

Readings from the Edges: The Bible and People on the Move

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As its title suggests, this short book is located at the edges. More to the point, its thesis is at the intersection and overlapping of two distinct loyalties: a loyalty to the Bible as a guide for theological reflection, and a loyalty to migrant communities throughout the world (especially among the Latino/a communities in the United States). This is a theology of migration, one that revolves primarily around often-neglected biblical texts, and seeks to call biblical scholarship to consider the experience of migrant communities as a central component of its theological vision.

Ruiz divides the book into two main parts, with the final chapter radically shifting the book's focus (more below). In the first part, Ruiz discusses what he calls "reading strategies": the exegetical and hermeneutical process of interpreting the Bible, not as detached observers, but alongside the migrant communities of the world. In the second part, Ruiz discusses select passages from the Bible itself, offering interpretations of texts that are frequently neglected in considerations of faith and migration (particularly in the official documents of the Catholic Church).

In Chapter 1, Ruiz takes up the ubiquitous divide between Biblical Studies and Theology. He argues that the overt distinctions between these two camps, and their often competing ends, are in need of rethinking. Chapter 2 wrestles with liberation theology's use of the Bible: namely, the relationship between liberation theology's "preferential option for the poor" and its "hermeneutical privilege of the poor." The tension between academic readings and those of the poor is the central problem of this chapter. Ruiz sees the consideration of daily, lived experience of human communities to be a safeguard against abstraction. Chapter 3 is the heart of Ruiz's book, and it is his best chapter. It is his call for Latino/a scholars both to take up fresh readings of the Bible, and to allow those readings to engage the public square. Ruiz wants the Bible to inform the manner in which Christians (particularly Catholics) think about migration, immigration policy, and human rights.

Chapters 4-8 are exegetical essays on select biblical texts (Genesis 12:1-20; Ezekiel 12:1-16; Ezekiel 20; Nehemiah 13; Matthew 20:1-16, respectively) that Ruiz wrote according to the hermeneutical principles he established earlier. Each chapter sets the biblical text in conversation with a different migrant (but in Ruiz's case, Latino/a) experience. Ruiz cites as relevant several realities: those who have crossed/are crossing the Mexican/United States border under perilous circumstances; enclaves of the Puerto-Rican and Cuban diasporas in the United States; the effects of colonialism, coupled with the necessity of post-colonial hermeneu-

tics; the trauma of exile; the complexities of assimilation (not the least of which are linguistic); and the trials of day-wage labor. This section is an ambitious and creative attempt to engage the Bible and these issues. Ruiz's training as an Old Testament scholar comes through, as does a genuine desire to address the needs of migrant communities. But the theology in these chapters often fails to develop clearly: Ruiz's writing is sporadic and tangential. Throughout this section, Ruiz needs to connect his thoughts more concretely, completing his arguments on how these realities enlighten biblical theology.

Chapter 9 shifts the course of the volume; here Ruiz reads Christopher Columbus' *El libro de las profesías*, which Ruiz sees as a quintessential late-medieval redaction of biblical texts and commentary. Ruiz explains that Columbus' exegesis is based largely on the Old Testament prophets (especially Isaiah, whose idea of new heavens and new earth Columbus found fulfilled in America) and that his subjective aim was one of propaganda for Spain's imperialist cause.

In lieu of critique, I mention certain considerations Ruiz should expound upon more in future work. First, Ruiz's reading of the OT is often challenging and insightful, but it leaves the reader wanting more from other parts of Scripture (what of Paul?). Second, although he did mention it, Ruiz needs to address more thoroughly the concept of legality alongside discussions of migration. Many readers here in the United States will consider that issue as too foundational for a short treatment. Third, although this book is part of Orbis' Studies in Latino/a Catholicism Series, it would be beneficial to think more about Christianity as a whole. As an Evangelical Protestant (who has worked for many years in the Latino/a community both in the United States and Mexico, and as a Spanish teacher), I would insist that migration is reshaping more than Catholicism. Fourth, the reader needs to hear more of Ruiz's own voice; he quotes incessantly, to the point that it is often difficult to discern the author of a text or paragraph. In sentences in which Ruiz's distinct voice came through, it was one of clarity and nuance.

Ruiz wants to tease out a public theology of migration from the peripheries of the Bible. To that end, this book is, in many ways, a bibliographic essay—guiding readers toward scholars and texts that are helpful for taking seriously the Bible and its implications for public life. Throughout the volume, Ruiz goes to great lengths to insinuate that the task at hand for the Christian community is one of reading the Bible alongside the Other, and taking the concerns and realities of migrants seriously. This book's strengths lie primarily in the call to engage these (seemingly) competing narratives. This insistence is essential for the global church of the 21st century. Ruiz argues that one of the central problems facing biblical scholarship is the isolation in which it frequently occurs, but this is one book in which the voice of the Other is heard loud and clear.

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