

Over the last few decades the global community has experienced migrations on an unheard of scale. Since the beginning of human history, people have been on the move. New regions have become inhabited, and the demographic make-up of every country in the world has changed over time. Today, however, the sheer size of the movement of diverse peoples worldwide has generated unique socio-economic, political, and ethnic challenges.

Immigration requires serious Christian reflection. Individual Christians, and the Christian church as a whole, need to ground their view on this controversial issue in the Scriptures, theology, and church history. The Vernon Grounds Institute of Public Ethics sees as its mission to provide a forum for such a task within an evangelical framework.

The venues for some of these contributions were two of the annual activities that are sponsored by the Vernon Grounds Institute: the Kent Mathews Lectures and the Rally for the Common Good. The two final essays were invited in order to add an important ethnic voice (Chinese) and a perspective from another part of the globe (Europe), respectively. With such a complex topic, it is doubtful that readers will agree with all that is said in this volume, but if it can stimulate authentic and comprehensive Christian thinking on immigration, it will have served its purpose!

Preface

Noel Castellanos

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Part I – Portraits of People on the Move in the Bible

M. Daniel Carroll R.

Chapter Two: Thinking Christianly about Immigration:

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Changes the Immigration Conversation

Craig Wong

Chapter Four: Imagine a Church without Migrants! A European Perspective

Darrell R. Jackson

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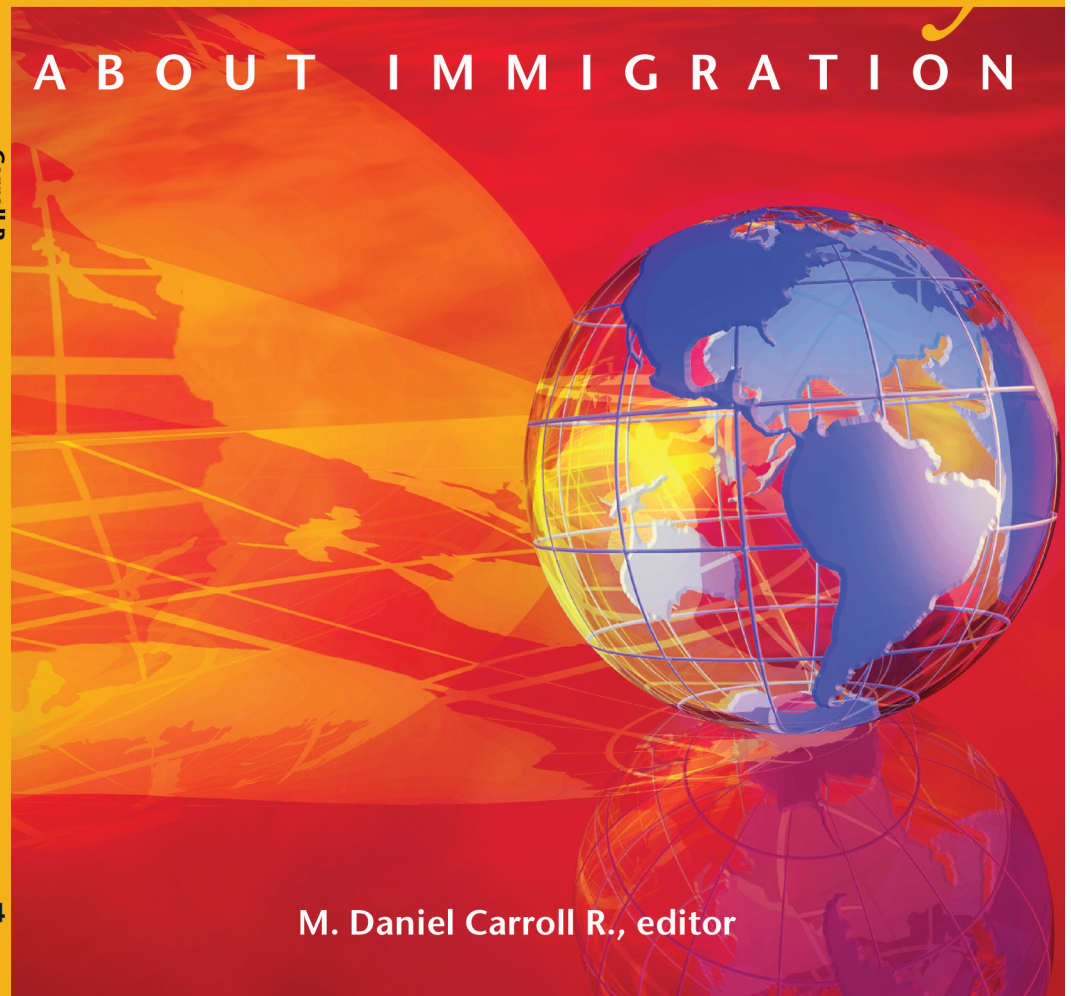
Thinking Christianly About Immigration



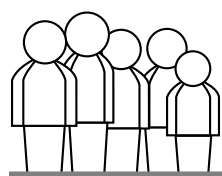
THINKING *Christianly*

ABOUT IMMIGRATION

Carroll R.



M. Daniel Carroll R., editor



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Christianly
ABOUT IMMIGRATION

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OF PUBLIC ETHICS

Monograph Series

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PREFACE

I feel privileged to write the forward to this important volume on *Thinking Christianly About Immigration*. Two of the contributors, Dr. Danny Carroll R. and Craig Wong are good friends. Along with Darrell Jackson, whom I hope to get to know, they offer perspectives that add much to our conversation about this important topic. My prayer is that the compelling exploration of the Scriptures and the thoughtful reflection offered in this book, coupled with meaningful and honest conversations with other Christ followers, will result in a deep, radical shift in the way we see all people, especially immigrants—as men, women, and children created in the image of God. This book gives us a solid foundation for individual and church outreach towards our undocumented immigrant neighbors and for our public engagement in seeking just solutions to this nation's current immigration policy.

My personal journey of understanding regarding immigration has been life changing. Ten years ago I began to be educated by my friends, neighbors, and parishioners in Chicago about the realities and challenges of immigrants crossing into the USA. They come looking for hope and opportunity: for a new start from poverty, political tyranny or war, and for the chance to earn a living wage to care for their families. A handful of years had passed since the 1986 Amnesty signed into law by then President Reagan, and those who continued to arrive by the thousands did so filled with the expectation not only of survival but also of prosperity, because once they got here there were jobs to be found.

Entire industries were fueled and sustained by these newcomers, who were eager to take jobs Americans despised. They worked as farm workers, maids, dishwashers, landscapers, and hard-working construction workers with skills in drywall, bricklaying and carpentry. Everyone was happy, and many were prosperous. The fact that millions were entering the workforce without legal docu-

mentation was tolerated, because of the myriad benefits to the economy.

Not only did businesses thrive, churches that reached out to these new neighbors also began to appear and flourish in cities and communities across our nation. Many of these immigrants, particularly the majority coming from Mexico and other Latin American countries, came with strong Roman Catholic roots and with an openness to integrate into these small congregations that showed them love and concern. They shared a common belief in 'Jesucristo,' even if these churches were different from many of their religious traditions back home.

It was in 1990 that I began my pastoral ministry in the Mexican *barrio* of La Villita on Chicago's southwest side. This thriving community of almost 200,000 residents was the perfect place to establish a ministry focused on loving our neighbors with Christ's love and on bringing about positive change in the community as an expression of Kingdom ministry. Our bilingual, multi-cultural, community-based church became a *mestizaje* of cultures, classes, and religious traditions rooted in this mostly Spanish-speaking corner of the Midwest.

Because from the beginning the focus of La Villita Community Church was to be a church in the *barrio* and for the *barrio*, getting to know our neighbors and our neighborhood and finding ways to demonstrate God's love were at the heart of our mission. I spent many days meeting storeowners on 'Avenida México,' or 26th Street, where almost 1000 businesses prosper. This strip of mostly Mexican owned business provides our city with sales tax income second only to the Magnificent Mile in the heart of downtown, an astonishing accomplishment for an immigrant community.

We quickly began to realize that in order to live out our ministry philosophy of Christian community development that emphasizes addressing the whole needs of people, and in order to

empower them to become responsible and engaged citizens and to develop indigenous leaders we had to invest in our young people. We did so by establishing a dynamic after-school program for elementary age kids, which involved their parents. We collaborated with local groups and the police to reach out to Mexican youth in our *barrio*, who were involved in gangs that devastate the community through violence and fear. Our goal was to intervene in the lives of these kids and to engage them relationally so as to redirect their activities into family, church, work, and education.

It was in the process of loving and befriending these families that I began to understand that our current immigration policy is not working and is in need of reform. By all estimates, over 12 million individuals from around the globe are in our country without proper legal status. The majority of these individuals have come for the same reason immigrants have always come to our nation: in search of a better life for their families. The more I encountered families trapped in an economic system that utilizes and benefits from the cheap labor provided by undocumented workers, while offering little protection from abuse or little hope for improved legalization because of present political realities, the more I realized that loving my immigrant neighbors would require much more of us as Christians. It was not enough to offer compassion or work harder to help folks find Christ. I realized that I also needed to advocate for immigration reform that would address the limitations of the current system.

Much has changed in the last ten years in regards to the Church's understanding of and engagement in immigration issues. This gives me much hope. Today many Christian organizations are well informed about the challenges facing our immigrant brothers and sisters. Among the many efforts working to bring about change is the collaboration of large, well known evangelical organizations that have committed to working together until we see a new attitude on behalf of the church towards the undocu-

mented, greater understanding of the complex issues of immigration, and the passing of comprehensive immigration reform that is fair and treats individuals with respect and dignity.

Almost ten years ago, I presented a lecture at Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington, entitled “Incarnation and Integration: A Biblical Response to our Immigrant Neighbors.” I never imagined that it would take so many years to bring about policy change or a heart change on the part of Christ followers towards people created in the image of God who happen to be undocumented. Much of what I presented then is still needed today.

I believe with great conviction that, as Christians, we must take seriously the biblical call to love those on the margins of society as a core expression of our faith. In order to love our immigrant neighbor, who is both marginalized and extremely vulnerable in our society, we must incarnate our lives among them if we are to minister to them effectively. In my estimation, one of the biggest reasons many Christians are not engaged or compassionate towards the plight of the undocumented is that they do not have any significant relationship with the undocumented. Once we connect immigration with actual human beings, our empathy and understanding deepen, and we become more open to finding solutions that reflect Kingdom justice.

This past year the board of directors for the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), which I lead, took a trip to Phoenix. From there we traveled to the US-Mexican border. The goal was to learn first-hand about the realities of immigration. Our organization has a rich history of love and commitment to the poor and vulnerable, and our members are deeply caring and committed Christians. They put their faith into action not just to help the poor, but to see individual lives and communities transformed by addressing the root causes of poverty. I realized, though, that many of our non-Hispanic/Latino board members, or those working primarily in African-

American communities, were ignorant of the complicated matters of immigration. Many had never related personally with an undocumented family.

What happened on this trip is exactly what I prayed would happen. While our group heard compelling teaching on immigration from Danny Carroll and others and immigration advocates presented their perspectives, it was a conversation we had with a young woman on the Mexican side of the border that turned people's hearts. She was only a few days removed from being caught in the Arizona desert, as she attempted to enter into the USA illegally. She shared her story of why she risked her life to take this journey alone to 'El Norte' to help her family, who lived in desperate poverty. She told us all the details about the monetary cost of attempting to cross and about her horrifying experience in the desert before being captured and returned to Mexico, thankfully into a shelter operated by a Christian ministry.

As she stood before us, she shivered out of nerviness and because of the trauma she had suffered, when she was caught in torrential rains that swept her into rocks and cactus. Her vulnerability was haunting. One by one, I could see in the faces of my friends that immigration was no longer simply about statistics and policy ideas. It was about a young woman created in God's image connecting with them on a personal, human level.

As we debriefed that weekend's experience, it was clear that our group's hearts had experienced a change. Not everyone was ready to sign on to a particular policy position, but all were ready to assert that we must demonstrate compassion, respect, and love towards our undocumented brothers and sisters. All agreed that we must urge our nation to fix our broken immigration system, a system that causes young women like the one we had met to attempt to enter our country in a dehumanizing and dangerous fashion.

At a closing immigration prayer gathering with a diverse group of Christians in Phoenix, Dr. John Perkins, the founder of

CCDA and an iconic civil rights leader, took the podium and declared that the issue of immigration might just be the human rights issue of our day. He went on to say that the moment we label people “illegal,” we dehumanize them and are then free to treat them any way we desire, without regard to their status before God. As the church, we should begin by affirming the truth that these are men, women and children created in the image of God. We must look to the Bible for guidance on how to think Christianly about immigration. Then, we could have much to offer to a national discussion that has the potential to define our posture towards immigrants for generations to come.

Noel Castellanos

INTRODUCTION

The title of this volume *Thinking Christianly about Immigration* is deliberately broad in its meaning, and it summarizes well what is to be found in these pages. To think “Christianly” in a full-orbed sense involves our engaging biblical teaching on a topic, processing it theologically and through our church practices, and learning insights from how Christians have dealt with the matter in history.

The topic here is the thorny issue of immigration. This is a global challenge. The United Nations tells us that over 200 million people are migrating worldwide. How should Christians as individuals, as ministries, and as churches respond to this overwhelming reality that now impacts every continent? This volume attempts to reflect to some extent the multinational and multiethnic nature of the immigration debate through the diversity of its contributors.

Noel Castellanos, the author of the Forward, lives in the Chicago area. He is the Director of the Christian Community Development Association, which works with underprivileged communities across the United States, both in urban and rural areas. This group has a unique experience of working with vulnerable groups, which they are increasingly aware includes immigrants. Daniel Carroll R. (Rodas), who wrote the biblical chapters, is half-Guatemalan. He lived and worked for many years in Central America and engages primarily Hispanic immigrants in metro-Denver. Craig Wong is of Chinese descent and is on the staff of a ministry that works with immigrants in the San Fran-

cisco Bay area. Darrell Jackson, the final contributor, is a British missiologist, who is a key player in European reflections on the challenges of immigration within the European Union. Quite a variety of authors, but this is exactly what is needed for a topic like this!

The conviction of the authors is that the topic of immigration requires that the array of Christian resources be brought to bear in the articulation of a genuinely Christian position and in the formulation of courses of pastoral care and wider practical action. Accordingly, Carroll surveys some of what the Bible says about migration; Wong considers the theological and ministerial significance of the Lord's Table for the immigration debate; and Jackson presents an historical overview of the role of immigrants in the life of Christianity in Europe.

The authors are aware that there are diverse opinions on immigration among Christians, particularly in regards to those without proper documentation. The hope is that readers will be able to appreciate these biblical, theological, and historical foundations as they develop their view on immigration. What kind of legislation and other pragmatic socio-economic matters that might flow from all of this is another discussion worthy of more study. Those important issues, however, lie beyond the purview of this volume. Perhaps these chapters can inform how Christians might enter those debates very self-consciously through the lens of their faith.

The purpose of the Vernon Grounds Institute is to serve as a forum for wrestling with the difficult issues of our day from an evangelical point of view. The Institute accomplishes this through the organization of speaking events and hands-on experiences. These include the fall Kent Mathews Lectures, which is a series of chapels at Denver Seminary, and the Rally for the Common Good and the Salt and Light Seminar in the spring. Previous topics sponsored by the Institute include the role of Christians in politics and health care reform.

Immigration is another in this series of reflections. The Kent Mathews lectures on the topic were given by Daniel Carroll on October 4-5, 2010. Those two presentations are included here. Noel Castellanos spoke at the Rally for the Common Good on February 20-21, 2011 and kindly has shared his heart on immigration in the Preface. Because of the nature of the theme, the Salt and Light Seminar involved connecting participants with ministries who work with immigrants. That activity took place on April 16. The contributions of Craig Wong and Darrell Jackson are invited essays.

May this volume serve as a helpful tool to those who seek a solid Christian orientation and moral compass on this crucial issue of immigration.

M. Daniel Carroll R. (Rodas)

Chapter 1

THINKING CHRISTIANLY ABOUT IMMIGRATION: PART I PORTRAITS OF PEOPLE ON THE MOVE IN THE BIBLE¹

By M. Daniel Carroll R.

Introduction

Migration is a human phenomenon. In many ways, history is the stories of people on the move. It is estimated that today over 200 million people around the globe are migrants.² Many millions leave their homelands—with or without the proper documentation—in search of work or a better way of life for themselves and their families. Others are refugees or asylees fleeing war, natural disasters, or persecution. Most are looking for a new start and a sustainable existence with some semblance of hope.

This worldwide movement of peoples is a global reality that is being felt on every continent, and it is challenging the social, political, economic, racial and religious status quo of many nations. Today and into the near future, the pressing questions for believers will be, “In a world of more than 200 million migrants, what does it mean to be a Christian? What does it mean to be the church of Jesus Christ amidst so much need?”

Why is this topic of immigration so important? It is impor-

tant to Christian faith, because migration and being a stranger is a core metaphor of what it means to be part of the people of God. Deuteronomy 26:5 states that, when it was time to present the firstfruits before God, Israelites were to declare, “My father was a wandering Aramean...” This ‘father,’ of course, is Abraham. He is the ‘forefather’ of Christians, too, through faith (Romans 4). The father of our faith was a migrant! 1 Peter refers to Christians as “strangers” and “aliens” in this world (1:1; 2:11). That is, migration and a life as an outsider is a central metaphor of what it means to be a Christian. It behooves us then to explore with seriousness the theme of migration in the Bible.

Unfortunately, many Christians do not engage the topic of immigration in a self-consciously Christian manner, with a view informed deeply by the Scriptures or their theological traditions. Conversations focus primarily on social, political, economic, and security issues (all of which are important), with minimal biblical orientation, and can quickly escalate into angry exchanges. For those who stand on the more conservative end of the spectrum and are wary of newcomers, the Bible’s contribution usually is limited to Romans 13:1-2 and the question of legality: Did the immigrants enter with the necessary permission? If not, they should be viewed as law-breakers and suffer the penalties of the legal system. For those who may champion the immigrant cause, the favorite verses tend to be Leviticus 19:18 (“Love your neighbor as yourself”) and Matthew 25’s words about the separation of the sheep and the goats at the final judgment (vv. 31-46, especially vv. 35, 43). Both sides have a narrow biblical foundation.

The contention of these two chapters is that Christians should ground their perspective on immigration on all of the biblical revelation, the *full* range of its teaching across both Testaments. Speaking from convictions informed by the Bible may yield *more explicitly Christianly* conversations and redirect their tone toward more constructive ends. There are a host of pragmatic challenges

connected to immigration at local, state, and federal levels that must be dealt with. It behooves the Christian to engage those topics from a biblical framework.

After looking at the image of God in the opening chapters of Genesis, this chapter will survey relevant narratives in the Bible to extract valuable insights into the human realities of immigration. The next chapter will focus on the lessons that can be learned for today from Old Testament legislation regarding outsiders.

Where Do We Begin the Discussion?

We should begin our survey of the biblical material at the beginning: Genesis chapter one. The fundamental passage concerns the creation of all human beings in the image of God (1:26-28). Christians have debated the meaning of this concept for centuries. It has been understood in three basic ways. One interpretation of the image of God is that it concerns what humans are and what they possess: an intellect, will, emotions, and a spiritual component. This is called the ontological, or substantive, view. A second perspective is that the image should be understood relationally. That is, it refers to the unique communion that humans can have with God through Jesus Christ, who is the supreme embodiment of the divine image (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15).

A third option, which is closer to the description of creation in Genesis 1, argues that the image is functional. The declaration of the creation of humans in God's image is followed by the authorization to "rule" and "subdue" the earth and its creatures (1:26, 28). Humans are defined as vice-regents of the divine King. They are to represent him on the earth in how they live and treat the rest of the created order. They are to fulfill this mandate by working and taking care of the garden (2:15), and they quickly exercise dominion by naming the animals (2:19-20).

This functional view makes sense against the background of

the ancient Near East. At that time, kings would set up images of themselves in lands under their control as a visual reminder of their rule. In some contexts, the king himself was thought to be the image, or representative, of the gods on earth; in Egypt, Pharaoh was a god. Importantly, in the biblical account God reveals that all persons are made in the image of God. This is not the privilege only of kings or an elite. Every person has the potential and capacity to rule the world!

Each of these three interpretations has biblical backing, and each in its own way affirms that every person is of incomparable value. The image of God is where any discussion of immigration should start. That is, we ‘begin at the beginning,’ with the foundational truth that every human being—including immigrants—is made in the image of God and possesses special worth. This is how immigrants should be defined first of all, instead of by their status. For instance, the label “illegal alien” communicates legal standing and the fact that the person is totally different than the native-born of a country; this is quite a truncated view of what an outsider among us is and is capable of accomplishing for themselves and the broader society. Demeaning language and caricatures of foreigners contradict the Bible’s teaching.

A perspective grounded in the image of God changes the conversation. Now immigration is not only about cost-benefit ratios or protection from a foreign ‘invasion’; it also involves asking how the newcomers in our midst can contribute to the common good and how this might be facilitated and encouraged for everyone’s benefit. This does not deny that difficult issues remain to be tackled, but it does transform how those topics are dealt with and whether the measures that are passed should be primarily punitive or instead oriented toward assisting individuals and communities to more positive ends.

At the same time, immigrants, who can feel inferior because of their race, national origin, language, educational level, or socio-

economic standing, are to be encouraged. They are created in God's image! They and their children can grow into all of what God created them to be, and they can continue to learn to live responsibly as representatives of God in their adopted land.

Old Testament Narratives

The Old Testament opens with people on the move. Cain must wander for killing his brother Abel (Gen. 4:10-14); humanity is scattered by God for its rebellion (Gen. 10-11). Terah leaves Ur in southern Mesopotamia with his family, which includes Abram, and settles in Haran in what is now southeastern Turkey, close to the Syrian border (Gen. 11:31). After many years Abram would be called from that place to the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:1-5).

Abram (who would be renamed Abraham in Gen. 17) characterized his life in Canaan as being "an alien and a stranger" (Gen. 23:4; cf. Deut. 26:5). He and his clan never owned land, except the plot of ground that he bought to bury Sarah (Gen. 23). His was the life of a migrant. Because of hunger, he and his descendants Isaac and Jacob went to look for food in Egypt (Gen. 12, 42-46), the Negev (Gen. 20), and Philistia (Gen. 26). Abram even felt compelled to lie to get into Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20). He was fearful of what might happen to him, and his wife Sarai (later called Sarah) put herself at great risk to get their extended family and servants into a place where they could find food. Desperate times require desperate measures, even lying. Modern accounts of border crossings are full of such stories of danger and duplicity in order to survive.³

The Joseph narrative can also be read as an immigrant story. Sold by his brothers to Midianite merchants, who took him to Egypt, Joseph is bought by Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials (Gen. 37). Because of his diligence and honesty, he rises to be-

come head over that household but ends up in prison. Potiphar's wife tries to seduce him, and he is wrongly accused of attacking her. Eventually, he appears at Pharaoh's court, impresses everyone again with his character, and saves Egypt from famine (Gen. 39-41). Quite an accomplishment for a foreigner!

Joseph integrated himself deeply into Egyptian culture. He obviously spoke Egyptian; he married an Egyptian woman (Gen. 41:45). Yet, he never forsook his faith. This is clear in the names he gives to his sons, Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 41:50-52; cf. 50:19-20).⁴ He also did not forget his mother tongue. He understands his brothers, who had come to Egypt to solicit food, and later speaks to them and his father. In other words, this immigrant had not forgotten his roots. Upon his death, he asks that his bones be returned to the land of his forefathers (Gen. 42-50).

The Exodus recounts the harsh realities suffered by an immigrant work force. The Egyptians are worried by so many Israelites in their midst (Exod. 1). We do not what the numerical threshold was that triggered this response, but such reactions to the presence of other ethnicities or foreigners are very human and have been repeated around the world since time immemorial. As is the case in such circumstances, the majority culture establishes harsh laws to control that population (in this case, decreeing that all the Hebrew baby boys must be killed). Yet, they still demand that the Israelites work, even as they make it harder for them to fulfill their task of making bricks for Egyptian building projects (Exod. 5). Among the Israelites there are moments of brave yet subtle resistance (the midwives of chpt. 1),⁵ frustration and fears, and a process of learning to believe in Yahweh their God through the ministry of Moses. All these responses are typical of immigrant communities that live in adverse circumstances.

Ruth is a wonderful story of an immigrant. Because of famine in Bethlehem, Naomi and her family moved to Moab. There her sons married Moabite women, one of whom was Ruth. In other

words, the account begins with Ruth marrying an Israelite immigrant. When Naomi's husband and sons die, she desires to return to her village. Ruth is willing to leave everything to accompany her. Now the one who had married an immigrant will become an immigrant herself (Ruth 1:16-17)!

The rest of the book describes Ruth's process of integration into Bethlehem. This immigrant woman arrives in Bethlehem with Naomi and is ignored by the townspeople (chpt. 1), works hard to feed her mother-in-law and herself (chpt. 2), comes under the protection of Boaz (chpt. 3) and marries him (chpt. 4). She must win over the other women, Naomi, the elders, and Boaz. In the end, this Moabitess is lauded by the elders as one like the great ancestresses of Israel's past (4:11-12) and is praised by the women (4:14-15). Naomi accepts the child (4:16-17), and so Ruth's integration into her newly adopted community is complete. Surely her son would not go through what his mother had as an outsider. Amazingly, King David (and so the Messiah) would be descended from that child (4:18-22). Ruth was part of a history wider and grander than she ever could have imagined. What a powerful story of an immigrant!

There are other stories in the Old Testament that are relevant. Many portray the life of those living outside the Promised Land in exile. Daniel and his friends, for instance, were taken by the Babylonians from Jerusalem to be trained to serve the empire. They are given different names for their new cultural context and are taught a new language and Babylonian matters. But their food is precious to these young men; to eat of Babylonian fare would be to compromise who they were. Food is a cultural identity marker, and here we see that reality in action! There is a level of assimilation, or accommodation, to their surroundings, but they never totally are accepted by others and suffer the consequences (Dan. 1-6).

One could mention, too, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther as ex-

amples of varied levels of assimilation. Ezra wants no part of Persian culture and returns to his home country. Nehemiah is loyal to the king (he is his cup bearer, or food and wine taster) but still wants to hear of news from home; he goes back for a time to Jerusalem to complete the project of rebuilding its walls and then returns to his post in the Persian royal court. Esther (this is her Persian name; her Hebrew name is Hadassah, 2:7) is assimilated to the culture and must be reminded by Mordecai that she is where she must be to save her people; hers is a pilgrimage to regain a consciousness of her roots. Each of these responses represents points along the spectrum of accommodation by immigrants, as do the host culture's reactions, which are characteristic of the engagement of outsiders with the native-born. Have you ever read these accounts as immigrant stories?

In the Old Testament people migrate for the same reasons as they do today: the need to feed their families and to flee natural disasters, like famine, and war. Many left their homes of their own accord; other were forcefully removed and taken into exile. Their time away from their native land was the occasion for some of the most profound literature that we have in the Old Testament. God used those circumstances to reveal new dimensions about himself and his plans for his people and the world. Some did relatively well in those different circumstances (e.g., Joseph, Daniel, Nehemiah, Mordechai and Esther); others struggled (Ezekiel and other exiles). Those were periods of great faith but also of tremendous personal and emotional upheaval for some (Ps. 137). We need to appreciate that much of the Old Testament arises from the lives of those migrants.

New Testament Contributions

The New Testament also has an important contribution to make to the formulation of a biblically informed Christian perspective

on immigration. Unlike the Old Testament, however, there are no extensive narratives of people living away from home, nor are there law codes that deal with outsiders. We can turn to Jesus and to the epistles, though, for additional insights.

Jesus does not give any explicit teaching on immigration, but there are at least two ways that his life and teaching are helpful. First, Jesus began his life as a refugee. He and his family were forced to flee Bethlehem. Joseph was warned by an angel in a dream to take his family to Egypt, because King Herod was going to kill all the little boys in the region. The Magi had told the king that they were going to visit the future ruler of the Jews, and Herod moved to eliminate any possible rivals to his throne. After a time, Jesus and his parents returned to the region but settled to the north in Nazareth (Matt. 2). In other words, living in a foreign land as an outsider was part of the Savior's own personal life experience. Today, migrants can turn to him with the full assurance that he understands their plight and challenges.

Second, what Jesus said and did in his earthly ministry is relevant. He constantly engaged personally with those who were marginalized, and he challenged his disciples to do the same. Of special importance is Jesus' interaction with the Samaritans. The Samaritans and the Jews had a long history of enmity that had on occasion degenerated into violence.⁶ In a famous scene, Jesus speaks with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well (John 4). In Luke 10 he uses a Samaritan as the model of righteousness in a response to a lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbor?" (10:29). Jesus here is appealing to the Old Testament command to love the neighbor (Lev. 19:18). In that passage this divine demand is extended to the foreigners in their midst (Lev. 19:33-34). Those neighbors that are the hardest to love are those that are different. The Law recognizes this and makes the love of the foreigner the ultimate test of this command. Jesus mirrors this by pointing to the Samaritan as the neighbor whom the Jew is to love! This parable of the

‘Good Samaritan’ is consistent with Jesus’ interaction with those rejected by others—the Gentiles, women, the poor, the sick, and those classified as sinners.

Matthew 25’s words about the judgment on the sheep and the goats at the end of time includes caring for the stranger as one of God’s criteria (vv 35, 38, 43-44). It is not uncommon for advocates for refugees and immigrants to appeal to these verses in order to call Christians to act on their behalf. The exegetical problem with this view is that elsewhere in the Gospel of Matthew “the least of these” and “brothers” (vv. 40, 45), from whom these strangers are drawn, refer to Jesus’ disciples (10:42; 12:48-49; 18:6, 10, 14; 28:10). Perhaps then, “strangers” are a more specific group: followers of Jesus, who have come from other parts and suffer for his sake. To take them as immigrants does not violate the thrust of Jesus’ concern for the vulnerable, but it may not be an accurate interpretation of the passage.

The idea of an itinerant ministry is a reality in the Book of Acts. Early believers were scattered by persecution (8:1-5; cf. Rev. 1:9), and traveling preachers were a common phenomenon in the early church. The missionary journeys of Paul are an illustration of this (1 Cor. 16:5-18; Gal. 4:13-14; Phil. 2:19-30; 3 Jn. 5-10). From these efforts arose multiethnic churches with believers from all kinds of backgrounds (Acts 13:1). This mix occasionally led to tensions within the community of faith (Acts 15; Gal. 2; Eph. 2). Being with different kinds of people—even if they are fellow believers—was, and is, hard! In Jesus, Paul says, there is neither Jew nor Greek (ethnicity and national identity), neither slave nor free (socio-economic and political differences), neither male nor female (gender discrimination). All are one in Christ (Gal. 3:28). This is important, because today in many places immigrants have brought their Christian faith and revitalized and strengthened denominations and local churches. This is true in the United States and around the globe. By the millions, Christians are part of the

world on the move. How can we apply this teaching on the oneness of the Body to this influx of immigrant believers? There presence is not simply a legal standing; it is also a spiritual reality.

Several New Testament epistles teach that all Christians are sojourners in a spiritual sense.⁷ The believer's citizenship ultimately is not of this world (Phil. 3:20; Heb. 13:14). Christians should not hold their earthly possessions and loyalties too tightly. Sadly, even though we are "strangers in a strange land," some Christians rather like where they live; it is no longer a strange place but their heart-felt home. Now, their goal is to defend it and keep strangers (immigrants) out! 1 Peter calls believers "aliens and strangers" (1:1; 2:11). It is possible that the addressees of this letter were literal exiles who had been displaced from their homes by the Roman Empire. If that is true, then their legal standing mirrored their spiritual status as Christians.

Finally, hospitality, whether towards fellow believers or unfamiliar persons, is supposed to be a fundamental Christian virtue. Christians are to be charitable to others (Lk. 14:12-14; Rom. 12:13; Heb.13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9), and this character attribute is a requirement for congregational leadership (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8).

Conclusion

If the people of God sincerely desire to formulate an expressly Christian perspective on the topic of immigration, then the place to begin is the Bible. This short survey of some of the scriptural material makes it clear that the Bible has a lot to say about immigration! From Genesis on through the New Testament, it is full of stories of those who were forced to migrate to provide for their families or because of other pressures, such as war. Those realities are with us still today.

For those of majority cultures, who receive immigrants into their midst, the Bible can help sensitize the heart to be compas-

sionate and welcoming, as these outsiders try to establish a new life in strange surroundings. For the immigrant, the Bible is a fund of accounts of others of faith, who endured similar circumstances and who had to learn the faithfulness of God and rise to the challenge of being a testimony in a different world.

The next essay turns to immigrant legislation. Can the Bible provide an orientation as to the kinds of laws that might be the most appropriate reflection of the values and attitudes demanded by God?

¹ This chapter is drawn in part from M. Daniel Carroll R., *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), chapters 2 and 4.

² Go to <http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration/hld/> and click on “Migrant Fact-sheet.” These data are from the United Nations. Also note Khalid Koser, *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³ See, e.g., R. Martínez, *Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail* (New York: Metropolitan, 2001); J. Ramos, *The Other Face of America: Chronicles of the Immigrants Shaping Our Future* (trans. P. J. Duncan; New York, NY: Rayo, 2002); K. Ferguson, N. A. Price, and T. Parks, *Crossing with the Virgin: Stories from the Migrant Trail* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona, Press, 2010). J. K. Hoffmeier, who argues that the Bible advocates only for those who seek legal entry, does not consider the despair of hunger that is a prime motivator for immigrants, documented and undocumented alike, in his treatment of Abram’s trip to Egypt (*The Immigration Crisis: Immigrants, Aliens, and the Bible* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009], pp. 46-48).

⁴ The names are word plays. Manasseh could mean “the one who causes to forget,” meaning God had allowed Joseph to forget his misfortune. Ephraim could mean “twice fruitful.” Both names express gratitude to God.

⁵ These kinds of actions are dealt with in James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁶ For an introduction to the Samaritans, see Robert T. Anderson and Terry Giles, *The Keepers: An Introduction to the History and Culture of the Samaritans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002).

⁷ A recent provocative study of these concepts is Benjamin H. Dunning, *Aliens and Sojourners: Self as Other in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

Chapter 2

THINKING CHRISTIANLY ABOUT IMMIGRATION: PART II CAN THE BIBLE HELP US THINK THROUGH IMMIGRATION LEGISLATION?¹

By M. Daniel Carroll R.

Introduction

Migration has been integral to the history of humanity, and of the people of God, for millennia. The previous chapter demonstrated that migration is a central theme in the Bible, too. In fact, migration and a life as an outsider is a central metaphor of what it means to be a Christian.

Because migration is such a fundamental human phenomenon, across the centuries countries all over the world have established laws to deal with those who come from the outside. Generally speaking, immigration legislation takes one of two perspectives. On the one hand, are those countries whose laws prioritize national security. This produces a defensive, or protective, posture; it is committed to firm border control and determining strict criteria for access and residency. In contrast, the second view argues that immigration policies should be oriented by human rights concerns. People migrate for concrete, and often desperate, reasons. Fellow human beings should be welcomed, as they try to escape natural disasters, armed conflict, economic instability or

limitations, or religious or political persecution. Some simply seek a better life for themselves and for their families, whether those family members who travel with them as well as those who stay behind and will receive remittances from those who migrate. The United Nations categorizes some of these migrants under the rubrics of refugees or asylees and helps these displaced persons to find sanctuary in other lands. Millions, however, have no such support and must fend for themselves. Many are a source of cheap labor and, sadly, the victims of human trafficking.

These are not simply modern realities. The same set of misfortunes has been common to every era. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is legislation regarding the foreigner in Old Testament Law. The question that this chapter will address is whether those ancient laws given to Israel might have any bearing on legislation today. If so, how?

Understanding “Law”

The Nature of Law

Human societies must organize themselves. All deal with similar issues in multiple realms, like economics (e.g., taxes, debts, ownership of land, the control of unfair practices), judicial systems (enforcement, criminal behaviors, penalties), politics (qualifications for leadership, privileges and responsibilities, offices), familial issues (including marriage, divorce, birth, death, inheritance), and social welfare (provisions for the needy, emergencies). However, the shape that individual laws and law codes take to handle these many matters is culture specific. That is, each society systematizes its laws in such a way to support its own sense of order and reflect its basic values. Some laws seem quite arbitrary (such as driving on the right hand side of the road instead of the left), yet even these laws are means of assembling a society so that it can function in ways that seem ‘normal’ to its residents. Every society

also promotes certain attitudes toward this body of legislation and toward those selected to maintain those laws (such as law enforcement officials and the court system). Citizens of any given place consider all of this to be how life should ‘obviously’ be; this is what they know and how they order their lives (this is why we have culture shock, when we visit another country). This is their social construction of reality.

To say something like, “This nation is a nation of law” is to speak a truism. Every country is a country of law; it is just that laws differ from place to place! In addition to the United States, I have lived for extended periods of time in three other countries: Costa Rica (one year), Great Britain (two and half years), and Guatemala (13 years). Each has its law code, law enforcement, judicial system, and particular sense of legality.

The Values that Shape Law

The question that needs to be asked, then, is not whether a certain society is a nation of laws (all are). The key question is what are the values that determine *the kind of laws* that a society establishes. What do the laws say about how those people respect human life? Do they protect and provide for the vulnerable (such as the poor, widows, orphans, the physically challenged, the unborn)? How strict are the penalties, and do these correspond appropriately to the crimes?

In addition, what *kind of values* generates the laws, and what *kind of tone and ambience* do they foster for daily life? Do they create an atmosphere of confident acceptance and generous hospitality, or one of suspicion, fear, arrogance, and exclusion? An important test of the breadth of a nation’s spirit is to look at how it regards those who are different from the majority (e.g., in color, social status) and those who come from other lands and represent dissimilar cultures.

Laws change over time (we try to modify them all the time!) and are connected to their specific contexts. The deep issues, and

the ones that should concern Christians, are the values that underpin them. It is one thing to analyze the surface pragmatics of legislation; it is quite another to penetrate into the core values from which they come.

The Purpose of Old Testament Law and Its Enduring Significance (Deut. 4: 5-8)

If values are so fundamental, perhaps Old Testament Law can be a helpful resource. The Law was to be the charter for God's people, who had been redeemed out of Egypt. In the biblical narrative, Israel left that nation and its social construction of reality and traveled to Sinai. There they received new legislation, one that touched on every dimension of their existence. It is clear that the Law was not a way to gain redemption; it was given after they had left Egypt. Rather, it was to show Israel *how to live as a redeemed people and society*.

Just like other law codes, the law given to Israel dealt with economic, judicial, political, familial, and social issues. To these are added dietary and clothing matters, which serve more as unique cultural markers. Underpinning everything was the religious system of sacrifices and feasts, religious personnel, and holy sites. In other words, the laws were grounded in the person of Yahweh, the God of Israel. The laws were to reflect his character.

In that ancient context, other gods and worldviews (such as those in Egypt) presented laws that produced very different societies. That is why the Ten Commandments, which preface the law codes in the Pentateuch, begin with the demand to not follow any other deity (Exod. 20:1-6; Deut. 5:6-10). This is not just a religious statement; it is one of great societal significance. The god of Israel, Yahweh, will create and sustain a special society (Exod. 19:4-6). This unique nation and its laws, in other words, are one of the ways that Israel was to fulfill its calling to be a blessing to the rest of the world (Gen. 12:1-3). The Law was to function as a

paradigm before the world—that is, a pattern and example of the kinds of things that Yahweh desires to be reflected in every society, and which had been made concrete in a particular fashion at that time and place in Israel.²

The question that quickly comes to mind, of course, is whether that legislation, designed for a theocracy in a distant land long ago, has any application in the modern world. The answer is found in Deuteronomy, chapter four. Verses 5-8 teach that these laws would demonstrate the wisdom of Israel and be a testimony to their great God. That is, the values that were the foundation of the laws are what are important and enduring. Other nations, then and now, do not need to imitate the laws of Israel, but they can learn from them. There is no need to replicate the particulars of that legislation. Not only would that be impossible, it misses the point.³

That having been said, what does the Old Testament legislation have to say about immigration? Anything? If there is material there on this perennially complicated and disputed issue, what might we glean to bring to contemporary debates on immigration?

Old Testament Law and the Outsider

The Vulnerability of the Outsider

In the ancient world the kinds of governmental programs, institutions, and safety nets for the needy that many modern societies have did not exist. Several law codes, like Israel's, demonstrate a concern for the poor, but in those days the mechanism for charitable help was primarily the extended family (the temples also could serve as dispensaries of food for the disadvantaged.)⁴ The problem for outsiders is obvious. They would have lacked the kinship network that could come alongside in times of trouble or want, such as births, sickness, crop failures, natural disasters, and the ravages of war.

Another reality made life difficult for the immigrant. Israel was primarily an agrarian economy. The vast majority of the population lived as peasant farmers in small villages. In these contexts land ownership, obviously, is key. According to Israelite practice, land was passed along through inheritance along kingship lines (the appropriate male heir). Sojourners coming from somewhere else naturally were excluded from this system and would have had a difficult time acquiring property on which to farm.

In sum, those from outside Israel were vulnerable on at least two counts. Outsiders would have been dependent on the Israelites among whom they had settled for sustenance, protection, and work. Apparently, many would have been day laborers, seeking to provide for themselves and their families as best they could—all the while at the mercy of the Israelites.

How did the Law respond to these vulnerable people? Was anything set in place to meet their personal, familial, and work needs? If so, what? And, how would God encourage his own people to react toward the strangers in their midst?

The Provisions of the Law

The Law classifies immigrants along with others in that society who were especially at-risk: the poor, widows, and orphans.⁵ These were the vulnerable ones, whose day-to-day lives could be precarious. In an agrarian economy that was ancient Israel, activities related to farming were almost all done manually. Families without mature males (that is, the widows and the orphans) to do the heavy work would find it hard to survive. The poor and foreigners had a difficult time, because of their lack of resources. This socioeconomic reality explains why these groups are listed together for special care.

There was a series of laws that allowed sojourners (and the other groups) to acquire food. For instance, they were permitted the opportunity to glean the edges of the fields, which were being

harvested (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 24:19-22.). This explains the presence of Ruth, a widow and an immigrant, in the land owned by Boaz (Ruth 2). In addition, a special tithe was to be collected every three years for these needy people (Deut. 14:28-29; 26:12-13).

Outsiders also were to receive justice in their new land. There was to be no prejudice against foreigners in legal proceedings. Rulings were to be impartial towards the native-born and sojourner alike. Immigrants were not to be taken advantage of (Deut. 1:16-17; 24:17-18; 27:19). In terms of work, sojourners were to be included in the Sabbath rest (Exod. 20:10; Deut. 5:14), and their wages were to be equitable and to be paid on time (Exod. 23:12; Deut. 24:14-15). These are important items. Immigration is largely about labor (the lack of it in the originating country combined with the existence of opportunities in the new host country). This is where much abuse can occur. Immigrants are taken advantage of because they are willing to work for less. They sometimes must work longer hours or on days when others do not. In other words, immigrant labor can easily be exploited. The Law will have none of that.

Israel also was to welcome the outsider into the most precious part of their culture: its worship. Israel's religious festivals and duties marked the rhythm of its familial, local, and national life. It established guidelines for every area of existence. It was the framework for living and the basis of their identity. And, sojourners could become a part of this world! They could participate in the Sabbath, the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29), the Passover (Exod. 12:45-49; Num. 9:14), the Feast of Weeks (Deut. 16:11), the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. 16:14), and Firstfruits (Deut. 26:11). They were given access to the cities of refuge (Num. 35:15).

The command to love the neighbor, which Jesus cites in Matt. 19:16-19 (and parallels), comes from Leviticus 19:18. What many miss is that the command reappears in that same chapter in verse 34. There, the love command is extended to the foreigner.

The hardest neighbor to love is the one who is different! Tellingly, God stipulates that the love of the sojourner is the supreme test of the love of neighbor.

Ideally, these laws would have created a generally open attitude toward the outsider.⁶ At the same time, this contact of cultures between the outsider and the native-born was to be mutual. There would have been expectations directed towards the outsider. For example, the sojourner would have had to learn the language to be able to work and to participate in the religious life of Israel. This would have been the process that today we refer to as cultural assimilation or accommodation (in both directions!). There also was to be a periodic public reading of the Law at which the foreigner was to be present (Deut. 31:8-13; cf. Neh. 8). This event would have been another means by which to instruct those from elsewhere about the ways of Israel and what it meant to integrate into its world.

Motivations to Obey the Laws

This brief overview of how the Old Testament Law responded to the vulnerability of the sojourner provides a sense of the graciousness of God and his desire for the people of Israel to reflect this in their dealings with individuals, who had moved to live in their midst. Demonstrating hospitality to foreigners is never easy, whether one refers to the pragmatics of structuring society to make accommodation possible or to the emotional openness that the host culture must possess so that this process proceeds in constructive ways. Why were the Israelites to be welcoming? What was to be their motivation?

Yahweh gives two primary motivations, or reasons, to his people. First, there was the importance of *historical memory*. Israel was never to forget their experiences in Egypt, how they had been exploited there as laborers for imperial building projects. The Egyptians had been hard taskmasters. What had frightened the

Egyptians was the increase in the numbers of Israelites, so draconian laws were put into place for population control and then the work itself was made more difficult (no straw for the bricks)... still the Egyptians wanted the Israelites to keep working! In their misery the Israelites called out to God, and he responded (Exod. 1-6). The people of God were not to repeat that kind of treatment towards foreigners in their land. If they forgot the socio-economic, racial, religious, and political mistreatment of the past, they could do similar things to others in the present (Exod. 22:21; 23:9; Lv. 19:34; Deut. 24:17-18).

The second reason is more foundational and important. In Deuteronomy 10 God presents himself as above all gods. Even though he is all-powerful and incomparably sovereign, Yahweh defends the vulnerable. He has loved Israel; he also loves the foreigner and loves them in concrete ways, giving them food and clothing. How is God to love them in those concrete ways? Through his own people, of course! They are his hands and feet, his channel of blessing to the outsider. Therefore, Yahweh demands that his people love foreigners (10:14-19; cf. 24:14-15). This passage also connects this care for the foreigner to the experience of Egypt, that first motivation for welcoming outsiders. Here, then, is the bottom-line motivation: Why should the people of God love the immigrant? Because God does!

Immigrant legislation in the Old Testament flows from the heart of Yahweh and should reflect the historical experience of his people. Said another way, legislation regarding the outsider is a window into the values of a nation: Why do we make the laws that we do concerning immigrants? What do these laws say about what shapes our attitudes to the Other? Do we support, or promote, legislation that would reflect God's wishes, or do we advocate certain laws that are grounded more in political agendas, lifestyle worries, or nationalistic concerns? These are difficult and unsettling questions.

Objections and a Way Forward

Some may respond, “The law is the law. Undocumented immigrants have broken the law. They are illegal intruders into our national life. Romans 13:1-5 says we are to obey the government; therefore, we will not accept undocumented immigrants.” In a technical sense, it is true that undocumented immigrants lack the necessary paperwork for permission to live and work here. And, Christians are to respect the authorities. But this is an incredibly complicated issue that cannot be resolved by a quick reference to these five Bible verses.

In addition to the fact that there is much in the Bible that is directly concerned with immigration (which we have surveyed), other matters arise. If the conversation is about immigration legislation and obeying it, what do we actually know of U.S. immigration law?⁷ Are we aware of its checkered history (such as the Chinese Exclusion Act or the quotas on certain ethnic groups) or its confusing and outdated statutes? All parties agree that the system is broken and needs to be changed. Present immigration legislation is ineffective, inefficient, and unworkable... and is on the way to reform. This is true in the U.S. and in many countries around the globe. How does Romans 13 fit into this reality of dubious laws that are going to be changed sooner or later? How should Christians approach that chapter?

To begin with, Romans 13 should be placed within its broader context. Chapters 1-11 explain the undeserved grace of God that opens the way of salvation for sinful humanity. Chapter 12 begins with a call to give our whole being to God in response to this gift and to not let our minds be conformed to the patterns of the world (12:1-2). This is very important in the immigration debate. The perspective of many Christians does not reflect the Scripture’s teaching on the topic, but rather their political affiliation, ideological commitments, and unfortunately in some cases unhelpful racial

attitudes. Many Christians, in other words, have been conformed to the world's thinking on this topic of immigration.

The twelfth chapter continues with its call for the church to be different: to be service-oriented in the exercise of spiritual gifts, not self-focused, and to be humble and hospitable (12:4-16). Even more to the point of how Christians should march to the beat of a different drummer, Paul calls us to care even for our enemies, and this in tangible ways: to feed them if they are hungry, and to give them to drink if they are thirsty (12:17-21). The lesson for the Christians and immigration is clear: Even if immigrants—legal or undocumented—are considered enemies, Christians are to feed them and give them to drink! In other words, Christians are beyond excuse; we cannot treat them as the world might.

With this backdrop, we move to the thirteenth chapter. Our submission to the law of the land is to be shaped by God's demands in chapter 12. Instead of simply submitting without question to the existing framework with all of its problems and ignoring the full scope of the Bible's teaching on immigration, Christians should think about how they might transform the present situation so that it might reflect better God's heart. How can legislation be revamped so as to be characterized more like structures of grace than structures defined primarily by exclusion and strict enforcement? It is not that the issues of national security and such concerns are unimportant. It is a question of whether they should dominate the debate, and, if not, where can they be brought into deliberations that focus on the humane. *That* conversation would be the sort of approach that would be constructive for all parties.

Conclusion

These opening two chapters have presented a summary of the Bible's teaching on immigration. Many narratives and much Old

Testament legislation are clearly connected to the topic; other material, especially in the New Testament, is not as directly linked but is still immensely relevant. Throughout the Bible, God is concerned for the sojourner, the immigrant. This migrant experience has been part of the experience of the people of God since the beginning, and in the New Testament becomes a central metaphor of the Christian life.

Our hope is that the Bible becomes the foundation for the positions Christians take on immigration. Too often our views can be grounded, if we are honest, elsewhere. May the Scriptures give us new eyes to see and a heart of love and hospitality as wide as God's that he may be pleased and the church edified.

¹ This chapter is drawn in part from M. Daniel Carroll R., *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), chapters 3 and 5.

² Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), pp. 48-75, 182-211.

³ Idem, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), pp. 374-87.

⁴ Marty E. Stevens, *Temples, Tithes, and Taxes: The Temple and the Economic Life of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), pp. 131-35.

⁵ In *The Immigration Crisis: Immigrants, Aliens, and the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009) J. K. Hoffmeier argues that Old Testament legislation only applies to legal immigrants. This is impossible to prove and, in my view, contradicts the gracious thrust of the Law.

⁶ Israel was not always open to outsiders. The clearest examples of negative measures are found in Ezra 9-10 and Nehemiah 13. There are contextual reasons for this reaction to foreigners, but that discussion lies beyond the purview of this chapter.

⁷ For convenient summaries, see Victor C. Romero, *Everyday Law for Immigrants* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2009); David A. Gerber, *American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Chapter 3

THE TABLE THAT TURNS US: HOW THE LORD'S SUPPER CHANGES THE IMMIGRATION CONVERSATION

By Craig Wong

Prelude: A Tale of Two Tables

In the fall of 1916 my grandmother boarded the S.S. Tenyo Maru and set sail for America. She had been separated from her husband for over five years. It was time to leave a fractured and struggling China, a country in the hands of competing warlords after the failed monarchy of self-proclaimed emperor Yuan Shikai. Wong Shee Fong also was fleeing the tyranny of a heavy-handed mother-in-law, with whom she had to leave her young son. With the hope of reuniting with her husband, she pondered life anew in Jiu Jin Shan, the Old Gold Mountain that was San Francisco.

Many flocked to Old Gold Mountain with its promise of prosperity. The reality, however, was that only a few prospered. For the rest, competition became fierce. The first to become economic scapegoats were the Chinese. Harassment and forced segregation were accompanied by laws, such as the Foreign Miner's Tax, that was designed to force "coolies" out of the mineral fields. Local ordinances prohibited Chinese cultural practices, like the use of shoulder-slung "yeo-ho" poles. Legislation made Chinese immigration as difficult as possible, culminating in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which barred all but the merchant and educated classes.

The America my grandmother experienced upon arrival was a hot, crowded processing center. She was immediately booked into custody on Angel Island, the nation's first major immigration detention center. Before long, she was brought into a room, empty, except for a small wooden table and some chairs. It was a table she would become intimately familiar with. At this table would begin a series of nightmarish interrogations that dragged on over months, with endless questions like these:

Q: "You stated before that there were eight houses in your village, and four rows. Now, with the paper clips you have used, you have arranged the village in six rows. Which is correct?" A: "In the first three rows there is only one house in each row. No second house." Q: Do you mean there are really six rows instead of four?" A: Yes. Q: "Why do you have your village different from the way you told us it was arranged when we had the other interpreter?" A: "I did not arrange them. The other interpreter arranged them himself. I did not know what he meant." The table that sat between her and her interrogator represented a virtual, yet very real border—one that stood between her and the United States. One can only imagine the humiliation and despair she felt, having to prove her worth and identity or face deportation.

On Sunday, on the mainland, people interact at another table in church sanctuaries throughout the city. On these tables sit the elements of bread and cup, with ministers on one side, parishioners on the other. Unlike the interrogation table of Angel Island, however, the table between them represents not a border, but rather a bridge—one that joins people, to God and also to one another. At this table, one does not have to prove their worth, but rather lays bare their unworthiness before One who graciously received each one of us. Like the interrogation table, the Lord's Table is a summons to remember... not the sad details of one's life to validate identity, but rather, to remember the One who died in order to offer us a *new* identity.

Introduction

In this chapter, I focus attention on the potency of the Lord's Supper as formational for the Church's engagement with the immigrant community, particularly the undocumented. The practice of the Lord's Supper takes a range of forms, meanings, and names, including the Eucharist, the Holy Feast, the breaking of bread, and the service of communion. A central tension surrounding the Lord's Supper has to do with the manner and degree in which Jesus is present at the table. Whether defined mystically, physically, or as a matter of mental recognizance, the question of presence has undermined the unity that Christ intended with its institution in the Upper Room.

For our purposes, I limit discussion of the Lord's Supper to three dimensions. First, I assume that all ecclesial traditions agree that it is Christ's *death for sinners* that the Church is called to remember. We come as sinners to Christ, who forgives and reconciles us to Himself and to each another. Once estranged, we have now become friends: our new identity. Second, I draw from the Apostle Paul's admonitions in 1 Corinthians 11 to examine the table's *economic* dimension: the table *overturns* the fear of scarcity. The final dimension is *eschatological*: The table demonstrates before the world where human history is headed. Unlikely table-mates will feast in communion with one another.

I draw from the experiences of my congregation, because ideas need to find expression in real life. Without the journey I share with my brothers and sisters, I would have nothing to offer. I hope such stories might foster pastoral confidence in the administration of the Lord Supper, not as a liturgical instrument, but as participation in the transformative work of the Spirit.

Our History at the Table

In the late 1970s, when my present congregation still existed as the English-speaking fellowship of a larger church in San Francisco's Chinatown, we were accustomed to practicing the Lord's Supper as a quarterly ordinance. Every three months, the pastors of the Cantonese, Mandarin, and English-speaking fellowships would join to administer the elements. Congregants were invited to come to the front and receive grape juice and communion wafers in remembrance of what the Lord had done. Questions loomed for each of us: Were we worthy to approach the table? Was there sin in our life? A temptation yet again succumbed to?

Such angst was compounded by the perception that those who remained in their seats were the *truly* spiritual: "They're really taking their sin seriously!" This added a layer of complexity: Were they doing so genuinely, or only to appear more pious? These questions about motive revealed a participation in the Lord's Supper that was more about us, and what we brought to the table, rather than about *Jesus* and what *He* has done.

The Jesus of the Upper Room dispels the notion that our place at the table is up to us. When Jesus said, "Take, eat, this is my body," He did so among a motley crew. Some jockeyed for position in their leader's cabinet. One would deny him publicly. Still another was preparing to commit the ultimate act of betrayal: handing his rabbi over to the religious, and subsequently Roman, authorities for trial and execution.

Our pastors began to rethink the role of the Lord's Supper, particularly after being commissioned as a new church plant to a different part of the city in 1983. Engaging ecclesiology through Anabaptist and Reformed lenses, we began to move from understanding worship as an "hour of inspiration" to one of *detoxification* from the false and competing voices of a sinful world. Recognizing that as fallen creatures we become what we worship,

it behooved us to debunk the gods of our age, “forsaking all pretenders to His throne”¹ that make a claim on our lives. From this perspective, the act of worship on Sunday is a radical re-orientation, a reclaiming of our true identity.

We began to sense our need for food, that is, the bread and wine of forgiveness, made possible by Christ's death on the cross. Was it because we anticipated making mistakes, as we struck out on our own? Perhaps we sinned against each other more frequently due to our smaller, more intimate numbers? Maybe we felt clueless about what it meant to be the church in San Francisco. We needed sustenance to ask this question rightly and to labor faithfully.

Whatever God used to stir our hunger, the Lord's Supper played a renewed role in our congregational formation. To remember Christ and Him crucified was to rehearse who we truly are: unworthy sinners graciously reconciled to God and to one another. We learned to approach the table, because a loving Savior communes with us *despite* our unworthiness. Furthermore, He gathered us at the table to send us out. In partaking in Christ's broken body, we *become* His body, an embodied proclamation of His death until He returns.

Over the next decade, we gradually increased our Eucharistic diet from once a quarter, to monthly, to twice monthly, and finally, to every Sunday. However, to rehearse our identity as forgiven sinners every Sunday morning is one thing. It is quite another to live out an identity that is profoundly counter-intuitive to the impulses of a culture, whose dominant narrative is one of power and control.

The Table Turns Strangers into Friends

Comfortable within the dominant narrative, our congregation is comprised of college-educated professionals, an identity that as-

sumes that studious control and advancement of one's career and other personal goals are of primary importance. Additionally, many of us are descendants of immigrants, and we prided ourselves on the idea that our smarts and hard work had earned us the right to do or have whatever we want. Equipped with the tools and experience to "work the system," we have come to possess, as our Pastor Sharon Huey puts it, a "power reflex" that kicks in whenever obstacles stand in the way of our objectives. Our impulse is to fix things, and we bring this to our relationships. Thus, we are more inclined to fix people than join them, much less to imagine being changed by them.

While I believe we had good intentions in our desire to serve, we nonetheless brought our power reflex to the Mission District, home to a majority of San Francisco's immigrant poor. Many have migrated under difficult circumstances from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. With due diligence, we conducted a needs assessment among the parents of children we had come to know. Hearing that they wanted to learn computer skills and English, we set up a program to match these needs with folks in our congregation who could teach them. Trying not to be paternalistic, we named the program "Grace Learning *Partners*" to emphasize that the relationship was two-way. We would offer skills to them and allow them to give something back: "I'll teach you how to use Microsoft Word; you can teach me how to make tamales."

Why did most, after a relatively short time, stop coming? For one, our immigrant neighbors sensed our frustration, when they arrived late or failed to show up consistently. They felt bad, knowing their instructor had put hard work into the lesson plan. Also, they looked forward to something to eat, but our dinner was available only between 5:30 and 6:00 pm. If they showed up at 6:03, it was too late. One learned to make a choice: be punctual or go hungry. More often than not, our neighbors' work sched-

ules didn't give them much choice. Insensitive to this and given our control-oriented ways, we made it hard for our neighbors to join us.

Far more insidious than any cultural predisposition was our eyesight. When Rosa enters the doors of our church, whom do I see? A poor person who needs help? An immigrant who lacks papers and is here only to take advantage of our resources? A single mom, whose problems exceed my ability to fix? Someone who should be more responsible? These are the questions of privileged people like me. They flow reflexively from an identity rooted in delusions of power and cultural superiority, objectifying and dehumanizing everyone in our path.

At the Lord's Table, however, we are mercifully stripped of such delusion. The cross disabuses us of any claim to moral high ground. So deep is our sin that our Creator came to die for us; yet, there we are, having table fellowship with Him. Around the table, we see fellow sinners. No more dehumanizing prejudice *or* pedestals. All are valuable, simply because each one is deeply loved by God. Daniel Carroll R. further elucidates the intrinsic value of every person, and therefore every immigrant, based on Genesis: "Immigrants are humans, and as such they are made in God's image... [Therefore] they have an essential value and possess the potential to contribute to society through their presence, work and ideas."² The wealthy receives from the lowly, the banker from the hotel worker, and the Stanford grad from the marginally literate. *Everyone* is a gift. *Everyone* has something to offer; *everyone* has something to receive.

Perhaps the most important gift we receive from strangers in our midst is a perspective that disorients us and challenges the assumptions that make up our lives. In one of our home fellowship gatherings, a young woman from Central America said, "I really have a hard time relating to your problems." This single mom has struggled to survive in San Francisco after being persecuted, phys-

ically abused and forced to flee her war-torn country. In contrast, our “struggles” are puzzling: angst about which home to buy, the level of safety at a daughter’s private pre-school, or the lack of personal fulfillment at one’s workplace. Having joined our congregation after seeing the ways her children had been cared for through our camps and after-school program, she now found that the chasm between *her* experience of life and ours became harder to endure week after week.

When we have the ears to hear neighbors like her, we are able to recognize the spiritual poverty our own souls, produced by our delusions of self-determination and self-sufficiency. As a friend from Nigerian told us, “You are afflicted by your affluence.” Such merciful encounters mirror back to us the false gods in our lives. We glimpse deeper pictures of God and of faith that far exceeds our own. In short, the welcome of strangers changes our lives. And, by God’s grace, our lives can also change theirs.

Justo González speaks of this exchange with the Spanish word, *frontera*, which has two primary meanings, “frontier” or “border.”³ Frontier is associated with conquest, for example, the coerced relocation of the indigenous people’s during America’s westward expansion and the redrawing of territorial lines after the Mexican-American War. A frontier is a unidirectional dynamic and inherently violent. Border, at least through Latin American eyes, is a place of encounter, where two different cultures and peoples meet and affect one another, usually producing a third culture. It is bi-directional in nature.

In our ministry, the postural shift from “frontier” to “border” has meant the difference between *repelling* and *compelling* our neighbors. Discovering that our own conversion is at stake, we are learning to recognize Christ in those we welcome (Matt. 25:35). In breaking bread with those with whom we might not otherwise associate, Christ turns strangers into friends. With our new immigrant friends, we share stories, watch each other’s children, cele-

brate each other's weddings, and pass the peace with each other after communion. We also misunderstand and hurt each other. But His grace is sufficient—not only to mend relationships, but to remind us that we need each other in the deepest way.

Which brings us to immigration policy: How might the conversation change, if we believe that all human beings are fundamentally interdependent? That we were originally created to live as one family? In our American consumer-capitalist culture, we value fellow human beings primarily in relation to their contribution to the economy. History irrefutably paints the inverse relationship between rising anti-immigrant sentiment (“They’re taking our jobs and draining our resources!”) and declining economic prosperity. We have historically welcomed immigrants, when their labor and intellect was needed, but expelled them once they were not. This happens when immigrants are viewed primarily as economic assets or liabilities. How might the immigration reform conversation change, if we embraced immigrants fundamentally as *gifts* rather than commodities? Does the Lord’s Supper give us the option of valuing immigrants, or the aims of U.S. immigration policy, in terms of the gross domestic output?

The Table Overturns Our Fear of Scarcity

The good news that the table transforms strangers into friends, regardless of what we bring to the table, does not imply that economics do not matter. On the contrary, the fact that the table enfolds scattered individuals into one family has profound implications for the way we relate to our possessions, privileges, and the food we eat.

At the most basic level, a family makes sure that everyone at mealtime has enough to eat. Families *share*. This basic supposition made something a sister once said to me particularly poignant: “The Church needs to show the world that sharing isn’t scary.” I

have never forgotten that simple, yet profound, comment. Although we teach our kids to share, it is not something we do naturally, particularly in a culture that venerates individualism, private ownership, and luxury. In America, the freedom to capitalize and consume without limit is sacrosanct. One can do so legally, regardless of how one's neighbor is doing.

The scriptures suggest otherwise. Paul's incredulity about the Corinthian's practice of Lord's Supper drives home the point that what is *legal* and what is *Christian* are oft two different things. As Richard Hays points out, what the Corinthian believers did was quite normal for that day. In Roman imperial society, it was typical for the wealthy benefactor and his close associates to lounge in the dining room, while those of lower-status gathered in the atrium. For believers, however, to mirror the class divisions of Roman society was to "show contempt for the Church of God" (1 Cor. 11:22) and to "drink judgment against themselves" (11:29). Paul bemoaned that their gathering was not for the better, but for the *worse* (11:17). The cross had knit these Corinthians *into one family*, yet they failed to demonstrate it.

The problem was not that some could afford to eat better than others. Rather, not looking out for the whole during communion countered the point of the crucifixion: one new humanity via the destruction of the hostile dividing wall (Eph. 2:14-19). As one big family, everyone shares at the table, because *Christ* is the generous host. Elizabeth Newman says, "The Eucharist does not simply motivate Christians to practice hospitality. Rather, it is our participation in God's hospitality, as through this celebration we are enabled to become Eucharistic, extending God's offering and gift to the world."⁴ Rather than grasp in fear of scarcity, we share out of God's abundance.

It has been humbling to see how our poorer neighbors live so much more freely than those of us with more. Indeed, the fear of scarcity and the need for control grow the more we have. This dy-

namic reveals itself even in how we give things away. One of our parishioners made this observation about an immigrant congregation during a cleaning day: "I'm impressed by how freely they give away their stuff to anyone who passes on the street. They're not worried about making sure everything is going to a 'good cause.' They just let God do with their stuff as He chooses."

The difference with which we experience freedom also manifests itself in the practice of home hospitality. Conditioned by Martha Stewart notions of hospitality, our intentions to invite our neighbors get trumped by our need to be "presentable." Treating our homes as though they are showrooms, we place *image* over *relationship*. Boggled down by whether our dining rooms, silverware, meal offerings, or kids are presentable, we let opportunities to break bread with others slip by.

Conversely, our immigrant friends graciously invite us into their homes, despite having less room or fancy place settings. One Saturday afternoon, a Guatemalan couple welcomed about thirty of us into their small flat, one shared by three families. They had just gotten married at City Hall. My wife and a few others had the privilege of playing chauffeur and wedding photographer. Wanting many to join them in celebration, this couple worked hard to rearrange what room they had to accommodate as many of us as possible. They cooked food, and we brought desert. It was cramped and a bit crazy, but one thing was clear: To honor and enjoy the relationship we now shared with them was what mattered most; we had become family.

We know it is theologically incorrect to value stuff over people. Unlike the wealthy Corinthians, we know better than to flaunt our possessions or conspicuously consume. However, even with our best intentions to live simply, we remain blind to what life is like for most undocumented immigrants, who tirelessly work in restaurants, harvest crops, construct buildings, watch babies, and host countless tourists. Apart from them our local econ-

omy would not survive. It is hard to comprehend having to choose between food, housing, and health care—things we take for granted. Even farther from our awareness is how we are complicit in their plight.

Again, we are helped by immigrants who help us to see. A Salvadoran man shared his story: “My friend’s farm no longer generates enough money to support his family. The government recently accepted the U.S. dollar as the national currency. This has raised the cost of living a lot, especially for the poorest families. Only the wealthiest in El Salvador, like those who work for corporations, can afford to pay for things at American prices.”

His story coincided with what I learned at a naturalization and citizenship fair, hosted by a Salvadoran church that requested our assistance. They needed lawyers, who could help process papers for immigrants seeking naturalization under “temporary protected status.” We sent two attorneys. At the entrance, a brochure caught my attention. On the cover was a photo of the Salvadoran president and ours, shaking hands. Ignorant of the current politics between these two countries, I inquired further. The Central American Free Trade Agreement had just been ratified, a sweeping set of trade policies that elevated the profit margin of North American corporations but put countless Salvadoran farmers out of work.

Destabilizing and heavy-handed policies like these, our Salvadoran brothers and sisters explained, are nothing new. Every year, they commemorate the life of Archbishop Oscar Romero who, for advocating for the poor, was assassinated in 1980 by one of the “death squads,” comprised, at least in part, by Salvadoran soldiers trained by U.S. military and intelligence personnel under the Carter and Reagan administrations. We have heard other dark stories over the years from Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, and the Philippines.

These are stories we must be willing to hear, if we are to take

our interconnectedness seriously. How we live, how we eat, our economic assumptions, the national imperatives we salute, have an impact on others, for better or worse. We may not want to hear them, but stories from across the border can cast light on ways, unbeknownst to us, that we are complicit in acts of state violence that stem from the pursuit of economic interests. N.T. Wright says: “When human beings refuse to use God’s gift of money responsibly, they are handing over their power to Mammon, and he will take control. And when the powers take over, human beings get crushed.”⁵

At the table, we are met by the Lord who owns the cattle on a thousand hills and fed five thousand from two five loaves and two fish. He commanded us not to worry about what we eat, drink, and wear (Matt. 6:25). Repenting from the fear of scarcity, the Church can engage immigration policy from a different starting point: There is enough for everyone when we share. How might this change the conversation? To start, we might affirm municipal ordinances that ensure all residents access to services, regardless of immigration status. Or, focus on creating livable wage jobs and pathways for immigrants to work legally. Or, seek to change trade policies that undermine foreign economies, which force many to cross the desert at risk to their lives. Or, urge the redirection of funds from ineffective border-sealing efforts to the development of Mexico’s struggling economy. The fear of scarcity overturned, the Church can demonstrate to the world that *sharing* as the basis of immigration policy isn’t scary and, in fact, may be necessary for the health of our national soul.

The Table Demonstrates How History Will Turn Out

For many decades political leaders from both side of the aisle have made bold claims about our nation’s moral health by claiming that “America is on the right side of history.” In 2002, our presi-

dent struck the same chord by proclaiming that the “ideal of America is the hope of all mankind... a light that shines in the darkness... the darkness will not overcome.” The Statue of Liberty behind him, he reflected that “this hope brought millions to this harbor.” Lady Liberty, more than any other national icon, celebrates America as a nation of immigrants, her arms open to the world’s “tired, poor and huddled masses.”

Months later, with cruel irony, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) released “Operation Endgame,” a comprehensive 10-year plan to expel all “deportable aliens” from the country. With this plan began the most ambitious immigrant crackdown operation in U.S. history. Since then, billions of tax dollars have spent been on mass detention facilities, Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE) agents, and arrest and detainment operations. While the DHS claims that their priority targets are felons and violent offenders, the fact remains that over half of all deported do not have such criminal records. As of 2011, over 2.5 immigrants have been deported, the majority back to Mexico, Latin American, Asia and Eastern Europe.

Is Operation Endgame on the right side of history? It depends on one’s eschatology, the theology of what is to come. For Phil, one of our long-time congregation members, and one who once confessed of being a “closet redneck,” the Lord’s Supper made him think. Phil was stirred by the wideness of Christ’s mercy. “Everyone is invited to His table, no matter who we are, where we come from, or how messed up we are,” he marvels. Every Sunday, he anticipates watching brothers and sisters, young and old, rich and poor, and of every color, filing up to take of one loaf and cup. “It is a picture of what is to come.”

Embracing this radically inclusive eschatological hope has prompted Phil to examine his long-conditioned prejudices. He had condemned those whom he considered irresponsible, who “don’t play by the rules” or “earn their right to be here.” How-

ever, it became clear that the Spirit was at work as Phil began to befriend Carlos. A Nicaraguan immigrant, Carlos had a host of health issues, mental and physical, that made it difficult for him to hold a job. He wasn't lazy. He came to our church regularly, always looking for ways to help, whether setting up chairs, cooking, or cleaning the dining hall. He did not ask for anything in return. He simply loved being around. One person he particularly connected with was Phil.

It was Phil that first sounded the alarm when Carlos disappeared. No one, including the sister with whom he lived, knew where he was. After a series of phone calls, Phil discovered that Carlos had been picked up by ICE and put in a detention facility. Of immediate concern were his epileptic seizures. During the first episode, we later found out, the guards thought he was faking, roughed him up, and put him in solitary. The layers of bureaucratic and physical insulation are too complex to describe here but, suffice to say, we learned a lot about how difficult it is to advocate for someone, let alone keep track of his or her whereabouts once they are in deportation proceedings. The administrative runaround, severely limited access, faceless interactions with authorities, all paint a dark picture of what happens when a group of people is criminalized.

As a congregation, we prayed for Carlos, delivered letters, and prayed with him through bullet-proof glass. We gathered his medical records and made appeals for his care, but we were ultimately unable to secure his release. He was taken from us and from his sister, and we miss him very much. But we are grateful for the season we shared together. Carlos and Phil, two unlikely tablemates, were able to break bread at the table... a picture of things to come. One day, they will together enjoy the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to "prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine; the best of meats and the finest of wines... [wiping] away the tears from all faces, he will remove the disgrace of his people

from all the earth (Isa. 25:6-8).” This is the *true* Endgame.

How would the immigration conversation be different, if we lived not by the rules of the current order, with its prejudices and divisions, but in light of the future? What could happen in our dialogue with politicians and policy makers, if we chose to imagine life on that day when liberals and conservatives, government lawyers and community activists, pastors and ICE agents will be seated together at the Great Banquet?

This heavenly scenario was foreshadowed at an unexpected opportunity to co-host a public engagement meeting with ICE in our sanctuary. Two groups that normally vilify one another, those charged with arresting and deporting illegal immigrants and those who advocate for them, sat down at the table together. On one side sat enforcement chiefs for the Northern California, Hawaii and Guam field office, ICE’s attorney general, and six DHS administrators from Washington, DC. On the other side were representatives of immigration advocacy and service organizations, along with a half dozen clergy and lay leaders, who serve families that live with the fear of being separated from their loved ones.

Above our heads hung our church symbols, including a banner depicting the bread and the cup, which serve as a visual reminder of the true Host of the gathering. Our pastor, Doug Lee, welcomed the guests at the table and affirmed that the Lord was present and would be at work in, and through, our conversation. One of our church elders recited *The Prayer of St. Francis*, asking God to help each of us sow love where there is hate, pardon where there is injury, and light where there is darkness, to seek to understand rather than to be understood.⁶ What followed was a conversation characterized by candor, purposeful listening, and honest engagement. Perhaps for the first time, most of us in the room were able to see the other as a fellow human being, rather than a faceless enemy or a public nuisance. After the meeting, one of the ICE agents walked up to us, pulled out his wallet, and produced

not his federal badge, but a laminated Prayer of St. Francis, and shared, "I carry this prayer around everywhere I go."

That meeting with ICE was a picture of what is possible, when the table is set in Christ's name. Not that there was any discernable change in posture or policy. As the agents reminded us, "ICE is only doing its job." Nor did we leave with a higher degree of confidence that any interest on their part in an *ongoing* conversation was genuine. What we experienced was the recovery of sight: the Spirit enabling us to *see* the other with the eyes of Jesus. That morning, the strangers in our midst were not only families from Mexico, El Salvador, Burma or Iraq, but federal law enforcement agents, who also work long hours each day to feed their families. They, too, are victims of a broken system, the powers and principalities that Christ came to defeat. Through the Lord's Supper, we rehearse, in the here and now, the reality of God's good future. We proclaim, and *embody*, the hope of Christ's return, when "a great multitude... from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the lamb... [cry out] in a loud voice, saying 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Rev. 7:9).

Conclusion

I close by returning to my grandmother. Besides the stressful interrogations, my grandmother had to combat disease in a jail with unsanitary conditions and inadequate medical care. One disease was trachoma, a serious eye infection that was classified as a basis for deportation. With time running out, the authorities received a letter, accompanied by a check, which read: "Sir, I respectfully request that hospital treatment be granted in the case of Wong Shee... A deposit of \$300 is hereby made to cover such treatment." This letter was signed and delivered by Ms. Donaldina Cameron, a minister of the Presbyterian Chinese Mission in San

Francisco. Along with Ms. Cameron, were Ms. Ethel Higgins, Mr. J. H. Laughlin, and other saints from that mission, which advocated for months for my grandmother's release. Documents from the National Archives bear witness to the voluminous correspondence between the church and immigration authorities, an amazing labor of love that blessed the lives of my ancestors and hundreds more, many of whom became active members of that congregation.

There is much that I have to learn about this historic Presbyterian congregation, their communal habits, their missional theology, their understanding and practice of the Lord's Supper. But this I know: their faith in Christ gave them eyes to see the immigrant in a way that went against the grain of an angry and fearful public. Fed by Christ, they gave of themselves generously and tirelessly. They possessed an otherworldly poise, a persistent yet *respectful* posture toward the authorities that held immigrants in custody. They demonstrated confidence that comes through faith in Christ Jesus. In so doing, they received much in return through the lives of the newcomers they welcomed into the fold. May it also be so with us.

¹ Sharon L. Huey, "Position Paper" (San Francisco, CA: Grace Fellowship Community Church, 1984), p. 1.

² M. Daniel Carroll R., *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), p. 67.

³ Justo L. Gonzales, *Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), pp. 84-85.

⁴ Elizabeth Newman, *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), p. 149.

⁵ N.T. Wright, *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 18.

⁶ A prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi in *La Clochette*, 1912.

Chapter 4

IMAGINE A CHURCH WITHOUT MIGRANTS! A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

By Darrell R. Jackson

Scotia me genuit. Anglia me suscepit. Gallia me docuit. Colonia me tenet. : “Scotland brought me forth. England sustained me. France taught me. Cologne holds me.” (Inscription on the tomb of John Duns Scotus [1265-1308] in the Church of the Franciscans, Cologne)

“Here I have endured unfathomable feelings of emptiness and absence. No one. Nothing. Certainly the weather is also to blame... caught in the rain outside and waiting under a tree for it to clear up, I begin to weep bitterly. ... will I endlessly be carrying suitcases around everywhere? Will I always be without anyone and anything; like an orphan?” (Yves Congar [1904-1995], native of Paris, exiled to Jerusalem, Oxford, and Strasbourg)

Introduction

‘Julián’ was apprehended by the Spanish authorities for travelling with very few personal possessions and without proper documentation. He was promptly arrested and taken into custody by the border guards, pending enquiries. Held without food or water,

Julián was confined to a small holding cell from where, after a further 36 hours, he was taken for questioning. Careful enquiry prior to questioning pointed towards the likelihood that he was a political exile, ultimately due to his belonging to a religious minority in a country with a dominant religious tradition. A less than pleasant interrogation elicited the needed information. Julián subsequently “disappeared.”

‘Jorgio’ had known for some time that his life was in danger. Working to a well-executed plan, friends spirited him away from danger in the middle of a chilly night in May. Jorgio was given a new identity and appearance by a foreign power that valued his admittedly radical perspective. He struggled to adjust to a new diet and, although given a modest living allowance, he was unable to travel or work openly. As a consequence, he struggled with depressive bouts. Mercifully, his language skills allowed him to engage in Bible translation work, and this enabled him to later understand something of the purpose behind a period of refuge that he had initially fought against.

‘Juan’ was another radical who had fled at an earlier point to a city in the northeast of France. Migrants like him lived a marginal existence and were vulnerable to the political whims of the local authorities who, conscious of their elected positions, kept a close eye on popular opinion. After some time, the authorities withdrew Juan’s residency rights in the city, and he travelled south for the border with Switzerland. In the cosmopolitan city of Geneva he was one migrant among many, joining many others who had travelled there for business, employment, as well as those who had moved there seeking refuge.

The stories of Julian, Jorgio, and Juan are typical of many contemporary stories of asylum, migration, flight, and exile. Their names may be unknown, but their stories will be all too familiar to readers with experience of cross-border migrants and migration. But, these three did not cross the border from Mexico into

the United States at any point in the last ten years. In fact, these stories relate to Europeans, date to the sixteenth century, and all involve Protestant leaders and theologians. Their relevance extends far beyond Europe however, for these are the stories of Martin Luther (who was smuggled away after the Diet of Worms on the evening of May 3, 1521, to Wartburg Castle and thereafter known as ‘Sir George’), John Calvin (who was a native Frenchman forced into exile in Geneva), and the lesser known Julián Hernández, a Spanish reformer who was executed on December 22, 1560 for returning from Geneva to Spain with Spanish-language Bibles. Julian was one of many religious refugees who had travelled to Geneva to form a remarkable migrant community of Protestant reformers gathered around Calvin in what the Scottish migrant John Knox described as “the most perfect school of Christ.”

The hagiographical elements that have been attached to the historical account of the lives of exiled and migratory Christian martyrs such as Julián tend to obscure the reality that migration has *always* been a central aspect of the identity of the churches in Europe. In 1557 there were more refugees in Geneva than Geneva-born inhabitants, and all thirteen Calvinist pastors were non-Genevans. As a result, employment and housing shortages fuelled resentment towards these foreign migrants.¹ They were eventually to become heroes of the Reformation, but they were not easily integrated into the local community, frequently forming their own language-based church congregations (several of which persist to the present day in Geneva), never reliable tenants (with limited financial means and liable to return to their homelands with little notice), and equally resented for the tacit support they lent to Calvin’s frequently unpopular influence over the Geneva secular authorities.

Europe’s historical experience of politically and religiously inspired migration is frequently overlooked in the current debates

about appropriate Christian responses to migrants and migration in Europe. Missiologist Andrew Walls was one of the first to write Europe's history of Christian mission with reference to the discourse of migration. He writes convincingly about the pertinent comparisons to be made between the European experience of missionary migration to a growing number of European colonies and the current migration of former colonial subjects, who have travelled to Europe to evangelise its citizens. Walls prosaically describes this as a "great reversal."²

This oversight becomes all the more apparent, when one considers the words of Robert Schuman, a founding father of the European Union and French political leader. He was a devout Christian and worked to overcome the alienating effect of nationalistic visions and national borders in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Outlining a vision for a Europe of reconciled nations in 1958, Schuman inspired a generation of post-war leaders with his calls for a "democratic model of governance which through reconciliation develops into a 'community of peoples' in freedom, equality, solidarity and peace and which is deeply rooted in Christian basic values."³ Schuman's vision of this new Europe could only begin to take shape as Europe's disparate peoples began to interact, trade, befriend, travel, relocate, frame laws, and marry across national borders. Indeed, when in 1984 the Council of Europe recognized the importance of European pilgrim routes, such as the medieval "Pilgrim's Way" to Santiago do Compostela, it acknowledged that the cultural contacts resulting from Christian pilgrimage represented one of the earliest of approaches to interculturalism and European unity.

Christian Migration in European History

Migratory Fathers of the Exile

Many early 'Fathers of the church' were migrants and might

equally be exiled by the religious authorities as by the secular authorities. John Chrysostom (349-407) was a Bishop of Constantinople exiled to the Caucasus, who nevertheless managed to use his free time in exile to organise mission in Cilicia and Phoenicia. Athanasius (c. 296-373) was a Bishop of Alexandria for 45 years and spent a total of 17 of those in exile (for five separate periods). Others exiled included Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662), Gregory of Nyssa (c. 334-394), and Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (d. 258).

When Tertullian (c. 160-220) wrote *De Fuga in persecutione* (*Flight from Persecution*), he was investigating the appropriate Christian response in the face of persecution: go into exile or remain to face the persecuting authorities. Christian leaders and church members have been facing the same dilemma since, and many have chosen the hard migratory journey into exile.

Religious Persecution

The Huguenots were French Protestants of the 17th century, who suffered terribly under Louis XIV. In 1685 he revoked the Edict of Nantes (1598) by which Henry VI had granted them relative religious freedom. All Protestant pastors were immediately exiled and the laity forbidden from leaving France. However, many did leave, and an estimated total of 200,000 Huguenots emigrated to countries in non-Catholic Europe, including the Netherlands, Germany (especially Prussia), Switzerland, Scandinavia, and even Russia. Several hundred went to established vineyards in South Africa (hence the name for the wine producing valley of 'Franschoek'), and a far larger number, estimated at fifty thousand, settled in England, introducing the word 'refugee' to the English language.

English pamphlet literature of the period warned of the threat the Huguenots posed to the employment market as well as to public order and morality. The pamphleteers lamented their poor

standards of personal hygiene and their poor standard of housing. Some even pointed out that they ate strange food! Despite these prejudices the Huguenots of England excelled in banking, commerce, industry, the arts, the army, on the stage and in teaching.

Biblical Scholarship in Exile

The Geneva Bible represents a triumph of English biblical scholarship, achieved by migrant Protestants living in exile in Geneva. Led by Myles Coverdale and John Knox and working under the influence of the migrant John Calvin, this community of scholars created a text that drew on Tyndale's Bible and which, in its turn, contributed directly to the text of the *Authorised Version* (1611) and prompted the publication of the Roman Catholic *Rheims-Douai Bible* in English (1609).

The title page of the Geneva Bible carries a woodcut of the Israelites about to cross the Red Sea, hinting at the self-understanding of the migrant community in Geneva. They identified their exile and wandering with those of the biblical Israelites. Encircling the woodcut are the texts "Great are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of all" (Ps. 34:19); "Fear not, stand still and behold the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you this day" (Exod. 14:13); and "The Lord shall fight for you; therefore hold you your peace" (Exod. 14:14).

An earlier migrant, William Tyndale (c. 1494-1536), had to leave the inhospitable religious climate of England in order to accomplish his lifetime's work of translating the Bible into English. He travelled to Wittenberg, via Hamburg, in 1524. After a year there he had finished translating the New Testament, publishing it in Cologne in 1525. From Wittenberg he travelled to Worms and from there on to Antwerp (possibly going into temporary hiding in Hamburg in 1529). In 1535 he was betrayed in Antwerp, seized, condemned, and eventually martyred. Without Tyndale, the Lord's Prayer would have sounded very different. He

is responsible for the phrase “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil” and many others in common use, including the entry into the English language of words such as “Jehovah” and “Passover.”

Lorenzo Lucena (1807-1881) revised the *Reina Valera* Spanish Bible in exile. A former Rector of the Roman Catholic Seminary in Córdoba, Lucena became a Protestant after reading their writings. He fled in 1836 to the English territory of Gibraltar, traveling as “José Cocido.” He pastored the Spanish-speaking congregation at Holy Trinity Cathedral until 1848 and during this period worked with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge to revise the New Testament. Arriving in England in 1848 as a missionary, he also taught Spanish and eventually was elected as the first Professor of Spanish at Oxford University (having taught there from 1858). In 1862, Oxford University Press published his revision of the complete Bible in Spanish, still commonly used across Latin America albeit with some revisions.

Martin Bucer (1491-1551) was a Dominican monk who renounced his vows after meeting Martin Luther in 1518. He failed to reform his parish of Wissembourg, was excommunicated, and fled to Strasbourg. He was a close associate of Zwingli, Luther, and Philip Melancthon. Strasbourg eventually re-introduced elements of Roman Catholic worship, and Bucer went into exile, living in England from 1549, where he assisted Thomas Cranmer’s work on the *Book of Common Prayer* (first published under Edward VI in 1549). He died two years later in Cambridge, a German migrant in exile.

War and Conflict

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) was a professor of systematic theology at the University of Frankfurt during the rise to power of the German Nazi party. In 1933 he was dismissed from his position for views critical of the Nazi’s national socialism and immediately was

invited to take up a position at Union Theological Seminary by Reinhold Niebuhr. He subsequently joined Harvard Divinity School in 1955 and went on to publish his three volume systematic theology. Tillich became a migrant theologian. In a confidential 1936 document, published in 1966 as "Refugee Scholars at Duke University," a total of 197 theologians whose convictions or associations made them unacceptable to the German Government, were identified for the purpose of finding suitable alternative employment in the USA.⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer was among those who left Germany, taking up a position at Union Theological Seminary in June 1939. Courageously, he returned to Germany on the last steamer to cross the Atlantic before the outbreak of the War, thereby sealing his fate.

Jürgen Moltmann (b. 1926) was drafted by the German army in 1944. Surrendering in 1945, he was a prisoner of war between 1945-48, initially in Belgium, then Scotland, and finally in England. In Belgium he despaired at what he found out about the German concentration camps, but the witness of other Christians in the camp stirred the first feelings of hope, and a U.S. chaplain gave him a copy of the New Testament and the Psalms. In 1946 he was moved to a camp near Nottingham, England, where he was encouraged to read Reinhold Niebuhr's *Nature and Destiny of Man* by YMCA leaders and students of theology he met there. Of this experience Moltmann later wrote, "I didn't find Christ, he found me."

Non-Protestant Migrants

When the communists rose to power in Russia, the Orthodox Church, as well as many evangelical churches, faced intense persecution. Archbishop Hilarion Alfeyev writes of this period, "At the time when Russian theological scholarship had been totally crushed in Russia itself, it continued to flourish in the West, among the Russian emigration."⁵ Its encounter with Western the-

ology was a source of theological renewal, as Orthodox theologians dialogued with Western theologians and defended Orthodoxy from the challenges of Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians. Fr. Georges Florovsky, Fr. John Meyendorff, Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, and Fr. Alexander Schmemmann are the most well known from among these migrant Russian theologians in exile and have done much to make Eastern Orthodox theology accessible to the West.

European Christianity and Migration

History suggests that European Christianity is an intercultural form of Christianity. Migratory theologians, missionaries (including St. Patrick, Willibrord, Boniface, Columbanus, Martin of Tours), exiled scholars, and church leaders are implicated in the founding of churches and religious communities across the continent. Where the contemporary expressions of those churches and communities adopt a cultural or ethnically exclusivist tone, European Christians with a sense of our history do well to retell these stories. European churches that promote or support the anti-immigration policies of the populist political parties are either suffering from historical amnesia or wilfully choose to ignore the painful and costly experiences of our forbears in the faith.

Happily, my own analysis of research (2001) shows that an increasing concern for the welfare of migrants in Europe correlates with increased frequency of church attendance. Twenty-eight percent of weekly churchgoers were concerned for migrants, whereas only 15% of those who never, or practically never, attended church expressed a similar level of concern for migrants. Active churchgoers are frequently engaged in church and mission agency responses, which have tended to focus on establishing, supporting, and networking with migrant congregations, on promoting social and cultural integration, and on providing welfare and ad-

vocacy services for asylum seekers, refugees and trafficked migrants. More recent attempts are being made to understand migration theologically and to learn from the migrant experience.

In countries that are a source of trafficked individuals, mostly women, agencies such as the International Catholic Migration Commission have a significant anti-trafficking educational presence. Churches Against Sexual Trafficking in Europe (ChASTE) and similar agencies have adopted advocacy and mobilisation strategies in countries of destination for trafficked women. Agencies such as the Greek evangelical agency Helping Hands have established refugee centres in Athens, which address a broader range of issues for migrants applying for asylum and seeking refugee status in Greece. In Hungary, the Reformed Church has been active in developing and supporting educational programmes for the children of refugees.

In 2004 over 150 migrant congregations were mapped in the Danish capital, Copenhagen. Responding to the issues this raises, a Churches Integration Service (KIT) and an Inter-Cultural Centre (TC) have been established by the Danish churches and between them provide training, resources, and support directed towards the integration of migrant congregations within the Danish church context. Similar agencies exist in England, Northern Ireland, Germany, and the Netherlands, whilst in several other European countries this forms a significant part of the programmatic work of a national Evangelical Alliance or Council of Churches.

These changes seem inevitable and necessary. In French-speaking Belgium, 20% of Protestant pastors and between 30-40% of Protestant church members are of African origin. In France, two migrant denominations are members of the French Protestant Federation, and there were a recorded 250 migrant congregations of African origin in Paris in 2005. In several of the German regional church assemblies there are Conferences of Foreign-Speaking Pastors. In the Netherlands there are three larger

migrant denominations and a number of smaller groups that are in membership of the Dutch Council of Churches. In Norway there are seven migrant churches in a similar membership.

Such developments can hardly be considered surprising when one takes into account the fact that five European cities are now characterised by “hyper-diversity”: London, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Hamburg and Munich. These are cities where at least 9.5% of the total population is foreign born; where no one country of origin accounts for 25 percent or more of the immigrant stock; and where immigrants come from all regions of the world. In Europe, 29 cities have a foreign-born population of over 100,000. London, Paris and Moscow have foreign-born populations of over 1 million. Sixteenth-century protestant Geneva may have approached “hyper-diversity”—one can only speculate—but irrespective of the scale, the legacy of its ethnic diversity may serve as an orienting factor for Christians engaged in current policy debates concerning urban ethnic diversity.

Responding to this growing incidence of ethnic minority and migrant church presence, European churches have typically responded in an *ad hoc* and unstructured fashion. This might seem a weakness, but it might actually be highly appropriate in the face of a contemporary phenomenon that is characterised by transition, fluidity, contingency, impermanence, and high mobility. Across the continent there are signs that somewhat more settled patterns of residence are emerging, but significant parts of the migrant community in Europe remain susceptible to economic and employment factors. Flexibility of response and lightweight structures are likely to remain central characteristics of migrant programmes for the foreseeable future in Europe.

An adequate discussion of contemporary migration in Europe must also take into account the many migrants, who are citizens of one European Union (EU) country and who are temporarily or permanently resident in another EU country. These facts some-

times get lost in the media-fuelled statistical storm. In 2008, a total of 120,000 Dutch citizens left their densely-populated country and 318,000 Brits left the U.K., whilst in 2009 165,000 Germans left Germany for other countries, encouraged by a growing number of TV programmes extolling the charms of Australia, New Zealand, the U.S., and Spain. Unwary readers frequently trip over the fact that the EU's immigration statistics also include citizens of EU countries who are entering or re-entering a country of which they are a citizen. This could be where the individuals have worked in another country for an extended period of residency in another country. It might also include children, who are citizens of a country on account of one or both parents and who are entering their country of citizenship for the first time, again after a significant period of residency since birth in another country. In 2008, 15% (or more than half a million) accounted for as 'immigrants' by the countries of the European Union fell into these categories. Not surprisingly, missionaries and their children, born overseas, may frequently add to this total.

In 2008, Chinese residents in the European Union were the fourth largest group of non-EU residents, at an estimated 621,000. However, if one factors in the presence of EU migrants in other EU states, the Chinese migrant population is only the tenth largest such population. European populations with a larger diaspora presence in Europe than that of China include Romania, Italy, Poland, Portugal, the U.K. and Germany. In 2008 Eurostat, a data source for the European Commission, estimated that 19.47 million non-EU citizens were living among an EU population of just over 500 million. This means that an average of 3.6% of the EU population is foreign-born.

The impact of these factors upon European indigenous Christianity is perhaps well illustrated by the experience of the Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities of Spain (FEREDE), which was able to successfully argue that, on the basis of German and

British migrants living across the “sunshine belt” of the south, the Protestant population of Spain was actually far in excess of previous government published statistics and that for this reason the state allocation of money to religious communities should be increased in favour of FEREDE.

In 2010, the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe declared a “Year of European Churches Responding to Migration” and, at the conclusion of the year, published the results of its active engagement in integration issues through its *MIRACLE* programme “Models of Integration through Religion: Activation, Cultural Learning and Exchange.”⁶ Practical policy recommendations were developed for European churches struggling to know how best to respond to the presence of migrant Christians in their congregations. Integration is likely to remain at the centre of European-wide efforts to respond in mission and ministry to the presence of non-Europeans (Christian and otherwise) in Europe. My own work has begun to explore migrant integration, theologically and missiologically,⁷ whilst others have drawn upon the experience of migration as a resource for theological construction.

Conclusion

A historical perspective that acknowledges the absolutely vital role played in European Christianity by migrants suggests that contemporary programmes focused on migrant integration are entirely commensurate with our intercultural ecclesial and theological legacy. A historical retrospective that describes European Christianity without reference to some of the great migrant, exile, and refugee theologians and church leaders of the past, faces huge challenges in adequately accounting for the present.

Without Luther, Calvin, and John Smyth, the Protestant Churches of Europe would exist today in what one can only describe as a parallel universe. It is impossible to imagine the Euro-

pean Church of today without the contribution of migrants and exiles such as Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Boniface, Columbanus, Coverdale, Lucena, Bucer, Tyndale, Knox, Tillich, Moltmann, and many more unknowns besides. Our Bible translations and our theological textbooks would be rather different to those we are so familiar with and for which we are so grateful to God. At various points these faith-filled migrants were considered “undesirable,” “illegal,” and “economic migrants.” As migrants, they experienced discrimination, misunderstanding, hardships, ill treatment, and in some instances they faced imprisonment and death. Their legacy remains an invaluable resource for reflection on the part of the Churches of Europe, as we consider our ministry and mission with, amongst, and to the migrant populations of non-Europeans living and worshipping among us.

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- ¹ T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1975), p.169.
- ² Andrew F. Walls, “Commission One and the Church’s Transforming Century” in *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*, eds. D. A. Kerr and K. R. Ross (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2009), p. 37.
- ³ J. Fountain, *Deeply Rooted: The Forgotten Vision of Robert Schuman* (Heerde: The Schuman Centre for European Studies, 2010), p. 5.
- ⁴ William E. King, “Refugee scholars at Duke University” in *They Fled Hitler’s Germany and Found Refuge in North Carolina (Southern Research Report 8)*, eds. Henry A. Landsberger and C. E. Schweitzer (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Academic Affairs Library, 1966). Available at <http://www.phy.duke.edu/history/DistinguishedFaculty/HerthaSponer/RefugeeScholarsAtDukeUniversity.pdf>
- ⁵ Archbishop Hilarion Alfayev, “Orthodox theology on the threshold of the 21st century,” unpublished conference paper presented at *The Russian Orthodox Church from 1943 to the Present*, Bose, Italy, 15-17 September 1999. Available at http://en.hilarion.orthodoxia.org/6_3
- ⁶ For further information, see <http://www.ccme.be/areas-of-work/uniting-in-diversity/miracle/>
- ⁷ Darrell R. Jackson, “Europe and the Migrant Experience: Transforming Integration,” *Transformation* 28, no. 1 (2010): 1-15.

INTRODUCTION TO THE VERNON GROUNDS INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ETHICS

In every age, God raises persons who not only have a keener sense of his ideals for life in community than their contemporaries, but who also have the courage and foresight to pursue these ideals for themselves and the ability to lead others to do the same. For more than a generation Vernon Grounds has played such a prophetic and catalytic role in the arena of social ethics within the evangelical community. In doing so, he has established a legacy of Christian witness in the social domain that has been hailed by many as epoch-making and pace-setting.

It is to perpetuate Vernon's legacy of a vigorous Christian engagement in the public domain that the Vernon Grounds Institute of Public Ethics was established at Denver Seminary, where he has given a lifetime of dedicated service.

In embracing this task, and keenly aware of Dr. Grounds' lifelong stance, the Institute makes several bedrock commitments. First, it is committed to always anchoring its teaching and position in the Word of God. Second, it will endeavor to remain true to the Christian world view and the evangelical understanding of Christian faith. And, driven by the passion to see these resources brought to bear on social reality with a view to transforming it for the better, it further commits itself to pursuing an ethical agenda that will seek to be as all-embracing as its means allows.

From what has been said so far, it should be clear that VGI's arena of endeavor is social ethics. But it needs to be said that, in

laboring in that realm, its mission is mainly educational. More precisely, what it aims to do is provide an environment, resources and tools with a view to sensitizing, educating and training Christians in a broad array of ethical issues so that they may be empowered and equipped to fulfill the biblical mandate to be “salt” and “light” in a morally decadent world (Matt 5:13-14, Phil. 2: 15-16). As used here, the term ‘Christian’ is meant to embrace several groupings: students in training, Christian leaders, lay persons and the broader Christian community.

In the pursuit of this educational mission, VGI intends to employ a variety of delivery modes, including lectures, workshops, seminars, informal discussion, and the printed page. Being keenly aware of the enormity of the task and of its own limitations, VGI welcomes partnership with others who are also interested in a comprehensive and a robust Christian witness in the public square for the glory of God.

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