, God “gave” them the land they now inhabit. It’s a gift, not a right. As Rajendra concludes, “Israel is to be the anti-Egypt, because God is the anti-pharaoh” (105).

Development of this sentiment functions as the metamessage of *Migrants*. In considering the strangers around and among us, the people of God must continually decide whether to be an Egypt or a Sinai. Indeed, relationships that honor and reflect the Sinai covenant look profoundly different from those in Egypt. Has God brought the Israelites out of Egypt merely to become a New Egypt? Old and New Testament Scriptures constantly associate care for the stranger with the blessing of God, while abuse of the strang-

er kindles God's wrath. The Egyptian army in hot pursuit of the *gerim* they had exploited for their labor ends up at the bottom of the Red Sea. Furthermore, for the people of God, protecting national wealth is never identified in Scripture as an overriding concern. The only prosperity that matters is that which comes from the generous and open hand of God. Our hand, in turn, should be like God's—open, generous, merciful.

Rajendra opens the book with brief critiques of “universal human rights” as well as approaches to thinking about migrants that employ a “preferential option for the poor.” Both critiques are essential to developing a Christian ethic of migration, and both have much to commend them. First, the universal human rights standard pushes Christians to recognize that “Migrants, created in the image of God, have an inherent dignity that must be protected by human-rights laws” (13). Such recognition properly de-couples human rights from citizenship in one nation and “opens us up to the possibility that citizens have responsibilities and obligations to migrants” (15). However, Rajendra finds this approach inadequate because of its “asymmetrical emphasis on the human rights of migrants without a corresponding discussion of who is obligated to protect these rights, reducing migrants’ rights to empty rhetoric” (15). Second, the preferential option for the poor derives from the idea that God as revealed in scripture “consistently chooses to be on the side of the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed” (24). This approach challenges our tendency to keep our eyes on the rich and powerful and compels Christians to act in defense of the poor. Although the “preferential option” has a less abstract character than the “universal human rights” approach, Rajendra still finds it wanting for roughly the same reason. It fails to specify precisely who has responsibility for the poor and the migrant.

Rajendra includes a good number of migrant stories in her analysis. For example, in her examination of universal human rights and the

In considering the strangers
around and among us,
the people of God must
continually decide whether
to be an Egypt or a Sinai.

preferential option for the poor, she offers the compelling story of Mario Castro, who migrated from Guatemala to the United States without his family, partly because he needed critical medical treatment his home country could not provide. When *US Immigration and Customs Enforcement* (a title that reduces to the inhospitable acronym “I.C.E.”) apprehended him, they sent him across the border to Mexico, another country where he held no citizenship, thus placing him between social systems and depriving him of meaningful citizenship. Who then should help him? Rajendra explains that “while documents like the *UN Convention on the Rights of Migrants* are quite insistent that migrants are endowed with rights by virtue of their very humanity, few

UN statements or academic books discuss who has the duty to protect the rights of migrants and why” (12). Lamentably, the website for I.C.E. appears to boast about its effectiveness at simply getting rid of undocumented people who have crossed into the United States without helping them. “Who is merciful? Not us!” Rajendra concludes that universal human rights and the preferential option for the poor are necessary but insufficient aspects of a Christian ethic of migration.

Chapter two offers a critique of three “structure-dominant” theories of migration: segmented-labor market theory, historical-structural theory, and world-systems theory. In briefly explicating these, Rajendra helps the reader understand that people (migrants or otherwise) are not simply “free persons,” unencumbered by the various structures that shaped their present situation. Segmented-labor market theory draws on Marxian ideas to explain how low-skill, low-prestige jobs are a by-product of industrialized economies. Likewise, historical-structural theory sees migration in similar terms —“migration, a legacy of colonial exploitation, becomes another way in which the resources of the developing world are transferred to the developed world” (43). Just as wealthy, “core” countries mine “pe-

ripheral” ones for minerals and other resources, they also mine less developed countries for cheap labor. And, perhaps most easily seen in our world today, world-systems theory explains how multinational corporations play a role in emigration from developing countries by “disrupting local economies, driving people into poverty, and displacing workers” (43).

Rajendra’s critique of these otherwise very insightful structural explanations draws attention to how they minimize the agency of migrants themselves: “All three structure-dominant theories reject the view of the person as an autonomous, rational agent; in fact, the choice to migrate plays hardly any role at all in these theories” (43). In other words, structure-dominant theories are one-sided, failing to maintain the sociological balance of both structure and agency. This being the case, they fail the “justice-as-right-relationship” standard Rajendra is promoting: “In erasing the agency of both migrants and citizens from an account of migration, structure-dominant migration theories risk erasing the responsibility that both migrants and citizens have in creating and perpetuating these unjust structures. These structures might preexist all the migrants and citizens alive today, but that does not mean we bear no responsibility for reforming and, in some cases, resisting unjust structures” (44).

Chapter two concludes with an overview of migration-systems theories, an overview that recognizes the influence of structures but also sees migration decisions as a dialectic (structures influence migrants, and migrants influence structures)—an approach that is less one-sided: “I do wish to suggest, however, that the relationships between citizens and migrants that initiated and sustain migration systems must be at the heart of the Christian ethics of migration. Indeed, the central question of the book is: ‘What responsibilities do citizens have to migrants?’ Responding to that question involves accurately understanding the relationships between different groups of citizens and migrants” (52).

Chapter three, “In Search of Better Narratives,” fortified my own understanding of the relationship between migrants and host countries. I recently heard several political ra-

dio ads that promoted their candidates in part with the promise that they would vote against the maintenance of “sanctuary cities,” where “illegal immigrants” take up residence. I live in the American South, in a city that in recent years was voted the most Bible-minded city in America, whatever that means. It is curious that political rhetoric and action against sanctuary for poor migrants holds currency in, arguably, the epicenter of Christian America. For me, the feel and tone of these ads, and of similar sentiment I sometimes see promoted on *Facebook* (“Click ‘Like’ if you think illegal immigrants make too many demands”), root them more in Egypt than in Sinai. They are predicated, I believe, on the assumption that no significant prior relationship exists between migrants and the United States. “They” see what “we” have, and want a slice of the American dream—like a stranger entering your house, asking “what’s for dinner?,” and then demanding you make it gluten-free. But prior relationship does exist, even if it is not immediately apparent, and meaningful justice requires that we unearth complex and difficult structural and relational histories. There really is no simple “us and them.” Using the case of a nanny as an example, Rajendra explains as follows:

... when we relate to other persons in society, we are not just relating to them as complete free persons. Our relationships are in some sense conditioned by our relative social positions. “Sociologically, these relations position people prior to their interaction, and condition expectations and possibilities of interaction.” For example, when Lourdes is employed as a nanny, the relationship between her and the couple employing her is not only a relationship among three individuals. The relationship between these individuals is shaped by the numerous relationships of social position between undocumented domestic workers and upper-middle-class, double-income suburbanites, between Latinas and whites, and between citizens and migrants. In other words, the fact that Lourdes’s wages fall far below a living wage is not simply the result of her employers not paying her enough: the interaction between Lourdes and her employers is, to a certain extent, conditioned by the relationship between

undocumented migrants and citizens in Los Angeles. It is characteristic of the relationship between these two groups that citizens tend to underpay migrants, taking advantage of the cheap labor that they offer. (57)

The rest of the chapter develops “narratives of relationships past.” These include an analysis of the lingering effects of guest worker programs, colonial migration systems, and foreign investment. I found this a valuable part of the book, helping the reader understand how specific past relationships have influenced present ones, and why Christians especially should be careful about disparaging sanctuary cities or oversimplifying migrants as “free-riders.” Of guest worker programs, Rajendra explains that wealthy host countries like to think they are just hiring workers. But you cannot get “workers” without getting “people.” Extracting an individual’s labor while ignoring his or her person, family, identity, or future, creates migration ripples that continue across time and must be addressed if relational justice is the standard. Accordingly, host countries who invited and benefitted from guest labor bear responsibility for the full humanity and context of those whose labor they enjoyed. After all, how should one treat a “guest?” And shouldn’t extended stay “guests” become friends over time? Or do we Christians just capitulate to secular paradigms for which economic legitimations are sufficient?

Rajendra’s treatment of colonial migration is equally illuminating. For example, “British immigration was a direct consequence of British colonialism” (64). The British colonized others, recruited their work, and then later resented and resisted the implications those relationships had for British culture: “British colonialism and the subsequent migrations it engendered changed British society, which today is rife with reminders of colonialism, not only in the presence of these migrants and their descendants, but in British food and culture” (66). Her point? Present rela-

Rajendra opens the book with brief critiques of “universal human rights” as well as approaches to thinking about migrants that employ a “preferential option for the poor.”

tionships between migrants and host cultures derive from past relationships. Working to identify and understand the particular histories which have shaped present migrant-host relationships, though frequently obscure and therefore difficult, is necessary to meet the requirements of justice as “right relationships.”

The final part of chapter three examines the influence of foreign investment on contemporary migration patterns. This section of the book explains how the activities “we” engage in abroad influence contemporary migration patterns and require that we take responsibility for their aftermath. For example, as I write, *Harley Davidson* is in the early stages of moving some of their factories to Thailand. How will a new factory influence the lives of native people who will build “our” motorcycles? Seen one way, it appears benevolent. Now “they” have an income source that they didn’t have before. But is this the whole story, and does American responsibility end with providing Thai factory workers with low-wage jobs for a time? What happens when the factory closes and unemployed workers want to migrate to the U.S. to make a better life for themselves? Rajendra details some of the implications of U.S. investment in Mexico, writing that “Migration systems initiated by both private companies and government guest-worker programs had been in place for decades, and this history forms the context of U.S. investment in Mexico” (68). She explains that international treaties such as the *General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade* (GATT) and the *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA) encourage countries to build factories through the elimination of import tariffs.

The creation of these factories often disrupts traditional work structures by drawing people from traditional work in agriculture or crafts into work in factories. Not only does the creation of factories draw people from traditional work, whose infrastructure collapses in the absence of work-

ers, but the promise of factory work draws new people into the work force, particularly women...in Mexico this process was exacerbated by the elimination of government grain subsidies to Mexico's farmers, which made it difficult for them to compete with an influx of cheap grain from the United States. (69)

When “we” profit from the labor of poor people in other countries, and when our activity in their communities dismantles traditional ways of making a living, we—like it or not—have cultivated responsibility toward them. We can pretend the relationship is one-sided when “they” cross the border—legally or otherwise. We can develop self-serving narratives that tell half-truths at best. But to do so is to sit by our heavily guarded fleshpots under a sign that reads, “Welcome to Egypt.”

Chapter four provides an overview of three philosophical theories of justice and culminates in roughly the same critique found in earlier parts of the book. John Rawls' contractarian approach conceptualizes justice as fairness. Rajendra finds Rawls' theory lacking because it presumes a world of people who have no contact or prior relationship with one another. Onora O'Neill's deontological ethics argues that moral concern extends to everyone with whom an agent is connected. Although O'Neill emphasizes the role of institutions in carrying out justice, Rajendra finds that she fails to specify which institutions, for example, should be responsible for helping people like Mario Castro who find themselves between countries in “no-man's land.” Of these philosophical approaches, Rajendra most admires Martha Nussbaum's “capabilities approach.” Nussbaum argues that because human rights are universal, human obligations are as well. Accordingly, her focus falls on duties rather than rights—we all have an obligation to provide the people of the world with the things they need. Rajendra appreciates this view, but she finds that it falls short of the justice-as-right-relationship standard because of its lack of particularity and inadequate attention to particular histories.

As previously noted, chapters five and six offer a Christian ethic of migration rooted in the conception of justice as right relationship. Here

Rajendra draws on her theological training to advantage, but it is also here that her offering would be strengthened by inclusion of concepts from the sociological literature. For example, she writes, “Contemporary commentary on the Exodus narrative notes that the pharaoh's reasoning is hardly unique in human history; once we define the ‘other’ as essentially unlike us, and thus a threat to ‘our’ way of life, oppression in the name of self-defense seem necessary and justified” (104). Sociologists employ the term “folk devils,” to describe a group or collective labeled as a threat to the dominant group and their way of life. Sociologist Samantha Hauptman notes that

Oftentimes, claims makers designate a group that is considered as the enemy, thus evoking a struggle between good and evil, where a division is made between the decent majority and a clearly delineated deviant segment, stereotyped as *folk devils*. The act of stereotyping also allows the general public to place the *folk devil* in a ‘despised category... [which] permits the conventional member of a society to feel justified I strong, even savage condemnation...unambiguous hostility toward him or her should not only be expected – it is demanded. (as cited in Hauptman).¹

Rajendra's argument would be bolstered by including sociological work which specifies the process by which a group's “otherness” is accentuated and linked to threat. Nonetheless, I found chapter five invigorating in the way it explained just how central the practice of respect, care, and love for the stranger is in the Hebrew Bible. In fact, one could argue that it is this care and concern for the stranger, this diminishing of otherness, that makes the Pentateuch truly unique among other ancient texts.

Rajendra's inclusion and development of Walter Brueggemann's work on the relationship between Torah, memory, land, and *gerim*, was, for me, alone worth the price of the book. She writes,

The relationship among God's election of Israel, Israel's identity as *gerim*, and the commandment to love the *ger* in ancient Israel points to a central irony about the gift of the land to Israel.

While God gives the land to the Israelites as his chosen people, living as God's chosen people requires what could be called a preferential option for the non-Israelite. Walter Brueggemann addresses this irony in his exploration of land as both gift and temptation in the Hebrew Bible. As Israel goes from being a wandering band of former slaves in the wilderness to a settled nation with a land of their own, they face the temptation to forget the covenant. Having land represents satiety, comfort, and power, and the satiated, comfortable, and powerful are prey to "the seduction of imagining it was always so, and that Israel made it so." To put it another way, the land, while a gift from God, is also a temptation to forget their relationship with God and the demands that this relationship places on them. The power that comes with land tempts Israel to forget that they were once powerless strangers in need of God's protection. Forgetting this episode in Israel's historical memory tempts Israel to become another Egypt by using the power of land to increase the wealth of the Israelites at the expense of the strangers. ... Brueggemann writes that memory in the form of Torah is a weapon against the temptation of the landed to forget. (108)

This centrality of care and concern for the stranger finds expression in the New Testament in the way Jesus himself presents as a stranger who ministers to those who have become strangers to God. Jesus continually befriends strangers, takes responsibility for them, nurtures relationship with them, and provides for them:

Matthew 25 explicitly links the image of Jesus as a stranger with the moral imperative of hospitality: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Like the Hebrew Bible materials that place the *ger* in the most-vulnerable triad, the Gospels identify the stranger as one of the "least of these" who reveal the face of Christ.... Hospitality toward strangers is based on the concrete relationship between Jesus Christ and the church. The hungry, thirsty, the stranger, naked,

sick prisoner... all represent Christ, and by caring for the least of these the Christian community cares for Christ.... The stranger cannot literally be a stranger for the stranger is the literal personification of Jesus. (110-11)

And, of course, the logic of evangelism rests on making neighbors of strangers. Obvious conclusion: To neglect or oppress the strangers among us is to forsake what it should mean to be the people of God, followers of Jesus' way of being in the world. When Christians oppose strangers by blocking them from fellowship and resources, it raises questions about whether the gospel really is "good news" or just another dead-end for the "least of these."

So, who is my neighbor in this complex world we share? Neighbors are those with whom we are

in relationship. And in a world of instant electronic communication, multinational corporations, guest-worker programs, factories in foreign lands, imports, and exports, neighbors are everywhere, near and far. We can pull in, protect "our" wealth, tell obfuscating half-truths about the poor, the migrant, the "least of these"—but none of this will add up to a credible Christian ethic of migration. And none of it will show us to be followers of Jesus, who most often comes to us in the guise of a stranger. If we will not know strangers, we cannot know Jesus. So it is that Rajendra's book is a valuable tool for helping us look outward, raising our eyes to Jesus, who sits on the edge of our borders, often just beyond the horizon of our vision. To find him we must uncover the hidden narratives that shroud as strangers those who could and should be understood as neighbors and friends. Is that not the goal of the gospel we claim to be heralding? The narratives we so frequently hear, and tell ourselves, are hidden by structural sin. Life as we experience it is taken as a given, and we fail to see the marginalized ones who weave our cloth, make our shoes, pick our coffee, assemble our iPhones, construct our buildings, and so on. Rajendra writes,

Simply by eating dinner, citizens participate in

The final part of chapter three examines the influence of foreign investment on contemporary migration patterns.

the structures of sin that take advantage of undocumented migrants. This participation does not require any ill will. In fact, opting out of this participation would require almost superhuman amounts of attention, time, and money simply because these structures have become so much a part of the way citizens live their lives.... Responsibilities to undocumented migrants come from this unwitting participation in labor markets that benefit from the labor of these migrants. (130)

Rajendra then calls us to lift the veil of the legitimated order we take for granted in order to actually see the migrant worker, separated from her family, picking the apple we put in our child's lunch. To wonder how good coffee with origins in Africa made it to our cups. To resist folk-devil narratives about immigrant ranks being full of rapists, criminals, and drug-peddlers. To learn to see structural sin, and to recognize how we benefit from it, even when its origins were beyond our control. And to take responsibility for our part in it. Relationships bind people, and justice is right relationship. To be people of justice, we must expose hidden narratives, re-tell them truthfully, and serve as vocal opponents of false, self-serving, and incomplete stories. For in seeking out and telling the truth about marginal strangers who press in on our worlds, and then engaging them in right relationship, we just might embrace the Jesus who stands among them along our border walls.

Migrants ends as it began, with a brief examination of the parable of the Good Samaritan. At first glance the parable seems to advocate idiosyncratic benevolence. If you come across someone who is hurt, help them out. At second glance it suggests universal compassion—help everyone. Yet both these ways of understanding the parable are inadequate. The Good Samaritan, rather, applies a new way of thinking about “folk devils” to a *particular* relationship. Rajendra explains that upon hearing this story, the Israelites would not have heard in it a universal moral imperative, nor would they have identified with the Samaritan who is ministering to the wounded Jew. Rather, they would hear

echoes of a story from 2 Chronicles, in which the Samaritan army loots a Judean city, captures thousands of women and children, and deports them to Samaria for slave labor. But that isn't the end of the story. Listening to Oded, a Hebrew prophet, denounce the Samaritan army, the leaders of Samaria have a change of heart: they clothe the captives, feed them, and anoint them. Then they take them to their kin in the Judean city of Jericho. In the context of a relationship marked by a history of mutual antagonism, both 2 Chronicles and the parable of the Good Samaritan show how, regardless of their history of mutual antagonisms and grievances, people can establish different relationships—ones marked by care and concern for a specific “other” ... the cycle of violence can be broken. (143)

She concludes, “Whether the relationship between Jews and Samaritans can be transformed depends on the response of Jesus's listeners to the parable. Can they interrogate and then transform their own narrative about the Samaritans? Going forward, can they tell a new story?” (144). Can we?

Migrants and Citizens is a wonderful and enriching book that both educated me and transformed the way I think about immigrants and Christian responsibility. In conceptualizing this review, I initially jotted down relationships I thought Rajendra had missed, ones that I felt were important to include in a book on justice as “right relationship.” For example, environmental sociologists explain that some of the more disastrous effects of climate change, for which rich nations bear primary responsibility, disproportionately affect poor nations, where conditions now make mere survival almost impossible. Shall we ban their migrants at our borders? But then I realized the gift Rajendra had given me was in expanding my sociological imagination, helping me to see relationship, and therefore responsibility, where before I saw little. Of course she can't possibly cover all not just uneven but lopsided relationships in one volume. Indeed, injustice and disregard for relationship are ubiquitous. But to call myself a Christian—if that is to mean anything—is to announce myself to be in a particular relationship

with those who have been mistaken as strangers. To follow Jesus, to seek to emulate his character, virtues, and ways, requires that I lace up my boots, head out to my borders, listen to the stories of so-called strangers, and together transform our narrative in order to right our relationship. And who knows, I may catch a glimpse of Jesus just across the barbed wire.

Endnotes

1. Samantha Hauptman, *The Criminalization of Immigration: The Post 9/11 Moral Panic, The New Americans: Recent Immigration and American Society* (El Paso: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC, 2013), 37.