

**AN ETHIC FOR REFUGEES: THE PILGRIM MOTIF IN  
HEBREWS AND THE REFUGEE PROBLEM IN KENYA**

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## ABSTRACT

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The refugee situation has reached alarming proportions in Kenya. Though there have been historical and sociological studies focusing on the problem, a biblical theological reflection has not been done. This work will provide a biblical theological response to the problem based on the pilgrim motif in Hebrews. The work begins with a historical analysis highlighting that the root causes of the problem of refugees in the Horn of Africa lies in the unequal relationship between the North and South. This relationship began with slave trade, continued through colonialism, and now exists in the form of powerful multinational companies that deplete the resources of Africa. Following independence, Kenya hosted refugees that came through its borders in an exemplary manner. But since 1992 the numbers have increased and due to social, economic, and political challenges, the Kenya government has not applied the wisdom of the saying *Mgeni siku ya kwanza; siku ya pili mpe jembe* (One is a guest is for two days; on the third day give him/her a hoe). The refugees have been confined in the camps for over ten years and there seems to be no solution in sight.

This work is a call to Christians in Kenya to provide an alternative ethic. Armed with the rich resources of African hospitality and taking seriously their pilgrim identity as

manifested in the book of Hebrews, they will be able to deal with situation courageously, compassionately, and creatively. The main components for an ethic for refugees are: following Jesus, the pilgrim *par excellence*, and a community of faith characterized by hospitality, courage, and hope in the face of adversity. Drawing upon Yoder and Okullu, we note that the mission of the church has a four-fold dimension: to announce the Lordship of Jesus Christ over and against all powers, to be a community that transcends national and ethnic boundaries, to be a paradigm for society, and to serve the community in its multiple functions. Thus, a church that will own its pilgrim identity will respond to refugees in caring and compassionate ways and will lead the nation towards creative life-transforming solutions.

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