

From Gravity to Grace: Finding a redemptive voice
among displaced Christians in Europe
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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the growing need to understand the religious perspectives of forcibly displaced persons. It looks at the subject in terms of a journey and how a small group of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe retell their journey stories with theological significance. The research asks how these refugees correlate their experiences of faith and displacement. The answer comes as a synthesis that juxtaposes displacement and salvific events.

Applying Simone Weil's idea of decreation to the data from in-depth interviews, the research looks at the individual journeys of refugees and traces these as a journey from creation to re-creation. Aspects of the journey develop at each level. As a creation, the *imago Dei* connects the person to God. A decreation takes place through displacement that leads the person away from their humanity in a downward spiral of dehumanization. Yet, the decreation of displacement is more than a list of needs and responsibilities; at its vortex is the possibility of a redemptive relationship. Re-creation takes place through a synthesis of displacement and salvific events, and the critical moment is when refugees recognize God's story in their personal story. The faith experience is not a static event; it becomes redemptive as it continues in a dialogical process of relating the journey to God and community. Finally, the result of this synthesis of re-creation and its redemptive process is a new reality that finds expression in *shalom*, being welcomed, and finding renewed purpose.