Refugees in the Scriptures

Ambivalence

- **Exclusion**
  - Identity - holiness & marriage

- **Inclusion**
  - Their own history of being exiles & the prophets

Exclusion of Foreigners

- They were especially frightened of their religions and that the faith of Israel would be corrupted through marriages.
- Criterion Lev. 19, 2 You shall be holy, for I the Lord and Holy.
- Fear of marriages: Ex 34, 14ff; Deut. 7, 3f; 13, 6.9
- Discrimination against foreigner: debts not cancelled Dt. 15, 1-3; interest Dt 23, 20 cannot become King Dt 17, 15.

- After the Exile identity became a major question
- Ezra 10, 10
- *All these had married foreign women, and they sent them away with their children.* Ezra 10, 44

Inclusion - Old Testament

- Dt. 26, 5-8 My father was a wandering Aramean
- Ex. 22, 21-7 Don’t wrong the resident alien we were also aliens in Egypt
- Lev. 19, 33f treat as a citizen; love the alien as yourself ....

Care for Aliens

- **Gleaning:** Lev. 19, 9-10; 23, 22 & Dt 24, 19 leave a sheaf for the alien, the orphan and the widow.
- **Tithing.** Annual tithes of grain, wine, oil and first fruits. On the third year these were to be distributed to Levites, resident aliens, orphans and widows Dt. 14, 28f; 26, 12.
- **Justice to strangers.** Equality of the stranger before the law. Ex. 12, 49; Dt. 24, 17f; Dt. 10, 18. Also some interesting law as about not handing slaves back. Don’t withhold wages of poor whether Israelite or alien. Dt. 24, 14f

Other OT themes re Aliens

- Universal God. God liberates all and shares his blessings with all.
- Second Isaiah. light to the nations 42, 6f; turn to me all the ends of the earth 45, 22; my justice a light to the peoples 51, 4. Suffering servant also includes all the nations.
- Third Isaiah. 56, 3.6.7 foreigners will be included.
- Jonah. Reluctant universalism.
- Ruth. Intermarriage the positive reply to Ezra.
- **Justice for all because God is the God of all.**

Inclusiveness - New Testament

- Jesus reaches out to the excluded rather than strangers.
- Jesus was a refugee. Flight into Egypt. Mt. 2, 13-23.
- Jesus moved from town to town, Lk. 13, 22. No place to lay his head, Mt. 8, 20.
Mary gives birth away from home and is forced to flee to Egypt
Love your neighbour as yourself. Matt. 22:39 Mark 12:31
The judgement of the nations. “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” Mt. 25, 31-46.

**Parables & Inclusiveness**

- Challenge the legal or merit system: [God’s world is not one of merit but of need and generosity]
  - Workers in the vineyard, Mt. 20, 1-16
  - Prodigal Son Lk. 15, 11-32
- Those excluded
  - Pharisee & Publican Lk. 18, 9-14
  - Great Feast Mt. 22,
- Good Samaritan Lk. 10, 25-37

**Paul & the Early Church**

- Pentecostal Experience
- No distinctions Col. 3,11; Eph. 2,14; Rom. 15, 7.
- Christians are pilgrims exhorted to hospitality Rom 12, 13
- Early Church’s struggle with Gentile members. Another struggle between identity and God’s universal love and presence. Eg. Peter & Cornelius
- Goal is the creation of a new humanity where there will be no slave or foreigner. Gal. 3, 27-29

**Some Summary Points**

- Scriptural picture is human - fear and welcome
- OT. Welcome because of their history, and recognition that God is the God of all
- Special call to look after the vulnerable. Job 29, 11-20
- Jesus’ option for the excluded and obligation to love your neighbour
- Last Judgement - test of our Christianity
- Parables challenge our expectations, threaten our secure worlds, and celebrate mercy, compassion and people before merit
- Jesus asks us to put people first and discover who we are through our relationships with the fringe people
- Christ died for all 2 Cor. 5,14
- Church’s struggle to recognise the presence of God. Battle of universal and special call [identity]
- Offering hospitality offers the possibility of individual and community transformation

Noel Connolly
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