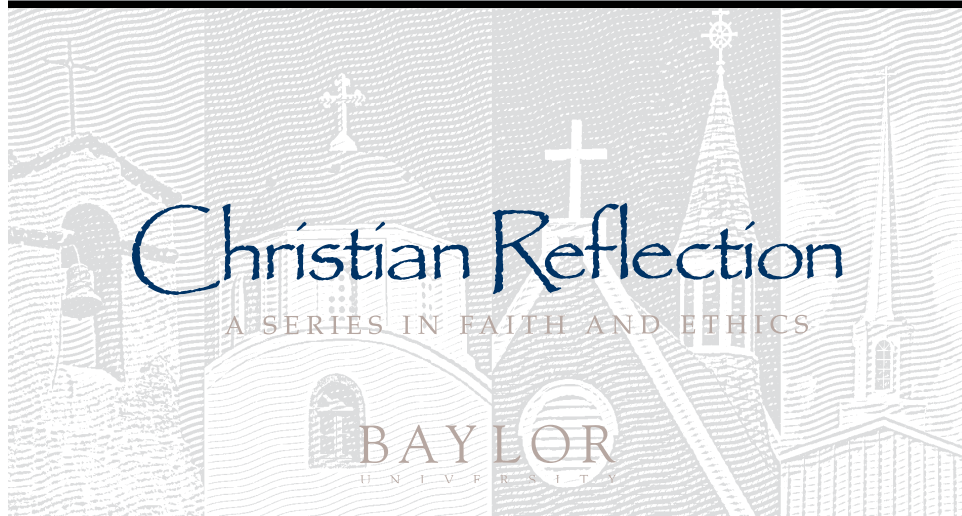




Immigration



GENERAL EDITOR	Robert B. Kruschwitz
ART EDITOR	Heidi J. Hornik
REVIEW EDITOR	Norman Wirzba
PROCLAMATION EDITOR	William D. Shiell
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT	Elizabeth Sands Wise
DESIGNER	Eric Yarbrough
PUBLISHER	The Center for Christian Ethics Baylor University One Bear Place #97361 Waco, TX 76798-7361
PHONE	(254) 710-3774
TOLL-FREE (USA)	(866) 298-2325
WEB SITE	www.ChristianEthics.ws
E-MAIL	Christian_Reflection@baylor.edu

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LOVING OUR NEIGHBORS, BOTH FAR AND NEAR

There may be no single “Christian” immigration policy, but by directing us to weigh the needs of outsiders against the defense of the life we share with our fellow citizens, Christian ethics illuminates the appropriate moral framework for understanding, and conducting, our immigration debates.

RUTH: RESIDENT ALIEN WITH A FACE

The biblical book of Ruth challenges our easy assumptions and stereotypes about immigrants today, especially when we put to it two simple questions: “What challenges does Ruth the immigrant face as she accompanies her mother-in-law Naomi to Judah?” and “How does God help her meet these challenges?”

A MORE PERFECT UNION

To the national debate over immigration, American churches bring keen insights gleaned from biblical wisdom and years of experience working directly with immigrants. For our union to become more perfect, churches must continue not only to talk about but also to walk with immigrants.

FAITHFUL COMPANIONS

How can we obey both biblical directives—to be good citizens and to show hospitality to immigrants, legal and illegal? The ISAAC Project is helping churches across the United States work within existing law to assist all immigrants by creating ESL and citizenship classes, family separation ministries, and recognized immigration organizations.

WAVES OF BLESSING, WAVES OF CHANGE

Surf’s up, brothers and sisters! We can ride this wave of immigration to North America by acknowledging that God is in the current, adopting mutually dependent ministry postures alongside immigrants, and recognizing their contribution to the vitality of the church and the transformation of secular society.

Introduction

BY ROBERT B. KRUSCHWITZ

In the current worldwide wave of migration how should we respond with love and justice to immigrants, whom Scripture commends to our care as the “strangers who live among us,” even as we care for our fellow citizens?

Almost 200 million people live in a country that is different from their place of birth. Thirteen and a half million are refugees. Within this worldwide wave of migration, the United States is home to the largest population of international migrants. Thirty-three million people—about twelve percent of the U.S. population—are foreign born, as are six of ten people in Miami, Florida, and a quarter of all Californians. Immigration is defining what it means to be young in America today: twenty-two percent of children under age six have immigrant parents. How should we respond with love and justice to these whom Scripture commends to our care as the “strangers...who live among you” (Deuteronomy 16:11), even as we care for our fellow citizens?

Given the historically high levels of migration to the United States, the public debate about reforming the nation’s immigration laws is becoming ever more urgent and rancorous. Christian ethics provides “the appropriate moral framework for understanding, and conducting, our immigration debates,” Peter Meilaender observes in *Loving Our Neighbors, Both Far and Near* (p. 11), “by directing us to weigh the needs of outsiders against the defense of the life we share with our fellow citizens.” He maintains, “The average citizen’s concern about the risks of continuing high levels of immigration is not simply selfish; it can and should be defended in moral terms, consistent with commitments to equality and love of neighbor.”

Christians must continue to contribute to the national debate over immigration in America, Michele Pistone and John Hoeffner agree in *A More Perfect Union* (p. 26), because “churches bring keen insights gleaned from biblical wisdom and from years of experience spent working directly with immigrants.” Pistone and Hoeffner review the public impact of church

statements—issued by Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Evangelical groups—concerning who has the right to migrate, where these individuals can migrate, and how they should be treated in receiving countries. Yet, “for our union to become more perfect,” they conclude, “churches must continue not only to *talk about* but also to *walk with* immigrants.”

In *Ruth: Resident Alien with a Face* (p. 20), Michael Moore reminds us of some biblical wisdom in the book of Ruth that “challenges our easy assumptions about immigrants today.” He notes that not all immigrants in the story deserve the same treatment, yet Ruth becomes a blessing to the people of God. “One of the most unique attributes of the biblical God,” Moore observes, “is the obvious delight he takes in using ‘foreigners’ to redeem, teach, save, and sanctify his chosen people.”

When an American congregation begins “not only to *talk about* but also to *walk with* immigrants,” what can it do within existing law to assist all immigrants, not just documented ones, with their basic needs? In *Faithful Companions* (p. 35), Richard Muñoz helps us understand the legal environment in regard to immigration so that we can “overcome [our] fears and...act responsibly for the good of the Kingdom.” Through the ISAAC Project, Muñoz guides churches to “reach out to those immigrant families torn asunder; provide comfort and a spiritual home to our removed brothers and sisters in Christ; teach newcomers the rich language, history, and hope of our nation; and guide them through a complex and confusing immigration system.”

The worship service (p. 46) by Leigh Jackson calls us to worship the God of deliverance and of justice and hope for the displaced. She includes a wonderful recent hymn by David Wright and Jim Clemens, “Seek the Peace of the City” (p. 44), in which God enjoins us: “Seek the peace of the exile, / stranger on the road. / I will walk along beside you, / stranger on the road.” Throughout the service we bear witness to “the wideness of God’s mercy” that extends welcome and gracious pardon to all people of the world.

In America’s inner cities “the world is in motion” as migrants “intuitively gravitate toward the city in their vulnerability.” Starting from the theological assumption that “God’s hand is active in the immigration process, and that his primary concern is not whether immigrants are legal or non-legal, but that they are *being changed* and are *bringing change* for the praise of his glory and the advance of his Kingdom,” Randy White examines how “primarily mono-ethnic, mono-class churches that wish to connect with immigrant communities need to redesign or alter their outreach strategies” in *Waves of Blessing, Waves of Change* (p. 74). Only as we learn to minister *alongside* rather than *to* immigrants can we fully appreciate the contributions these newcomers are making to the vitality of the church and the transformation of secular society in North America.

Among those abiding contributions are the styles of church architecture immigrants bring from their countries of origin. In *Immigrant Churches* (p. 54), Heidi Hornik introduces us to a signal example—Saints Cyril and Methodius

Church in Shiner, Texas, which is one of the famed “painted churches of Texas.” She compares this sanctuary’s longitudinal basilica form “adorned with a surprising profusion of color” (see the photograph of the apse and altar on the cover) with the form and interior decoration of a remarkable Byzantine church, San Apollinare in Classe, Italy.

Dan Royer immigrated to Canada to serve as pastor in Selkirk, Ontario, for several years. “Members of our congregation suggested it was a big step for us to go to a new country,” he recalls in *Beyond Risk and Uncertainty* (p. 68), so he “kept a mental list of things that made the risk-taking worthwhile.” As you would imagine, his list is filled not with paychecks or scenic tours, but with close relationships that he and his wife value to this day. Albert Reyes begins his reflection, *I Was a Stranger: Jesus and the Undocumented Immigrant* (p. 63), with a similarly personal list that includes his Mexican and Tejano-born ancestors and the pastors who led them to faithful discipleship. “There was a time when we were strangers—not only to the United States, but also to the family of faith,” he writes. “Texas Baptists made room for us in the family.” His passion about the subject of immigration leads him to wonder “why God has allowed fourteen million undocumented immigrants to come to our country to live, work, eat, and have a good life...and what kind of Kingdom resource undocumented immigrants might become as their lives are redeemed for the Kingdom.”

Viviana Triana, in *Back to the Basics of Immigration* (p. 84), reviews two books that tell the complex story of the migrants who have come to America over the years and how they were received. She appreciates Roger Daniels’s *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* as an “encyclopedia of immigrant history” that “dispels many commonly held myths regarding the motivations, identity, and origins” of the migrants. “How we ‘see’ immigrants and the immigration process—as people fulfilling an implicit contract, creating a new affiliation with us, or beginning a transition to full citizenship,” Triana observes, “strongly influences how we treat immigrants.” She commends Hiroshi Motomura’s view in *Americans in Waiting: The Lost Story of Immigration and Citizenship in the United States* that “lawful immigrants should be treated as persons in transition to become citizens.”

In *Planning for Immigration* (p. 89), Daniel Groody, C.S.C., begins by lamenting that “few theologians address immigration, and scholars in migration studies almost never mention theology.” That is why he appreciates Dana W. Wilbanks’s *Re-Creating America: The Ethics of U.S. Immigration and Refugee Policy in a Christian Perspective* and Peter C. Meilaender’s *Toward a Theory of Immigration* for building a bridge between Christian theology and the global immigration debate. These books are “valuable resources not only for the political leaders and scholars who struggle to balance national security and human insecurity, sovereign rights and human rights, and civil law and natural law,” Groody concludes, “but also for Christians who must negotiate the boundaries of citizenship and faithful discipleship.” ☦

Loving Our Neighbors, Both Far and Near

BY PETER C. MEILAENDER

There may be no single “Christian” immigration policy,
but by directing us to weigh the needs of outsiders
against the defense of the life we share with our fellow
citizens, Christian ethics illuminates the appropriate
moral framework for understanding, and conducting,
our immigration debates.

In any discussion of immigration in America someone is likely to comment, “We are a nation of immigrants.” Their intent is to end debate. How could a nation of immigrants not welcome immigrants? Yet this comment—too true to deny, but too much a truism to aid in reflection—conceals much that is important to understanding the place of immigration in American life. Few countries in the world are populated by descendants of their earliest inhabitants. In a real sense, the history of humanity is a history of migration. Nor is America the world’s only “nation of immigrants.” Canada and Australia, Brazil and Argentina have all been deeply shaped by immigration. Even the countries of Western Europe, few of which have any historic identity as destinations for migrants, now find themselves home to large foreign populations. What does it mean, then, to call ourselves a nation of immigrants?

Both the reception of immigrants and their gradual assimilation play a prominent role in the American psyche. Images of Ellis Island and of huddled masses seeking refuge and a fresh start are an essential part of our national identity. Nevertheless, the history of immigration in America is more complex and ambivalent than the “nation of immigrants” label suggests. From the nation’s beginnings Americans have not only taken pride

in the traditions of liberty that made this country an attractive destination for so many, they have also worried deeply about the potential consequences of large-scale immigration for our economic, political, and cultural life. Indeed, when one reads the immigration debates of the early twentieth century, one is immediately struck by the familiarity of the arguments, which concern the very things we worry about today: competition for jobs, strains on urban services, immigrants not learning English, the fraying of our cultural fabric. We are having exactly the same arguments that our great-grandparents had.

This is unsurprising, because our experience with immigration resembles theirs. The history of immigration to America can be described, without undue distortion, very simply: first a rise, then a fall, then a rise again.¹ Early in the country's history there was no national immigration policy. During most of the nineteenth century, immigration levels rose gradually, with periodic increases or decreases caused by economic changes or war. After the Civil War, however, during the last decades of the 1800s, immigration rose substantially, creating what we now know as the First Great Wave. Concern began to mount, especially about the new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, who were regarded as backwards and potentially unassimilable. This concern culminated in a pair of immigration acts in 1921 and 1924, which significantly reduced the overall number of immigrants admitted annually and assigned to other countries annual quotas of immigrants intended to preserve America's traditional ethnic composition.

As a result, immigration dropped sharply. Numbers remained low into the 1950s before gradually beginning to rise again. Several factors contributed to an increasingly bad national conscience about low immigrant admissions: growing awareness of the consequences of countries' not having accepted Jewish refugees during the Holocaust; the gathering civil rights movement, whose focus on racial equality was hard to square with immigration quotas based on ethnicity; and a Cold War desire to attract immigrants fleeing the communist bloc. These factors led to a loosening of the restrictions in the Immigration Act of 1965. This act introduced two reforms in particular that proved momentous: it eliminated the national origins quotas and it created an elaborate system of preference categories under which various relatives of current citizens and legal residents were automatically entitled to immigrate, in some cases without being subject to a new overall cap on the number of immigrants admitted annually.

In ways not fully anticipated even by the act's supporters, these reforms caused both a major shift in the ethnic composition of the immigrant stream and a sharp increase in total immigration levels. As a result of the family reunification provisions, whatever countries were currently sending immigrants—no longer the traditional European countries of origin—got a foot in the door, as it were, so that new immigrants could in turn sponsor their relatives for immigration, creating systems of chain migration from the new

sending countries. And because close family relatives were automatically entitled to immigrate, regardless of numbers, overall admissions continued to rise. This again sparked public concern during the 1980s, and by the 1990s immigration reached levels not seen since the early twentieth century, averaging close to a million legal immigrants entering the United States each year. We are currently living through the Second Great Wave.

Despite minor reforms in 1986 and more significant ones in 1996, the Immigration Act of 1965 continues to provide the basic framework for American policy. Without changes, there is no reason to expect immigration levels to decline in the near future; even were illegal immigration to vanish tomorrow, legal immigration would continue to be at historically high levels. Little wonder, then, that we find ourselves rehearsing the debates of one hundred years ago.

LOVING (ALL OF) OUR NEIGHBORS

As President Bush's failure to pass comprehensive immigration reform dramatically illustrated, Americans today are no less ambivalent than their ancestors about immigration. American attitudes towards immigration often combine deep unease about the effects of current immigration levels on American politics and culture with a vague sense of guilt that such unease may be either immoral or, at least, un-American. This guilt arises from several sources. One I have mentioned: our powerful self-image as a "nation of immigrants." Another is a concern that America's ideals of liberty and equality may be incompatible with immigration restrictions that deny others access to the opportunities we enjoy. Christians in particular may feel pangs from a third source: the fear that immigration restrictions, by protecting a privileged position for our fellow nationals, conflict with the obligation to love all human beings as God loves us.

This popular ambivalence has an intellectual parallel. Under international law, control over immigration has traditionally been regarded as a sovereign right of the state. With limited exceptions—states are these days generally thought

The history of immigration to America can be described very simply: first a rise, then a fall, then a rise again. We are currently living through the Second Great Wave.

to have an obligation not to return asylees to countries where they will be persecuted and to have at least some obligations to accept refugees—sovereign freedom continues to characterize the state's rights under international law. On the other hand, moral philosophers and political theorists writing about immigration have tended to argue that a commitment to equality makes immigration restrictions ethically suspect and that the normative

ideal is therefore a world of open, or nearly open, borders. The gap between traditional international law and contemporary ethical theory thus displays a divide every bit as stark as the one within many an American citizen's psyche.²

I want to argue that we need not feel quite as ambivalent as we sometimes do. The average citizen's concern about the risks of continuing high levels of immigration is not simply selfish; it can and should be defended

The ethical challenge posed by immigration policy is whether we can justify using state coercion to preserve the particular way of life that we share with our fellow citizens.

in moral terms, consistent with commitments to equality and love of neighbor. In order to explore this argument, we first need to discern the characteristic shape of immigration as a moral issue. Immigration policy is best understood as a version of a common moral dilemma: the conflict between universal and particular

obligations, or—to put the same point slightly differently—the problem of preferential love.³ When we enforce immigration restrictions against outsiders seeking to enter the country, we are in effect exercising state force in order to preserve the particular way of life that we share with our fellow citizens. The ethical challenge posed by immigration policy, therefore, is whether we can justify using state coercion in this manner. On what basis might we restrict access to this life that we share? Are we entitled to show this kind of preference for our own compatriots?

We do not ordinarily think that either a commitment to equality or the Christian obligation to love all persons is incompatible with special obligations to particular individuals. I am obligated to care for my own children more than for children in general. My friends reasonably expect from me forms of sympathy, attention, and assistance that those of you reading this essay do not. I have obligations towards my faculty colleagues and fellow parishioners that I do not have towards professors at other colleges or the members of other church congregations. And the same logic applies to my fellow countrymen and countrywomen. Because we share in a common life, involving a range of shared institutions and practices, we develop obligations towards one another that we do not have, or not to the same degree, towards outsiders—not because we do not love those outsiders, or because we think that our fellow citizens are somehow better than folks elsewhere, but simply because these are the people with whom our lot has been cast.

That image of the lot being cast—calling to mind the idea of someone doing the casting—suggests an additional reason why Christians, far from rejecting, should embrace these special obligations. It may be possible to justify particular obligations without reference to distinctively Christian

beliefs. That citizens share a common life, shaping and being shaped by one another through their mutual encounters, appropriately gives rise to expectations for treatment different from that accorded strangers. Yet the Christian belief in providence helps us comprehend more fully why such differential treatment is appropriate. As finite, mortal beings, we are creatures of time and place, living at a particular historical moment, inheriting a particular past, in a particular community, among particular neighbors. But these circumstances of our lives are not simply random matters of chance. Rather, they are part of God's plan for each of us. I might have married any one of a number of women, but that my wife and I happened to find ourselves next-door neighbors in graduate student housing a dozen years ago was not merely fortuitous. Biologically, I might have produced many children other than the ones I did; but that God has gifted me with a particular son and these three daughters has led me (or perhaps better, invited me) to develop in some ways rather than others. I see no reason why a similar logic should not apply to the national communities into which we "happen" to be born.

One could push this argument too far, of course, falsely supposing that God must wish everything to be precisely as it is. I intend no such grand claim. My point is simply that we should not regard the circumstances of our lives as mere biographical data of no moral significance. Rather, they are the concrete historical settings in which God challenges us to make moral choices and develop into the kinds of persons he wishes us to become. If he grants me a daughter, the appropriate response is not to pretend that I have no special duty to care for her in ways I am not obligated to care for all the other children in the world, merely in order to demonstrate my moral impartiality. Nor is it a sign of refined moral sensitivity to think that our fellow citizens have no special claims on us. Human charity is necessarily filtered through the prism of time and place. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer suggested,

We ought to find and love God in what he actually gives us; if it pleases him to allow us to enjoy some overwhelming earthly happiness, we mustn't try to be more pious than God himself and allow our happiness to be corrupted by presumption and arrogance, and by unbridled religious fantasy which is never satisfied with what God gives. God will see to it that the man who finds him in his earthly happiness and thanks him for it does not lack reminder that earthly things are transient, that it is good for him to attune his heart to what is eternal, and that sooner or later there will be times when he can say in all sincerity, "I wish I were home." But everything has its time, and the main thing is that we keep step with God, and do not keep pressing on a few steps ahead — nor keep dawdling a step behind.⁴

If we have had the good fortune to be born in a free and prosperous country, we should neither overlook our obligation to assist the less fortunate elsewhere nor “try to be more pious than God himself” by neglecting the duties of our common life with those immediately surrounding us.

This explains why restrictions on immigration are morally justifiable within a Christian ethic: they are an appropriate way of expressing the

We must think of immigration policy as serving all our neighbors—not just the distant ones seeking to join us, but also those near at hand, with whose lives our own are already interwoven and for whose welfare we thus bear more direct responsibility.

special obligations we have towards members of our national family. Some readers may fear that that this answer is too easy, merely a convenient way to explain away obligations that might challenge our own interests. But this response implicitly embodies an inappropriately individualistic perspective on immigration, assuming that one’s policy views reflect a narrow focus on personal self-interest. Clear-

ly, however, I need not support immigration regulation solely, or even primarily, for my own sake. I may do for the sake of others, and may do so even if I myself expect to benefit from immigration. In this connection we might recall Martin Luther’s advice in his essay on *Temporal Authority* about the appropriate Christian attitude toward the exercise of political power. On their own account, he argued, Christians should always be prepared to suffer, turning the other cheek and refusing to seek vengeance. But for the sake of the neighbor, they should resist violence and injustice, protecting others even by force if necessary.

A Christian should be so disposed that he will suffer every evil and injustice without avenging himself; neither will he seek legal redress in the courts but have utterly no need of temporal authority and law for his own sake. On behalf of others, however, he may and should seek vengeance, justice, protection, and help, and do as much as he can to achieve it.⁵

From this perspective, we might say that we are not merely permitted to preserve the common life we share with our fellow citizens; we owe this to them. “If [the Christian] did not so serve” —Luther again— “he would be acting not as a Christian but even contrary to love....”⁶ We should think of immigration policy, then, not as a way in which I seek to protect myself. Rather, through it I aim to serve my neighbors who will face competition for their jobs; or the

children whose education will suffer in overburdened schools; or those fellow citizens in communities whose ways of life will be disrupted by a continuing influx of immigration at current levels; or indeed our own grandchildren, to whom we hope to pass on a cultural and political heritage. We will be unable to assess immigration policy adequately until we learn to think of it as serving *all* our neighbors – not just the distant ones seeking to join us, but also those near at hand, with whose lives our own are already interwoven and for whose welfare we thus bear more direct responsibility.

REFLECTING ON CURRENT DEBATES

With this framework in mind, what can we say about recent debates over immigration policy? I have argued here for the moral justifiability of immigration restriction. I emphasize this argument because our public rhetoric often leaves the contrary impression that moral concerns all line up on the pro-immigration side, and that only self-interest prevents us from generously accepting as many immigrants as we ought. Nevertheless, I by no means think that the state should enjoy unlimited discretion in crafting immigration policy. Our duty to sustain the economic, political, and cultural life we share with fellow citizens is balanced by other duties, and these set outer limits to the leeway we may legitimately exercise in determining whom to admit. In particular, I believe that close family members of current citizens as well as refugees and asylees have very strong claims to be admitted as immigrants – the former because of their relation to current members of the national community, the latter simply because their need is so great.⁷ These are not trivial points. If the United States continued to admit, say, even a million legal immigrants a year, we would have no trouble filling most or even all of those slots with people from these categories.⁸ I am therefore inclined to oppose common proposals to devote a higher percentage of immigrant admissions to people selected for possessing specific economically desirable skills. These people, often highly educated and reasonably well-off, appear to make a weaker or less direct claim on our generosity than do refugees or family members of current citizens.

More significantly, the framework outlined here suggests a resolution to what have recently been the most fiercely debated and controversial aspects of immigration policy, namely illegal immigration and the question of amnesty for illegals already residing here. The argument I have made strongly suggests that we should indeed support what is generally referred to (negatively) as “amnesty” – permitting illegal residents who have been in the country for some specified length of time (I would suggest five years) to legalize their status and eventually become eligible to apply for citizenship. If we are entitled to restrict immigration in the first place because we owe special obligations to members of our own national community, the same logic suggests that we may not indefinitely exclude from legal status people who are in fact already members of that community, even if they originally

came without our permission. Shared membership in the community, which generates the special duties, is at some level simply an empirical fact, and precisely that fact, I have argued, has moral significance.

On the other hand, American citizens are entitled to a policy that respects the rule of law, and they reasonably fear that amnesty will create incentives for additional illegal immigration by those who hope to enter the country and hide out long enough to enjoy a future amnesty. The resolution to this dilemma seems clear: trading real border control for legalization of current illegal residents. Legislation implementing improved border security measures could include benchmarks that would trigger amnesty provisions only when evidence became available showing that the new security measures were indeed working. Some such trade-off as this is the most ethically defensible resolution to the current debate over illegal immigration.

Resolving this issue would leave the thorniest but most important question of all: determining appropriate levels of legal immigration. This is a more significant issue than illegal immigration, but it will be much harder to settle. It is easy, after all, to oppose people breaking the law; harder by far to determine how many we should admit in the first place. It is also a question, I think, for which moral reflection can provide only limited guidance. My argument above suggests that we can reach a wide range of ethically justifiable conclusions about whom to admit, and in what numbers. It does not insist that we reach any particular answer. And if I am correct that we may legitimately exercise considerable discretion about this, our conclusions will rely heavily upon prudential judgments about the empirical effects of various immigration levels on our national way of life and our economic, political, and cultural institutions. My own view is that it would be prudent, as we did a century ago, to scale back admissions temporarily after such an extended period of massive immigration, giving ourselves the chance to digest the newcomers and see how things stand. At the same time, such a decision, even if politically feasible, would have costs. Reducing legal immigration in half, from almost a million to, say, half a million entrants per year—still a lot of people!—would mean admitting fewer family members and refugees, to say nothing of those with special economic skills. And it is difficult to predict what effect a new round of restriction would have on America's image in an increasingly globalized world.

Because reasonable people will estimate these potential costs and benefits differently, preferred solutions will vary. It is therefore implausible, I think, to suggest some particular conclusion as the "Christian" immigration policy. Nevertheless, by directing us to weigh the needs of outsiders against the defense of the life we share with our fellow citizens, Christian ethics illuminates the appropriate moral framework for understanding, and conducting, our immigration debates.

NOTES

1 Helpful accounts of the history of American immigration include Roger Daniels and Otis L. Graham, *Debating American Immigration: 1882-Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001); Noah Pickus, *True Faith and Allegiance: Immigration and American Civic Nationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Aristide R. Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); and Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

2 For a short defense by a political theorist of something resembling the traditional view, see Michael Walzer, "Membership," chapter 2 in *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983). The best statement (though one occupying the far end of the spectrum) of the more standard egalitarian view currently favored by most political theorists remains Joseph H. Carens's important article "Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders," *Review of Politics* 49.2 (Spring 1987), 251-273. Two good collections of scholarly essays on the topic are Brian Barry and Robert E. Goodin, eds., *Free Movement: Ethical Issues in the Transnational Migration of People and of Money* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992); and Warren F. Schwartz, ed., *Justice in Immigration* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

3 I have made this argument in *Toward a Theory of Immigration* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), chapter 3, "'This is My Own, My Native Land': Immigration, National Identity, and the Problem of Preference." Those who prefer their arguments in briefer form might instead consult my "Immigration: Citizens & Strangers," *First Things*, 173 (May 2007), 10-12.

4 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: The Enlarged Edition*, edited by Eberhard Bethge (New York: Touchstone Books, 1997), 168-169.

5 Martin Luther, *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed*, in volume 45 of *Luther's Works*, edited by Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 101.

6 *Ibid.*, 94.

7 I lack space here to make this case in more detail but have argued these points in chapter 6, "The Boundaries of the Political," of *Toward a Theory of Immigration*.

8 For a powerfully argued case along these lines focusing specifically on refugee admissions, see Matthew Gibney, "Liberal Democratic States and Responsibility to Refugees," *American Political Science Review* 93.1 (March 1999), 169-181.



PETER C. MEILAENDER

is Associate Professor of Political Science and Chair of the Department of Integrative Studies at Houghton College in Houghton, New York.

Ruth: Resident Alien with a Face

BY MICHAEL S. MOORE

The biblical story of Ruth challenges our easy assumptions about immigrants today, especially when we put to it two simple questions: “What challenges does Ruth the immigrant face as she accompanies her mother-in-law Naomi to Judah?” and “How does God help her meet these challenges?”

Telephoning him at home to find out why he had not sent in his term paper, the response he offered was a little unnerving. He said he had been staying up late every night the past two weeks watching the World Cup on *ESPN*. Why? Because he *needed* to know how Honduras (his native country) was doing in the first rounds of play. Because of this he just “couldn’t find the time” to write his paper. When I informed him that failure to produce a paper would mean failure of the course, he said, “I understand,” thanked me for the call, and hung up.

It was just so...puzzling. Eduardo was one of my brightest students, the young pastor of one of the fastest-growing Hispanic churches in the Southwest. Earlier that year he had invited me to preach at his church and the excitement generated by that experience had left a deep impression on me. His energetic participation in my Pentateuch class had been so positive and affirming, I could not understand why he had decided to prioritize the World Cup over a seminary term paper.

Only slowly did I begin to realize how wide the canyon had grown between our worldviews: a first-generation immigrant, he found the English reading and writing assignments very difficult; a seasoned seminary professor, I felt it my responsibility to help him learn the Word of God in its original historical and literary contexts.

When two cultures clash like this it is tempting for the dominant culture to conclude that immigrants like Eduardo are ignorant and lazy. The biblical story of Ruth challenges this conclusion, however, especially when we put to it two simple questions: *What challenges does Ruth the immigrant face as she accompanies her mother-in-law Naomi to Judah?* and *How does God help her meet these challenges?*

CHALLENGES FACING RUTH

John Keats tries to express Ruth's pain in a few lines of one of his shorter poems, *Ode to a Nightingale*:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
 No hungry generations tread thee down;
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown:
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
 She stood in tears among the alien corn.

It is one thing to help one's mother-in-law grieve the death of her husband and sons. It is another to accompany her to a strange new land filled with strange new people—and to have to beg for help from alien men in charge of the "alien corn." Appreciation for this challenge increases significantly when we realize that Ruth, like Naomi, is herself a childless widow. Like Naomi, Ruth has no husband to help her scratch out a living in this new land, and the chances of finding a Hebrew to help her make it through future famines stand somewhere between unlikely and impossible.

Arriving in Bethlehem, the first problem she has to face is the most basic—finding food to eat. Fortunately she has come to a place where the law is clear: "You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 19:10). "When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the resident alien, the orphan, and the widow" (Deuteronomy 24:21). Unfortunately she arrives at a time when there is "no king in Israel" and "everybody does what is right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; cf. 18:1; 19:1; and 21:25).

GOD'S RESPONSE

While God does not speak overtly to anyone in this short story, we may glimpse God's providential response to Ruth's dilemma through four crucial meetings.

The first occurs between Ruth and Mahlon, Elimelech's firstborn son. The text does not give us the details of this meeting or their relationship, but by marrying this foreigner Ruth chooses to become part of a family so overwhelmed by "famine" they have to leave their ancestral homeland. In other words, she takes a huge risk, and it backfires horribly. Mahlon gets sick and dies before the two of them can produce a single child. Still, we cannot help

but wonder how much of this experience prepares her for the time when the tables turn and she becomes the “resident alien.”

A second meeting occurs between Ruth and Naomi. Unlike her sister-in-law Orpah, Ruth refuses to abandon the widowed mother of her dead husband. Learning that Naomi plans to go back to Judah after the famine lifts, she vows loyalty to her via some of the most beautiful words in the Bible:

Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!
Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.

Where you die, I will die—
there will I be buried.
May the LORD do thus and so to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!

Ruth 1:16-17

We do not hear words like these spoken very often today, not in a culture where the number of divorces is roughly half the number of marriages each year. Still, one of the reasons why these words appear in so many wedding ceremonies is because of their very rarity. It is hard to find anything comparable to this vow of unconditional covenant love.

Ruth meets the foreman of Boaz, one of Elimelech’s kinsmen, in a third meeting. Apparently she makes such an impression on this man that he cannot wait to tell the boss about her. Thus, when Boaz asks about her, he says, “She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. She said, ‘Please, let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.’ So she came, and she has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment” (2:6b-7). In other words, this man concludes that this immigrant is not like every other immigrant to Israel. She respects the laws and customs of her adopted country. She seeks to do what is right and proper. Her reputation precedes her—a fact Boaz makes clear when he later tells her that “all the assembly of my people know that you are a worthy woman” (3:11). By calling her a “worthy woman” he uses the same expression describing the woman in Proverbs 31:10-31. Like his foreman, Boaz recognizes that Ruth is a different kind of immigrant than, say, the Danites who destroy the innocent village of Laish or the Gibeonites who gang-rape the concubine of the foolish Levite (see Judges 18:27-19:30).

The fourth meeting between Ruth and Boaz takes place in two stages. The first occurs when he sees her waiting patiently on the edge of his barley field,

feeds her, and offers to protect her from anyone who would do her harm. The second occurs when she stealthily comes to him on the threshing floor at night (something prostitutes commonly do, according to Hosea 9:1). Startling him from a sound sleep, she asks him to spread over her his “wing” of protection. Behind her request doubtless stands several conversations with her adopted family – Naomi, Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion – where Ruth first learns about Yahweh’s covenant love (or, *chesed* in Hebrew), particularly as incarnated in the socioeconomic institution of levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). Impressed by both her courage and her character, Boaz responds affirmatively to her request, the book ending with him negotiating with another kinsman for the honor of participating in this *chesed*.

RECOGNIZING “RUTHS” IN OUR MIDST

Meditation on this beloved story leads me to submit three proposals for further reflection. First, socioeconomic distress (“famine”) is most often responsible for the immigrants in our midst. No one wants to leave home, but when famine strikes, hungry people will do whatever it takes to feed their families. Today, as then, there are many kinds of famine. Whether these famines occur in ancient Judah or modern Mexico, ancient Bethlehem or modern El Paso, the “Ruths” in our midst often find themselves in miserably desperate situations. Whether the river they have to cross is the Jordan, or the Mississippi, or the Rio Grande, they have to do whatever it takes to insure the safety and welfare of their families. When food and shelter become scarce the only option they have left is to pack up and move.

Not every immigrant deserves or even wants to be “redeemed.”

Should Ruth have looked like one of the Danites, for example, Boaz would probably not have been interested in helping her. He might have excused himself for a closer kinsman (notice the fine details of the negotiation strategy in Ruth 4) or even ignored her altogether. Some immigrants are “worthy,” others are not, and Boaz is not

Today, as in biblical times, there are many kinds of famine. Whether these occur in Judah or Mexico, Bethlehem or El Paso, the “Ruths” in our midst often find themselves in miserably desperate situations.

going to waste his time on someone who does not want to be “redeemed.”

Finally, the genuine “Ruths” among us are nevertheless crucial to our well-being as God’s people – because the God of Boaz has a habit of redeeming *anyone* who wants to channel his “covenant love,” regardless of status or bloodline or standard of living. This God takes great delight in bringing “Ruths” among us. They channel his grace in ways no one else can. They

help the “Naomis” among us like no one else can. They help the “Boazes” among us like no one else can. They help produce the “Davids” among us when others do not, will not, or cannot.

CONCLUSION

The end of the nineteenth century saw the United States facing a wave of immigrants it did not know how to assimilate into its predominantly

God has more “Ruths” to send our way. He takes obvious delight in using “foreigners” to redeem, teach, save, and sanctify his chosen people.

Anglo-American culture. Most Americans at that time spoke English, went to Protestant churches, believed in the separation of church and state, knew how to read and write, and displayed the buoyant optimism of a people ever-ready to indoctrinate foreigners into their “American” value system.¹

Prior to the Civil War most of these immigrants had experience with self-government, the same social mores, and a relatively high standard of living. After the Civil War, however, many of the newer immigrants did not share these characteristics, and as war with Germany (World War I) drew closer, the “immigration problem” jumped into a whole new key. Social historians call what happened next the “Americanization Movement” because nativistic hysteria simply took over the hearts and minds of many Americans at this time and it became very, very difficult to recognize the “Ruths” from the “Danites.”

It is tempting to conclude that many of us are doing the very same thing today, woefully displaying our ignorance of the Bible as well as our own recent history. Thus the question: What can we do to make it easier to recognize the “Ruths” in our midst? Here are two practical suggestions.

Only the most prejudiced unbeliever would argue that God has no more “Ruths” to send our way. One of the most unique attributes of the biblical God is the obvious delight he takes in using “foreigners” to redeem, teach, save, and sanctify his chosen people. He calls Israel to be his “suffering servant” to “redeem the nations” (Isaiah 49:1-7). He sends his only-begotten Son in the form of a “suffering servant” (Philippians 2:5-8). He empowers the Church to “suffer outside the camp” with Christ (Hebrews 13:13).²

Only the most naïve universalist would argue that every immigrant deserves the same treatment. On the contrary, many immigrants do not *ask* “Boaz” for help, they *demand* it. Imagine Ruth coming to Boaz that night on the threshing floor and accusing him of neglect instead of asking him to obey his own law. People on both sides of the immigration question can learn a lot from the attitudes and behavior of these biblical characters.

Applying these principles to the “immigration problem” cited at the beginning of this essay, I called Eduardo back and asked him if he would prefer to sit for an oral final exam in his native language, and then got a translator to mediate for us. Not only did he pass the course, the two of us experienced a taste of how good it feels when God’s *chesed* “becomes flesh and dwells among us, full of grace and truth.”

NOTES

1 I document this history in “America’s Monocultural Heritage,” *Fides et Historia* 15:1 (Fall-Winter, 1982), 39-53.

2 For more on this, see my article “Ruth the Moabite and the Blessing of Foreigners,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 60:2 (April 1998), 203-217.



MICHAEL S. MOORE

teaches at Fuller Theological Seminary, Southwest, and Arizona State University in Phoenix, Arizona.

A More Perfect Union

BY MICHELE R. PISTONE

AND JOHN J. HOEFFNER

To the national debate over immigration in America, churches bring keen insights gleaned from biblical wisdom and from years of experience spent working directly with immigrants. For our union to become more perfect, churches must continue not only to talk about but also to walk with immigrants.

The human dimensions of immigration, the issue's economic importance, and its significant cultural impact all contribute to strongly held convictions about what should be done to welcome the stranger, if indeed he should be welcomed at all. But religion and morals contribute to the formation of our views as well. For Christians, Scripture provides ample food for thought, if not a specific blueprint for immigration reform.¹

In this article we discuss what Christian churches say about immigration and how they have responded to various proposed reforms of U.S. immigration law. We also discuss the effect Christian churches have had on the immigration debate, before closing with a few suggestions for how that debate might be made more productive.

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AND IMMIGRATION

The three most basic questions concerning migration are "Who has the right to migrate?" "Where can individuals migrate?" and "How should migrants be treated in receiving countries?" The first question generated much controversy and debate during the Cold War, with the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, among others, implementing and defending various restrictive emigration policies. Over the past two decades, these restrictive policies have largely, though not entirely, been rescinded, and as

this has occurred, the issue of who has the right to migrate has assumed a decidedly lower profile. In short, with some narrow exceptions, the now generally accepted (although not unanimous) view among governments and Christian churches is that almost everybody has the right to migrate.

The second and third questions, however, deeply divide societies all over the world. Indeed, the issues raised by these questions have gained salience in recent years. Among other things, differences arise from conflicting conceptions of national sovereignty and the rule of law, from varied views of the necessity for and likelihood of assimilation and/or integration of immigrants, and from opposing assessments of immigration's overall economic impact.

At the root of these differences is this: while the difficult personal circumstances of most immigrants are very widely recognized and create much sympathy, immigration restrictions exist largely because many citizens believe that – all humanitarian impulses aside – as a practical matter, we cannot do more (and perhaps must do less).

In this debate, Christian churches in the United States have often taken the opposite approach, prodding society to do more and admonishing it not to do less. Sometimes the prods and admonishments are gentle, and sometimes they are not. They have their genesis in dozens, perhaps hundreds, of particular contexts, but may productively be considered to fall within just two categories: what types of migrants should be allowed to enter and stay in the United States, and how should migrants, of whatever type, be treated after they have crossed the border?

WHO SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO IMMIGRATE TO THE U.S.?

Opinions as to who should be allowed to enter and settle in the United States vary widely and are in many respects irreconcilable, but we shall begin with a rare area in which we find basic agreement among the churches, the law, and society. The issue involves refugees, who are defined by international (and U.S. domestic) law as persons unable or unwilling to return to their home country because of past persecution or a well-founded fear of future persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion if returned home. There is essentially unanimous belief that refugees should be granted asylum upon an adequate showing of past or likely future persecution. A recent joint pastoral letter by the U.S. and Mexican Catholic Bishops reflects the consensus opinion: "The right to asylum must never be denied when people's lives are truly threatened in their homeland."²

To a certain extent, however, this happy consensus is more wide than deep. Many churches have expressed opposition, for example, to laws that mandate detention of asylum applicants pending resolution of their claims, to the imposition of short deadlines to file asylum claims, and to the replacement of full with truncated hearings for some asylum claimants. Religious

groups that have expressed opposition to one or more of these laws include organizations of the Society of Friends and the United Church of Christ, and of the Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, and Mennonite churches.³

These disputes about refugee law are important, but less fundamental than differences concerning the admission of non-refugees, a category that largely consists of economic migrants. While the general consensus and the law would gladly admit all refugees who prove refugee status, proving economic need is, by itself, of no legal benefit. Nor does the court of public opinion recognize economic need as being of decisive, or even of any, importance. The main basis for opposition to such recognition is the pragmatic concern that opening the door wide to economic migrants would create a substantial risk that more immigrants would enter than the country has the capacity to absorb, just as the opening of floodgates creates a high risk of damage from the ingress of more water than the land has the capacity to absorb. Another concern motivating opposition to economic migration is the fear that, by allowing admission on the basis of economic hardship, we would make it more difficult to help economically deprived U.S. citizens.

Christian churches recognize the importance of these concerns, as well as the overall complexity of the issue and the right of a nation to control its borders. Such recognition, however, has not led to universal support for the current immigration system. Many churches, for example, have called for greater acceptance of economic migrants. "Catholic social thought," for instance, "suggests that at least some desperately poor economic immigrants may deserve something akin to asylum status," which is to say, there are some economic migrants who *must* be accepted by a receiving country.⁴ The World Council of Churches likewise has "challenge[d] the conventional wisdom of a sharp differentiation between refugees and migrants." The WCC has urged similar treatment for all "uprooted people...regardless of the labels they are given by the international community."⁵

From the belief that severe economic disparity is a legitimate justification for migration, it is a short step to the conclusion that undocumented economic migrants should be provided a path to legalization. And indeed many churches have urged the development of such a path. Thus, the Presbyterian Church (USA) has called for "the establishment by law of a comprehensive legalization program for undocumented persons already living and working in the United States."⁶ The Catholic, Episcopal, United Methodist, and Mennonite churches, among others, as well as a substantial minority of evangelical churches, have done the same.

The support of these churches, of course, has not yet led to any concrete result. The reason for this is plain: to put it mildly, American society lacks a national consensus on what to do about undocumented immigrants. Some people urge strengthened deportation efforts; some urge a policy of "attrition," brought about through the enactment of measures that make life so difficult for undocumented migrants that they voluntarily depart; some

highlight the advantages of enacting a general “pause” in immigration; some focus on improving border enforcement; some urge liberalization of citizenship requirements; and many pick and choose from these various agendas. With no side able to claim clear majority support for substantial reform, the unsatisfactory status quo becomes the de facto majority fallback position, subject on the national level to minor changes at most.

HOW SHOULD IMMIGRANTS BE TREATED?

The stalemate at the national level has encouraged local action. The states and their subdivisions cannot mandate the rules for deciding questions of immigration status, nor do they have any direct responsibility for controlling the migration of persons across national borders. What they have been doing, at an increasing rate, are enacting laws designed to make life more difficult for undocumented migrants, often by imposing stiff penalties for those who employ, rent housing, or otherwise aid persons without documentation. A proponent of these laws, John Vinson, the president of the American Immigration Control Foundation, has explained their purpose as follows:

What we believe in is attrition enforcement.... By gradually tightening the screws, you make it more difficult for [undocumented immigrants] to stay here and, ultimately, you encourage many of them to deport themselves. If we enforce our laws on hiring with businesses, if we cut off benefits to them, if we make it hard for them to stay here and break our laws, eventually they will go home.⁷

Many Christian churches have been very vocal in opposing these laws, and have sometimes done so in highly charged language. For example, Oklahoma recently enacted a law (House Bill 1804) that makes it a felony to knowingly shelter or transport illegal immigrants, sets up barriers to hiring them, and restricts benefits they can

Many churches have called for greater acceptance of economic migrants. Some suggest that “at least some desperately poor economic immigrants may deserve something akin to asylum status.”

receive from the government and its contractors. The Catholic Bishop of Tulsa, Edward J. Slattery, described the law as creating “an atmosphere of terror and repression.” The Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma also issued a statement in opposition to the law, as did the Oklahoma Conference of Churches. Indeed, the latter organization—an umbrella group of African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, Catholic, Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran,

Mennonite, Presbyterian, and United Methodist churches, among others – called HB 1804 “a disastrous effort” which “instigates fear and prejudice” and enjoined the faithful to reject it.⁸

Churches elsewhere have responded with similar intensity and directness to “attrition” legislation passed in other states, to an extent that provides a marked contrast with the response accorded other immigration proposals. Thus, while church commentary on laws regulating the entry of immigrants is often subdued and at pains to detail the complexity of the issues, church responses to “attrition” legislation are much more uniformly and sharply negative.

Explaining the difference is the perception (well-founded, we think) that “attrition” legislation often risks criminalizing acting in accordance with the tenets of the faith. “The provision of hospitality to the stranger is one of the most frequently cited marks of covenant faithfulness. In the New Testament, Jesus identifies with the stranger and emphasized hospitality as one of the indispensable acts of discipleship.”⁹ Given this, can a church-run homeless shelter that receives some government funding close its door to a homeless undocumented immigrant if the law requires it? Can it decline to “transport” a pregnant woman to a prenatal care doctor’s appointment for fear of legal sanction? Is Christian hospitality dispensable in these cases?

These questions implicate in a fundamental way core concerns about what it means to be a Christian. Other types of immigration issues are important – perhaps more important – but their complexity and distance make them more ethically ambiguous. A 2006 statement by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod explores this distinction in a way that sheds light on why “attrition” legislation has tended to receive heightened criticism from Christian churches:

Today, issues related to immigration and immigration laws are causing distress in our land. As corporate citizens of this nation, we recognize that solutions to the problem of illegal immigration are complex. There are many factors that deserve consideration, each exhibiting its own value. Secure borders, national security, policy enforcement, national stability, inexpensive labor, decent income, budget limits, human rights, and work opportunities are only the beginning of the long list....

Christians equally committed to God’s word may reasonably arrive at different conclusions on specific aspects of [immigration] issues and their resolution. However, this much is certain: God, in His Word, consistently shows His loving concern for “the stranger in our midst” and directs His people to do the same....

[So], in order to fulfill our Christian obligation, we...request that the charitable act of providing assistance to undocumented aliens not otherwise engaged in illegal activity not be criminalized....¹⁰

IMPACT OF CHURCHES ON THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE

Given the tension that exists between the law as it is and the expressed preferences of many Christian churches, one may rightly ask, is anyone listening to the Christian churches? Many approaches might be taken in answering this question.

First, we can note that, on many immigration issues, Christian churches do not speak with one voice. Thus, on any particular issue, it is possible for the same person to lament that one Christian church has not been heard, and to lament that another has been heard all too well.

We also can acknowledge that this divergence of views is entirely to be expected and can even be healthy. As the statement of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod quoted above indicates, immigration is an immensely complicated field, and our determinations about it often are necessarily based on prudential judgments involving subject matters on which churches have no special institutional competence. Hence, alternative views on immigration among Christian churches can present an opportunity to learn. At a minimum, our awareness of differing views can be useful in making plain the sometimes hidden assumptions that underlie our own opinions. And sometimes we may learn that our assumptions about prudential matters are incomplete or even mistaken. The lesson, then, is that even if Christian churches disagree among themselves and nobody else is listening to them, they and their members would do well to listen to each other.

Second, to the extent that Christian churches do speak with one (or almost one) voice, two scenarios present themselves. In the first, as has sometimes happened,

Christian churches are heard and provide a leading and perhaps even decisive influence on events. For example, in 1996, one of the authors (Professor Pistone) was involved in the campaign to defeat a Congressional proposal to establish a thirty-day deadline for filing asylum applications; she can testify from personal experience

that a unified and involved religious community was crucial in winning a very close vote that extended the deadline to one year. So sometimes, at least, one can rejoice that Christian churches are being heard in the immigration debate and that their combined impact is apparent and significant. The known successes should encourage churches to continue to make their views known.

Church commentary on laws regulating the entry of immigrants is often subdued and at pains to detail the complexity of the issues, but responses to “attrition” legislation are much more uniformly and sharply negative.

On the other hand, at other times a largely unified Christian community may seem to be ignored by the larger society. This is no reason for discouragement. Such occasions—perhaps “attrition” legislation provides a few—are opportunities for the Christian community to raise a prophetic voice.

Third, it cannot be denied that many people do not listen to the views of the churches. There are many individual reasons for this, but the natural

Support for immigrants is one aspect of a more general Christian preference for the poor. Can we help immigrants without making life harder for other poor people?

and very human temptation is always to lay blame on some presumed defect of those who have covered their ears. Churches that face resistance to their views might do well to recognize, however, that opponents often may embrace their positions out of highly commendable motivations. Support for immi-

grants is only one aspect of a more general Christian preference for the poor. Some putative opponents may work on behalf of poor non-immigrants and regard immigrants as making life harder for other poor people. Perhaps some who have tuned out the church’s message believe that the best solution to the “problem” of immigration is to increase economic growth in developing nations, and so they work hard and make financial contributions toward that end. Committed people of this sort are not opponents, but allies in a larger cause. Churches should do more to recognize them as fellow laborers in the vineyard and take care not to reinforce their alienation.

Fourth, the increasing popularity of “attrition” legislation of various kinds, despite the expressed opposition of many churches, makes it clear that in some contexts the churches are certainly not being heard. In some cases this is troubling not only on the merits, but also because to the extent such legislation makes it harder for churches to do their chosen work of serving the poor, the legislation indicates a disturbing discounting of the value of churches as mediating institutions. Such institutions, existing between the central governing authority and the individual, bring us a better world than government could acting alone; they smooth over the rough edges of life and the law by delivering assistance and providing community in a way that government cannot. Perhaps the apparent discounting of this important structural role is a sign that the churches have not stressed it enough. If so, it is crucial that this failure be remedied, for the sake of immigrants and much, much more.

Finally, while in the end we can never really know if anyone is listening to the churches on immigration (because we do not know what the world would be like in the absence of their voices), perhaps it is healthy for churches to

assume that no one is in fact listening. If that is the case, additional importance is placed on what is done, rather than on what is merely said. The belief that words are falling on deaf ears may be a blessing in disguise if the result is an increased incentive to fulfill directly the command of Matthew 25:35 to give the hungry something to eat and to invite the stranger in. Much good could result, and it is always possible that some who do not have ears to hear may have eyes to see.

CONCLUSION

Immigration is a contentious issue, and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Christian churches widely partake in, and sometimes lead, our national debate over the issue. All things considered, it is good that they do so, for the churches bring keen insights to the debate, gleaned not only from biblical wisdom but also from many years of experience spent working directly with immigrants. For our union to become more perfect, churches must continue to talk about and walk with immigrants, as we all struggle to learn which of our current imperfections are necessary products of our time and which could be presently overcome with greater commitment and imagination.

NOTES

1 Among the biblical materials relevant to migration are the flight of the holy family into Egypt (Matthew 2:12-23), Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), and the laws regarding Israel's treatment of resident aliens (e.g., Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:33-34; Deuteronomy 10:17-19 and 27:19). Recall how the Son of Man judges "the nations" in another of Jesus' parables: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35c).

2 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope, A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States* (Washington, DC: U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, 2003), paragraph 31. This pastoral letter is available online at www.usccb.org/mrs/stranger.shtml.

3 Philip G. Schrag, *A Well-Founded Fear: The Congressional Battle to Save Political Asylum in America* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 264-266, notes the opposition by all these groups to a filing deadline on asylum applications in the United States and to an expedited removal process for individuals who arrive at the border without proper visas or other travel documents. In addition to issuing statements of their own, religious groups have been instrumental in building coalitions, like the Detention Watch Network (www.detention-watchnetwork.org), to advocate against certain U.S. detention practices for asylum seekers.

4 "Immigration Policy in the United States," in Michael L. Coulter, et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Catholic Social Thought, Social Science, and Social Policy* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 541-543, here quoting from 542.

5 *Resolution on Uprooted People*, No. PI 4 (Potsdam, Germany: World Council of Churches Central Committee, 2001), available online at www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/cc2001/pi4-e.html.

6 Presbyterian Church (USA), *Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States* (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly, 2004), 9. This resolution approved by the 216th General Assembly (2004) is available online at www.pcusa.org/oga/publications/immigrant-legal.pdf.

7 Sarah Kellogg, "Immigration Reform and the American Identity," *Washington Lawyer* (February 2007), 26.

8 Edward J. Slattery, "The Suffering Faces of the Poor Are the Suffering Face of Christ" (The Diocese of Tulsa, November 25, 2007), available online at migrante.com.mx/pdf/BISHOP.pdf; Carla Hinton, "Church Panel Adds Its Voice to Opposition," *The Oklahoman* (November 2, 2007), available online at newsok.com/article/3162187.

9 *Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants*, 6-7.

10 Gerald B. Kieschnick and Matthew Harrison, "Joint Statement Regarding Immigration Concerns" (The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, June 2, 2006), available online at www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=10023.



MICHELE R. PISTONE

is Professor of Law and Director of the Clinic for Asylum, Refugee, and Emigrant Services (CARES) at Villanova University School of Law in Villanova, Pennsylvania.



JOHN J. HOFFNER

is an attorney in Villanova, Pennsylvania.

Faithful Companions

BY RICHARD M. MUÑOZ

How can we obey the biblical directive to show hospitality to immigrants, legal and illegal? The ISAAC Project helps churches work within existing law to assist all immigrants by creating ESL and citizenship classes, family separation ministries, and recognized immigration organizations.

The Apostle Paul exhorts us to be good citizens and uphold the laws of our land (Romans 13:1-3). The author of the book of Hebrews directs us to welcome strangers into our home (Hebrews 13:2). When a congregation engages the immigrant community these verses intersect and, at times, create a unique tension. Can we answer our call to be good citizens and still show hospitality to immigrants, both legal and illegal?¹

Fortunately, these two biblical directives are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, one way we can minister to immigrants is by helping them comply with the law. That is why the Baptist General Convention of Texas and Buckner Children and Family Services collaboratively formed the Immigration Service and Aid Center (ISAAC) Project. ISAAC helps churches establish ESL and citizenship classes, family separation ministries, and “recognized” immigration organizations. These ministry options allow churches to work within existing law to help all immigrants – not just undocumented ones – with some basic needs.

Why should a congregation engage these strangers in the land? How do certain federal and state laws impact immigration ministry? How does ISAAC help churches develop and structure specific ministries geared toward immigrants? A familiar scriptural passage provides the conceptual framework to address these issues.

A STRANGER MEETS JESUS

According to Matthew’s Gospel, when Jesus began teaching and performing miracles, his fame spread throughout the land and large crowds

followed him (4:25). After he had spoken the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus traveled in the area of Capernaum where he encountered a foreigner.²

When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress." And he said to him, "I will come and cure him." The centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, "Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you according to your faith." And the servant was healed in that hour.

Matthew 8:5-13

There are two 'strangers' in this passage — Jesus and the centurion — and both men's responses are noteworthy. First of all, Jesus was operating on strange turf. Matthew reports that Jesus had been teaching in the "Jewish meeting places" (4:23, CEV) with an authority that exceeded the crowd's "teachers of the Law of Moses" (7:29, CEV).³ He had healed a man with leprosy, who probably also was of the Jewish faith given our Lord's instructions that he make a Mosaic sacrifice (8:1-4). So prior to meeting the centurion, Jesus had been ministering primarily within his own linguistic, ethnic, and religious community. In his comfort zone Jesus was doing miracles, proclaiming the Good News, and doing the will of the Father.

Likewise, many churches are doing Kingdom work within their own linguistic, racial, and socio-economic communities. They are preaching the gospel and participating in everyday miracles, large and small. Our natural inclination is to reach out *first* to those who look, speak, and act like we do. Yet, this story reminds us that Jesus did not always remain in his familiar community. Many times throughout this Gospel, our Savior left his comfort zone and ate with sinners and tax collectors (cf. 9:11).

The centurion — or, as *The Message* paraphrase refers to him, the "Roman captain" — also was in strange territory. Probably stationed far from home, he was not part of Jesus' culture or tribe. Luke mentions that he was active and well regarded in the Jewish community (Luke 7:4-5). We do not know the centurion's religion or background. We do not know how he heard about Jesus and his healing power; it could have been through his official

duties or from his Jewish friends. We do know this centurion had a problem: his servant was gravely ill and needed a miracle.

As an officer in the most powerful army in the world, the centurion could command soldiers, servants, and slaves. It must have been difficult for this man of earthly authority to approach Jesus and publicly beg for help. Yet he had to approach the Savior openly and without fear to receive his miracle. His remarkable spiritual journey from a stranger to a participant in the feast of the “kingdom of heaven” started with his willingness to use his newfound knowledge to conquer any fears he may have had about approaching Jesus, the stranger.

OVERCOMING OUR MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF THE LAW

The local church must understand the legal environment in which it exists and then, like the centurion, use this new knowledge to overcome its fears and act responsibly for the good of the Kingdom.⁴ Immigration ministry can potentially touch areas that involve some federal human trafficking and smuggling statutes. These laws prohibit unlawful “transporting,” “harboring,” and “encouraging” of an undocumented alien in the United States.⁵ A careful reading of these statutes is required to avoid potential legal issues since no one can predict how a zealous U.S. attorney or Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent will view all circumstances. Fortunately, however, various courts of appeal have provided some guidance. The following short discussion is an attempt to clarify some common misconceptions about these laws.⁶

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which has federal jurisdiction over Texas, has stated that illegal “transportation” of an undocumented alien is more than merely driving or moving a person from one point to another. “Willful transportation of illegal aliens is not, per se, a violation of the statute, for the law proscribes such conduct only when it is in fur-

therance of the alien’s unlawful presence.”⁷ A court will determine whether conduct is “in furtherance of such violation of the law” by looking at the defendant’s intent and whether there is a direct or substantial relationship between that transportation and its furtherance of the alien’s presence in the United States.⁸ In other words, transportation that is only incidentally connected to the alien’s unlawful presence is not a violation of the statute.⁹ “A

The local church must understand the legal environment in which it exists in regard to immigration and use this knowledge to overcome its fears and to act responsibly for the good of the Kingdom.

broadier interpretation, the court reasoned, *one that would prohibit the mere transportation of a known illegal alien*, ‘would render the qualification placed there by Congress a nullity’” (italics added).¹⁰

While the term “harboring” is not defined in the statute,¹¹ the Fifth Circuit has stated that it is “activity tending *substantially to facilitate* an alien’s remaining in the United States illegally” (italics added).¹² The Court has also stated that “[i]mplicit in the wording ‘harbor, shield, or conceal,’ is the connotation that something is being hidden from detection.”¹³ The term “encouraging” is also not defined in the statute. At least one federal court has stated that the term “relates to actions taken to convince the illegal alien to come to this country or to stay in this country.”¹⁴ Generally, “encouragement” cases have focused on the defendant’s *active participation with the illegal alien to violate immigration law intentionally*.¹⁵ Some examples are engaging in document fraud and facilitating unlawful entry into the United States.¹⁶

It is also important to note that federal law does *not* require you to verify the citizenship or immigration status of the members of your congregation or beneficiaries of your benevolence.¹⁷

Admittedly, the legal issues involved in the immigration ministry environment are complex and pervasive. But legal issues are present in *any* ministry a congregation operates. (Have you read your church’s children’s policy manual lately?) Do not let a misunderstanding of immigration law squelch your church’s desire to reach out to the strangers among it. Like the centurion, use your knowledge to clear up any misunderstandings or fear about the law. Seek competent legal advice and guidance and then use that knowledge as a framework for a potential immigration ministry.

THE ISAAC MODEL

Immigrants from China, India, Mexico, Russia, and from all over the world are coming to the United States. In Texas, for example, approximately fourteen percent of the residents are foreign born.¹⁸ Perhaps eleven to twelve million of the immigrants in the United States are undocumented.¹⁹ To put that number in perspective, the undocumented immigrant population in the United States is approximately the same as the population of the state of Ohio.²⁰ As our Lord said, “many will come” from all over the world to participate in the feast of hope (Matthew 8:11).

The centurion’s home was not on Jesus’ itinerary. He approached Jesus without notice, but Jesus agreed to make himself available. I do not know whether the centurion spoke to Jesus in Latin, Aramaic, Greek, or some other language. Perhaps the intermediaries mentioned in the Gospel of Luke spoke for him. It is clear that the centurion communicated the need to Jesus, and Jesus responded.

With Jesus’ response to the centurion in mind, ISAAC was developed to help churches engage the strangers in our midst. Aliens in our land have many needs but ISAAC has chosen to focus on a few basic ones: English and

citizenship education, family separation ministries, and immigration counseling and processing. These are ministries that can be established and operated within the context of the local church mission. ISAAC operates on the “tool box” theory. That is, we will supply you the tools necessary to start and sustain these types of ministries. All that is necessary are the hands to put faith into action.

English and Citizenship Education. Immigrants who wish to become United States citizens must complete an application with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) – over 1.7 million applications were received in 2007 – and pass the required English proficiency and citizenship exams. ISAAC helps churches establish English classes for immigrants by connecting them with like-minded ministries such as Literacy ConneXus. While the ideal situation would be for the administrator of a congregation’s adult education program to have a teaching background, it is not absolutely necessary. Indeed, many prepared lesson plans and teacher’s guides are written with the layperson in mind. ISAAC also helps churches network with adult literacy organizations to successfully prepare immigrants for the United States Citizenship Exam. This exam, which is usually administered in a USCIS office, is a test over American history and civic procedures. The USCIS posts typical exam questions and provides free study aids on its Web site.

Family Separation Ministry. The Department of Homeland Security apprehended over one million “deportable” aliens in 2006.²¹ When “deportable” Mexican immigrants are apprehended, U.S. officials take them to the nearest border crossing, but leave it up to the aliens to find the rest of the way home.²² I recall when the pastor of a local church called our offices asking if we knew anyone in a particular location in the interior of Mexico. A member of his congregation had been caught in an immigration raid, detained, and ordered to return to his country of origin that he had left *as a*

child over fifteen years ago. This young man had no family, friends, or social support network in Mexico. Quite literally, he would be on the street in a foreign land in a few days. After several phone calls and conversations, we were able to give this young man’s family the name of a Baptist church and pastor in his new destination in Mexico. Rather than this brother in Christ “falling through the cracks,” he now has a social support network and

Facing a dilemma about how to treat a “deportable alien”—a runaway slave named Onesimus—the Apostle Paul skillfully ministered to both Onesimus and Philemon under the laws of God and his country.

church home in his country of origin. Family separation ministries also must deal with a related problem: each year many immigrants leave the United States, voluntarily or involuntarily, and leave spouses, children, and extended family in this country.

The Apostle Paul once found himself with a dilemma about how to treat a “deportable alien” — a runaway slave named Onesimus. In his short but magnificent Letter to Philemon, the apostle urged the slave owner Philemon to treat the returning Onesimus “no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother” (1:16a). Paul knew the duty of a good Roman citizen was to uphold the law. He also knew that God’s love could transform Philemon’s view of Onesimus from that of an outlaw slave to a fellow brother in Christ. In this context, Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon with his promise to repay anything that Onesimus owes (1:19). Paul skillfully shows that he could minister to both Onesimus and Philemon under the laws of God and his country.

Similarly, ISAAC is creating a network of pastors, missionaries, and churches in other countries to receive these newly removed individuals *in their countries of origin*. ISAAC does not encourage, induce, or support these individuals returning to the United States illegally. Such an act would be a violation of federal law and not support the program’s goals. Whether the young man from the Texas church will be able to return legally to the United States is for the government to decide. The fact remains, however, that our Lord’s love does not stop at the border and nor should ours. If you know of missionaries, pastors, or churches that could receive these new arrivals in their home countries, wherever in the world that might be, please help ISAAC build this network so that they can be received as sons and daughters.

Immigration Counseling and Processing. In immigration proceedings, the federal government does *not* appoint lawyers for immigrants who cannot afford one. Despite the many volunteer hours given by immigration attorneys, the costs associated with employing one are often quite high. As a result, many immigrants who cannot afford a lawyer must represent themselves. These *pro se* (self representing) immigrants are uniquely disadvantaged since they do not understand the immigration rules and regulations. Immigrants with legitimate cases are often unable to resolve their problems because they incorrectly submitted or filled-out required government forms and documents. Other immigrants have sought the services of less expensive *notarios* or unlicensed “immigration consultants.” These nefarious businesses have scammed many immigrants out of large sums of money yet provided no immigration assistance.²³

Federal immigration officials recognized these systemic problems and created a special class of representatives for inter-agency procedures and tribunals.²⁴ These specially trained individuals who work for approved non-profit entities are allowed to complete required paperwork and documents for immigrants and, at times, represent them in special immigration courts.

The Code of Federal Regulations allows any “non-profit religious, charitable, social service, or similar organization established in the United States” to designate its “accredited” representatives to assist immigrants in official matters. The non-profit agency, however, must covenant that it will only charge “nominal fees” for its services and that it has “at its disposal adequate knowledge, information and experience.”²⁵

ISAAC assists local churches to complete the federal “recognition” process and also helps train their representatives in immigration law and procedure. Once the church’s ministry is “recognized” and its representatives are “accredited,” they will be legally allowed to assist immigrants with a wide range of issues such as obtaining U.S. citizenship, gaining work authorization, and extending religious visas.²⁶ In addition to providing immigration training, ISAAC also provides churches technical “recognition” application assistance and sophisticated software tools that will help a church’s immigration ministry meet federal approval. Our experience has been that churches or organizations with no prior immigration experience can complete the recognition and accreditation application process in approximately one year. We invite your church to explore this type of ministry option and fill this very desperate need in the immigrant community.

A CENTURION’S REFLECTION

As Jesus was preparing to follow the centurion home to heal the servant, the centurion reflected on his life and confessed publicly that he was not worthy for the Lord to set foot in his house (Matthew 8:8). Appealing to his own military logic, he told Jesus it was only necessary for him to speak the word (give the command) and the servant would be healed. This act of trust and acceptance of God’s grace by a stranger is essential to the story. The centurion’s self-examination is uniquely important not because it astonished our Lord, but because it prompted him to announce that the feast of heaven is available to all people (8:10-11).

Not every congregation—even a large one—has the volunteer base, resources, time, and facilities to accommodate an immigration ministry. Yet, if your church is ready to start this journey, ISAAC is here to help.

Before a church embarks on an immigration ministry, we ask that it take time for introspection. Not every congregation—even a large one—has the volunteer base, resources, time, and facilities to accommodate an immigration ministry. Yet, if your church is ready to start this journey, ISAAC is here to help. Together we can reach out to those immigrant families torn asunder;

provide comfort and a spiritual home to our removed brothers and sisters in Christ; teach newcomers the rich language, history, and hope of our nation; and guide them through a complex and confusing immigration system.

At some level we are all like the centurion. We are strangers to someone. Let us boldly leave our comfort zones, approach the alien, and demonstrate our remarkable faith publicly.

NOTES

1 The terms “undocumented” and “illegal” immigrants are technically incorrect, yet they are so ubiquitous that I will use them interchangeably when discussing an alien that is either “out of status” or has “no status” under current immigration law.

2 The account of this encounter in Luke 7:1-10 mentions intermediaries, “some Jewish elders,” between Jesus and the centurion. In either version, the principles are the same.

3 Scripture quotations marked “CEV” are taken from The Contemporary English Version, © 1995 by the American Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

4 Immigration law historically has been the province of federal law in order to ensure uniformity across the United States. Lately, however, states have begun to enact immigration legislation that could impact church activities. The constitutionality of many of these state laws have been challenged in federal court, but it is unclear when these issues will be resolved. As of the date of this writing, my home state of Texas has not passed such legislation. Because several other federal immigration laws or state laws could be impacted in addition to the ones mentioned here, when in doubt a church should seek the advice of licensed attorney.

5 8 U.S.C. §1324(a)(1)(A) (ii)-(iv). Some media personalities have misidentified these statutes as “aiding and abetting” laws. This is not accurate. It is a crime to commit the prohibited acts and also a crime to conspire to violate or to aid and abet “the commission” of any of the *proscribed acts*. *Id.* at (v)(i)-(ii).

6 ISAAC does not handle individual cases or represent churches with individual matters. The discussion of these laws is not intended to be legal advice pertaining to your specific situation and should not be construed as such. It is for educational and informational purposes only.

7 *United States v. Merkt*, 764 F.2d 266, 272 (5th Cir. 1985).

8 *Id.* at 271-272. See also 1982 *Ford Pick-Up*, 873 F.2d 947, 952 (6th Cir. 1989), reversing forfeiture of vehicle because defendant merely transported aliens for purpose of seeking employment, a showing which was insufficient to prove the “in furtherance of” element of the transportation charge; and *United States v. Moreno*, 561 F.2d 1321, 1322 (9th Cir. 1977), holding transportation of illegal aliens during the ordinary and required course of the defendant’s employment “was only incidentally connected to the furtherance of the [aliens’] violation of law, if at all.”

9 See *Moreno* above.

10 See *Merkt* above, citing *Moreno* at 1323.

11 In these instances courts rely on the “ordinary” definitions of words. See, for example, *United States v. Zheng*, 306 F.3d 1080, 1085 (11th Cir. 2002).

12 *United States v. Cantu*, 557 F.2d 1173, 1180 (5th Cir. 1977) (internal quotations omitted).

13 *United States v. Varkonyi*, 645 F.2d 453, 456 (5th Cir. 1981).

14 *United States v. Oloyede*, 982 F. 2d 133, 137 (4th Cir. 1993).

15 See *id.*, where document fraud was designed to help an alien remain in country illegally.

16 *Id.*; *United States v. Yoshida*, 303 F.3d 1145, 1150-51 (9th Cir. 2002).

17 There is a duty for an *employer* to inquire about citizenship and immigration status when hiring employees. See 8 CFR §274a *et seq.* In other contexts, however, there is no affirmative duty under the law that requires churches, pastors, or anyone else to inquire about an individual's immigration status for purposes of private church ministry. Many churches simply do not ask these types of questions. This provides *some* inoculation but is not a total defense to violations of the above-described statutes. A violation can still occur if the church or pastor acted in "reckless disregard of the fact" that an individual was an illegal alien and either transported him "in furtherance of such violation of the law," concealed or hid the alien, or performed actions deemed to be illegal encouragement. See discussion *supra*.

18 U.S. Census Bureau, *State and County QuickFacts*, available online at quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48000.html.

19 Jeffrey S. Passel, *The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S.*, Pew Hispanic Center Research Report (March 7, 2006), available online at pewhispanic.org/files/reports/61.pdf.

20 *State and County QuickFacts*, available online at quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/39000.html.

21 Table 34, *2006 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, September 2007), 91, available online at www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/statistics/publications/yearbook.shtm.

22 Steve Inskeep, reporter, "Mexico Helps Migrants Expelled from U.S. Get Home," *Morning Edition* (Washington, DC: National Public Radio, April 1, 2008).

23 Office of the Attorney General of Texas Press Release, "Attorney General Abbott Targets Fraudulent 'Notarios' and Others Who Scam Immigrants" (February 13, 2003), available online at www.oag.state.tx.us/oagnews/release.php?print=1&id=129.

24 Other federal statutes allow non-lawyers to represent individuals in specific federal agency tribunals such as the immigration courts. See 29 CFR §2200.22(a), representation before OSHA tribunals by non-lawyers; and 31 CFR §10.3(c), representation of taxpayers by non-lawyer "enrolled agents."

25 8 CFR §292.2 (a)(1)-(2).

26 In the state of Texas, federal recognition and accreditation are also required so that the church ministry will not violate the Texas Unauthorized Practice of Law Statute (Tex. Gov't. Code §81.101).



RICHARD M. MUÑOZ

is an attorney and Director of Immigration Service and Aid Center (ISAAC) in Dallas, Texas.

Seek the Peace of the City

BY DAVID WRIGHT

Seek the peace of the city;
make this land your home.
I have set you here to prosper;
make this land your home.

Seek the peace of your neighbor,
enemy or friend.
I can break the hardest heart,
enemy or friend.

Seek the peace of the exile,
stranger on the road.
I will walk along beside you,
stranger on the road.

Seek the peace of the Savior;
I will draw you near.
I will bring you home forever;
I will draw you near.

Seek the peace of the city;
find me in this place.
I have brought you here to know me;
find me in this place.

Seek the Peace of the City

DAVID WRIGHT

JAMES E. CLEMENS

1 Seek the peace of the cit - y; make this land your
 2 Seek the peace of your neighbor, en - e - my or
 3 Seek the peace of the ex - ile, strang-er on the
 4 Seek the peace of the Sav - ior; I will draw you
 5 Seek the peace of the cit - y; find me in this

home. I have set you here to pros-per;
 friend. I can break the hard - est heart,___
 road. I will walk a - long be - side you,
 near. I will bring you home for - ev - er;
 place. I have brought you here to know me;

make this land your home.
 en - e - my or friend.
 strang-er on the road.
 I will draw you near.
 find me in this place.

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SEEK THE PEACE
 7.5.8.5.

Worship Service

BY LEIGH JACKSON

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Meditation

First — all humans are sacred, whatever their culture, race, or religion, whatever their capabilities or incapacities, and whatever their weaknesses or strengths may be. Each of us has an instrument to bring to the vast orchestra of humanity, and each of us needs help to become all that we might be.

Jean Vanier[†]

Prelude



PRAISE AND ADORATION FOR THE GOD OF US ALL

Processional Hymn

“From All that Dwells below the Skies” (vv. 1-2)

From all that dwells below the skies,
let the Creator’s praise arise;
let the Redeemer’s name be sung,
through ev’ry land by ev’ry tongue.

Eternal are your mercies, Lord;
eternal truth attends your word;
your praise shall sound from shore to shore,
till suns shall rise and set no more.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748), alt.

Tune: DUKE STREET

Invocation

O God of creation,
your redeeming work in this world is not dictated
by borders, by lines on a map.
We praise you for the unreserved nature of your mercy
and the expansive reach of your love.
You have created all the people of the earth in your image
and care for each one.
Remind us this day of your call for us to be a blessing
to all families of the earth,
and illuminate the fears that cause us to deny your blessing
to those who live as strangers among us. Amen.

Call to Worship

We have heard the story of the children of Israel in the land of Egypt—
how they cried out to you for deliverance, O God;
how you rescued them from Pharaoh
through your mighty acts of power;
how they learned to be your people in the wilderness;
how you called them to remember their slavery in Egypt.

We worship you, O God of Deliverance.

We have heard the story of the family of Jesus—
how they were forced to flee and seek refuge in Egypt.
When threatened by the violence of Herod,
even our Savior knew the uncertainty of life
as an immigrant and stranger.

We worship You, O God of the Displaced.

We live in a world of turmoil filled with injustices
that threaten the lives of your children in every nation.
We trust that your Kingdom transcends earthly kingdoms, O God,
so give us courage to hear the cries for freedom all around us.
Use us as your vessels of justice and mercy
in a world longing for liberation.

We worship You, O God of Justice.

You are present in every corner of this world, O God,
living within us and among us.
May your Spirit breathe fresh your promise of redemption and deliverance
into the hearts of those without peaceful soil
and into the hearts of those who would extend mercy.

We worship You, O God of Hope.

Sung Response

“Gloria Patri”

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen. Amen.

Anonymous (4th Century)

Tune: GLORIA PATRI (Greatorex)



WITNESS OF GOD’S LOVE FOR THE WORLD

Greeting

Witness of Scripture: Deuteronomy 24:14-15, 17-22

You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt....

You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow’s garment in pledge. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there: therefore I command you to do this.

When you reap your harvest in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.

When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

“Seek the Peace of the City”

Seek the peace of the city;
make this land your home.
I have set you here to prosper;
make this land your home.

Seek the peace of your neighbor,
enemy or friend.
I can break the hardest heart,
enemy or friend.

Seek the peace of the exile,
stranger on the road.
I will walk along beside you,
stranger on the road.

Seek the peace of the Savior;
I will draw you near.
I will bring you home forever;
I will draw you near.

Seek the peace of the city;
find me in this place.
I have brought you here to know me;
find me in this place.

David Wright (2004), © 2004 David Wright

Tune: SEEK THE PEACE

James E. Clemens (2004), © 2004 James E. Clemens
(pp. 44-45 of this volume)



CONFESSING OUR SINS

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, we confess we have failed to see the stranger among us.
We have closed our eyes to the injustices that force people to leave
their homelands and seek shelter in unfamiliar places.

We claim that you are our refuge and security, yet we act as though national borders provide us with our only opportunity for peace. Forgive us for ignoring your call to peacemaking and for only looking after our own interests.

Help us to recall our personal stories as sojourners in a foreign land so that we may fully embody your call to provide for the orphan, widow, and stranger.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Silent Prayer

The Assurance of Pardon: Psalm 103:8-12

Hear now the assurance of God's pardon from the Psalms:

The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

He will not always accuse,
nor will he keep his anger forever.

He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.

For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far he removes our transgressions from us.

Sung Response

"There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"

There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in his justice, which is more than liberty.

There is welcome for the sinner, and more graces for the good;
there is mercy with the Savior; there is healing in his blood.

But we make his love too narrow by false limits of our own;
and we magnify his strictness with a zeal he will not own.

For the love of God is broader than the measure of one's mind;
and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.

If our love were but more simple, we could take him at his word;
and our lives would be more loving in the likeness of our Lord.

Frederick W. Faber (1854), alt.

Tune: WELLESLEY



GIVING OUT OF OUR JOY

Offering of the People

Hymn of Offering

“Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”

Come, thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above;
praise the mount! I’m fixed upon on it, mount of thy redeeming love.

Here I raise mine Ebenezer; hither by thy help I’m come;
and I hope, by thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger, wand’ring from the fold of God;
he, to rescue me from danger, interposed his precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor daily I’m constrained to be!
Let thy grace, Lord, like a fetter, bind my wand’ring heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;
here’s my heart, Lord, take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above.

Robert Robinson (1758)

Tune: NETTLETON



GOD’S CALL TO A NEW LIFE

Gospel Reading: Luke 10:25-37

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was

moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon



RESPONSE OF FAITH

Invitation of Response and Commitment

Hymn of Response

"Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior"

Pass me not, O gentle Savior,
hear my humble cry;
while on others thou art calling,
do not pass me by.

*Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry;
while on others thou art calling, do not pass me by.*

Let me at thy throne of mercy
find a sweet relief,
kneeling there in deep contrition;
help my unbelief.

Refrain

Trusting only in thy merit,
would I seek thy face;
heal my wounded, broken spirit,
save me by thy grace.

Refrain

Thou the spring of all my comfort,
more than life to me,
whom have I on earth beside thee?
Whom in heaven but thee?

Refrain

Fanny J. Crosby (1820-1915)

Tune: PASS ME NOT

Spoken Benediction

Go now and live in the wideness of God's mercy,
bearing witness to the truth we have heard this day:
all people of the world are sacred and loved by God.
Go in peace. Amen.

Sung Benediction

"He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"

He's got the whole world in his hands. (x3)

He's got the whole world in his hands.

He's got the wind and the rain in his hands. (x3)

He's got the whole world in his hands.

He's got the little tiny baby in his hands. (x3)

He's got the whole world in his hands.

He's got everybody here in his hands. (x3)

He's got the whole world in his hands.

He's got the whole world in his hands. (x3)

He's got the whole world in his hands.

Traditional Spiritual, alt.

Tune: WHOLE WORLD

Postlude

NOTE

† Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998), 14.



LEIGH JACKSON

is Minister of Granada Hills Retreat Center, a ministry of The First Baptist Church of Austin, in Austin, Texas.



Saints Cyril and Methodius Church, one of the “painted churches of Texas,” is a remarkable contribution by immigrants to church architecture in America.

SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS (1920-1921). Apse and altar. Shiner, Texas. Photo: © Jim Whitcomb, Studio Houston, 2008. Used by permission.

Immigrant Churches

BY HEIDI J. HORNICK

One of the most abiding contributions by Christian immigrants to the vitality of the church in North America over the centuries has been the varied forms of church architecture they bring from their countries of origin. The “painted churches of Texas” are a remarkable example.¹ Their sanctuaries adorned with a surprising profusion of color, these houses of worship are part of the valued and continuing legacy of the Czech and German immigrants—mainly Catholic, but also Brethren and Lutheran—who settled frontier towns like Ammansville and Dubina, High Hill and Praha, Schulenberg and Shiner, West and Fredericksburg, stretching from the Gulf Coast inland to the Hill Country of central Texas.

Today more than forty-five million, or one in six, Americans claim German or Czech ancestry. Over 2.3 million Texans descend from German or Czech immigrants, in this state where one of the flagship universities offers Czech language and culture instruction. Their forebears ranged from professors to farmers, but most were farmers who immigrated to Texas beginning in the 1850s to find abundant, fertile land. Their cash products were cotton, corn, cattle, and feed. They left an “old country” of economic injustice, overpopulation, and food and housing shortages for the promise of freedom and economic prosperity in America. Some even came alone, without family members.²

Recently I visited one of the most beautiful painted churches, Saints Cyril and Methodius Church in Shiner, Texas.³ A color photograph of the sanctuary apse (an extension of the building for the placement of the altar)—captured by Houston photographer Jim Whitcomb—is on the cover of this issue.⁴ Shiner was founded by German and Czech immigrants in November 1887 when the settlers of Half Moon, a small village three and a half miles northwest of the railroad tracks, decided to move their families closer to where the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway (SA&AP) trains coming south from Waco stopped. Saints Cyril and Methodius were chosen as the patron saints of the church because these brothers were honored missionaries to the Slavic peoples during the ninth century. Cyril was a monk and probably a priest. Methodius was governor of a Slav colony for a time before he became a monk, abbot, and later bishop. The brothers were accused of heresy, largely because they employed the vernacular language



SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS (1920-1921). Exterior view. Shiner, Texas. Photo: © Jim Whitcomb, Studio Houston, 2008. Used by permission.

in the liturgy. They strove to enrich the spiritual and liturgical lives of the people of Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Bohemia, Southern Poland, and Yugoslavia) in a way that was not officially sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church until Vatican II in the 1960s.

The first church building in Shiner was built on two acres of land just east of the railroad and construction began January 2, 1891, for a structure 85 feet x 40 feet with a steeple 112 feet high. It was dedicated on May 7, 1891, under the name of Saints Cyril and Methodius. In 1920, due to the rapid growth of the parish, Father Francis Xavier Wolf hired the architect E. Wahrenbeger and contracted a San Antonio firm to build the current structure that was blessed by Bishop Drossaerts on July 7, 1921 (see above). Its Romanesque Revival style, which was adopted widely for churches and public buildings in America during the late nineteenth century, is meant to echo the imposing structures of late Medieval Europe.

This photograph is available
in the print version of
Christian Reflection.

SAN APOLLINARE (533-549). Exterior view. Classe, Italy. Photo: © Scala / Art Resource, NY. Used by permission.

It is illuminating to compare Saints Cyril and Methodius to the Church of San Apollinare (533-549) in Classe, Italy (see above). This important sixth-century church also bears an architectural imprint of immigrants, for it combines the Early Christian style of architecture and painting in Italy with the Eastern style brought there by Emperor Justinian (ruling dates 527-565). Standing in Classe, a small town established just four miles south of Ravenna as that city's seaport on the Adriatic, San Apollinare is modeled on another church in Ravenna, San Vitale (526-547), which contains famous mosaics of Emperor Justinian and Empress Theodora. We can trace elements of the Byzantine style from San Vitale to San Apollinare and on through the ninth century when it becomes the Romanesque style that would be "revived" in the church of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Shiner, Texas, a thousand years later.

Bishop Maximillian consecrated the Church of San Apollinare in 549 in memory of Saint Apollinaris, the first bishop of Ravenna. As is typical in Early Christian architecture, there is no transept in San Apollinare. The rounded bell tower was added later in the Medieval period. The exterior is simple brick with no ornament. The treasure of such a church was on the interior rather than the exterior. The adornments and color are reflected in the mosaics above the altar in the apse. This external shell was deliberately a change in style from the Classical temple that was heavily ornamented and sculpted on the exterior.

This photograph is
available in the print
version of
Christian Reflection.

SAN APOLLINARE (533-549). Nave view towards apse. Classe, Italy. Photo: © Scala / Art Resource, NY. Used by permission.

San Apollinare in Classe is a longitudinal basilica form with a central nave and single side aisles (see above). The two-story elevation provides a clerestory for natural light above the side arcades, where the successive arches are supported by circular columns with foliated capitals. The ceiling, originally made of wood, is now encased in brick. The walls and vaults seem almost weightless, which further draws the eye to the wall mosaics whose rich, glistening colors evoke the richness and beauty of the Kingdom of God.

Earlier Christians had painted murals on the walls of catacombs, but on a much smaller scale than required to decorate large church structures after the rapid growth of Christianity in the fourth through sixth centuries. In San Apollinare the new art form of wall mosaic replaced the older and less expensive medium of mural painting. Mosaics are made of tesserae, small pieces of colored stone, tile, or glass set into plaster. It is believed that the artists who decorated these church walls with beautiful mosaics were imported from throughout the Empire.

The first mosaic workers had been the Sumerians in 3000 B.C., who used small pebbles and tiles. Later the Greeks and Romans created a way to copy paintings using marble tesserae. Their mosaics lacked brilliance, because while their color palette was broad, it was limited to those colors found in nature. Mostly these classical mosaics were placed on floors, although the

This photograph is
available in the print
version of
Christian Reflection.

SAN APOLLINARE (533-549). Apse mosaic above altar. Classe, Italy. Photo: © Cameraphoto Arte, Venice / Art Resource, NY. Used by permission.

Romans did produce some rare wall mosaics for very special purposes. The early Christians were the first to make tesserae of colored glass, which created a world of color hues (including gold) and intensities that had never been seen before. Because glass tesserae could be made shiny and in irregular shapes, they reflected light in glimmering, colorful tones that furthered the mystery of the interior of the sanctuary. The figures devised from these irregularly shaped pieces of painted and cut glass were held together by a black silhouette that created the illusion of a solid object, making it into a recognizable form when viewed by the congregation below.

At San Apollinare, the apse has a polygonal exterior (probably of Eastern origin), but a semicircular interior. The mosaic that fills this space is in the mature Byzantine style (see above). Like the earliest Christian imagery, it is a pictorial cycle that is interdependent with the architecture. Most of its iconography developed during the previous, fifth century. The mosaic is composed of a large blue medallion with a jeweled cross, a symbol of the transfigured Jesus. The hand of God the Father is visible at the top of the apse. Moses and Elijah, the prophets present at the Transfiguration of Jesus, sit in the clouds. Three sheep represent the three disciples who accompanied Christ to the foot of the Mount of the Transfiguration. Apollinaris, the patron saint of the church, stands in the lower center of the mosaic surrounded by twelve sheep



*SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS (1920-1921). Apse mosaic above altar. Shiner, Texas.
Photo: © Jim Whitcomb, Studio Houston, 2008. Used by permission.*

representing the congregation and the Apostles. Above the triumphal arch, the Apostles are symbolized again as twelve sheep and Christ appears in a medallion surrounded by symbols of the four Evangelists—the bird symbolizes John; the angel, Matthew; the lion, Mark; and the ox, Luke. The background of rich greens, blues, and gold accentuates the white used for the main figures of the patron saint, the prophets, and the sheep.

The mural painting above the altar of Saints Cyril and Methodius depicts Christ praying in the Garden of Gethsemane (see above).⁵ The presence of the ministering angel signifies that the painting has its biblical source in the Gospel of Luke.⁶ Christ and the angel are in the center of the lower portion of the mural. Christ stands on rocks that cascade below him and to the right. On the left side of the painting, in a greener, oasis-like area of the garden, the apostles Peter, James, and John are sleeping. To the right in the background is the walled city of Jerusalem. Like the mosaic painter of the sixth century whose name does not come down to us, the name of the mural painter is unknown at this time.⁷ The deep ultramarine blue for the heavens behind the angel compliments the gray of the rocks on which Christ kneels. He wears a purple mantle over his white gown, and the angel has white robes. Like the San Apollinare painter, this artist employs



SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS (1920-1921). Nave view towards apse. 1920-1921. Shiner, Texas. Photo: © Jim Whitcomb, Studio Houston, 2008. Used by permission.

a simple, rich palette as the background to the central figures clearly visible by their white draperies. Five semicircular windows separate the apse mural and the dome of heaven painted as a blue sky with clouds. Above the central apse scene are three angels. Above the central angel are four small putti, or baby angels. The original inscription on the arch in front of the apse dome, "Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth" (Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts), was replaced in the 1954 renovation with the current words, "Ecce Panis Angelorum" (Behold the Bread of Angels).

The beauty of this church, like San Apollinare, is the interior decoration. The exterior of Saints Cyril and Methodius is red brick, simple and unadorned. The church is also a longitudinal basilica with a nave and single side aisles, with a nave arcade supported by four columns (see above). As a Romanesque revival church, it contains the characteristic barrel vaults over the nave and five quadripartite, ribbed groin vaults over the side aisles. The religious iconography and imagery are not limited to the apse mural painting. Twelve stained glass windows, documented as being commissioned by artists in "Munich, Bavaria," for the 1920s structure, feature scenes from the life of Christ. On the left side of the altar, the Annunciation is depicted in the first window, followed by Adoration of the Shepherds, Presentation in

the Temple, Jesus in the Temple with the Elders, Wedding at Cana, and the Beatitudes. Beginning at the right of the altar are the Supper at Emmaus, Resurrection, Christ Giving the Keys to Saint Peter, Jesus in the House of Mary and Martha, Boy Possessed by Demons, and Jesus and the Woman with a Hemorrhage. On each window, key lines from the scriptural narrative are written in Czech.

The Catholic Church of Saints Cyril and Methodius was listed in the National Register of the Texas Historical Commission on June 6, 1983. One can only imagine the pride those original settlers would feel at this recognition of the significance of their immigrant settlement, their faith community, and the glorious church structure they left behind. Like the Christians who built San Apollinare, they managed to create a lasting legacy in architecture and painting—because they were imaginative and bold in appropriating their ethnic heritage while faithfully interpreting the larger Christian tradition.

NOTES

1 For an overview of these church buildings, see the Web site of the PBS documentary “The Painted Churches of Texas” (2001) at www.klru.org/paintedchurches.

2 The University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio offers brief introductions to the heritage of German-Texans (www.texancultures.utsa.edu/publications/texansoneandall/german.htm) and Czech-Texans (www.texancultures.utsa.edu/publications/texansoneandall/czech.htm). The population data is from the 2000 U.S. Census.

3 I greatly appreciate the hospitality shown to me when I visited the church of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Shiner, Texas, on May 28, 2008. In particular, I would like to thank the pastor, Reverend Robert E. (Bob) Knippenberg, and Mr. Joe Machacek, Assistant Business Manager, for assisting me during the visit. All historical information regarding the Church stated in this article was found in the church files and documents that I was allowed to study. For more about this active parish, see www.shinercatholicchurch.org.

4 Jim Whitcomb, a commercial and architectural photographer, founded Studio Houston Digital Photography in 1999. His portfolio of images of the painted churches (www.StudioHouston.com) was the inspiration for this article.

5 The original mural contained only the figures of Christ and the angel in the Garden of Gethsemane, before the mural was enlarged to cover the entire dome area during a sanctuary renovation in 1954.

6 Luke 22:43-44 records this detail: “Then an angel from heaven appeared to [Jesus] and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.”

7 Mary Barta, Parish Business Manager at Saints Cyril and Methodius, recalls that the painter’s name was Edmond Faťo, but I could not find any documentation on the artist.



HEIDI J. HORNİK

is Professor of Art History at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

I Was a Stranger: Jesus and the Undocumented Immigrant

BY ALBERT L. REYES

From a Kingdom perspective, what does it mean that God has allowed us to have over fourteen million undocumented immigrants, primarily from Latin American countries, inside our borders? What kind of Kingdom resource might they become as their lives are redeemed?

On September 16, 1898, my paternal grandfather Jose Maria Reyes was born in Encinal, Texas. His parents Pedro and Micaela Reyes, born in Mexico in 1860 and 1862 respectively, had immigrated to Texas without documentation. On my mother's side of the family, Carlos Garcia immigrated to Texas to work on the railroad system in 1925 with documentation and authorization from the U.S. Government. The next year his wife Jovita Garcia and her four children, Concepcion, Maria, Carlos, and Nicolas, came to Texas without documentation and authorization to be in the United States. After she was reunited with her husband, my mother Gloria and seven other siblings were born in South Texas as U.S. citizens. On the paternal side of my family I am a third generation native Tejano born of Mexican descent. On the maternal side of my family I am a second generation native Tejano born of Mexican descent.

In the early 1930s a Baptist itinerant church planter named Reverend Edward P. Gonzalez came across my grandfather and grandmother, Jose Maria Reyes and Francisca Rodriguez Reyes, and their nine children as they made their living as migrant workers in West Texas, particularly on farms and ranches near Snyder, Texas, during cotton season. Rev. Gonzalez preached the gospel to my grandfather's family. My grandmother was the

first to respond to faith in Christ and be baptized. She was followed in baptism by her husband and each of her children over a period of several years. The family later settled in Corpus Christi, Texas, and joined Primera Iglesia Bautista Mexicana under the leadership of Reverend Ignacio Gonzalez.

My father married Gloria Garcia who was raised in the Roman Catholic tradition. Several years after their marriage my mother professed faith in Jesus Christ as her personal Savior under the ministry of Ignacio Gonzalez at Primera Iglesia Bautista Mexicana of Corpus Christi. After I was born in 1958, my parents and I moved to California where my mother and older brother Agustin (Gus) were baptized together into the fellowship of Mision Bautista de San Bernardino sponsored by Emmanuel Baptist Church of San Bernardino, California. A few years later our family joined Memorial Baptist Church of Rialto, California. By the time I was nine years old I prayed to receive Christ as my personal Savior and was baptized by Reverend Bill Thornton at Memorial Baptist Church. We moved back to Texas in 1970 and we joined my father's home church, Primera Iglesia Bautista Mexicana of Corpus Christi, where I answered a call to vocational ministry in 1975 under the leadership of Reverend Rudy Sanchez.

My purpose in reviewing my family's history, especially our faith history, is this: there was a time when we were strangers—not only to the United States, but also to the family of faith. We were strangers and Edward P. Gonzalez announced the good news to us. Texas Baptists made room for us in the family.¹

I am passionate about the subject of immigration for several reasons. Immigration to the United States is part of my family history and heritage. I am also interested in the ethical and biblical perspectives on this issue for Christians. Finally, I believe there are missiological issues connected to immigration that speak to our role in redemptive history.



Jesus spoke to the experience of the stranger in his parable of the Judgment of the Nations in Matthew 25:31-46. When the Son of Man judges the nations, separating “people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats,” the criteria for whether a person's identity in Christ can be authenticated is whether or not that person has demonstrated the agenda of Jesus with regard to the poor, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner.

These criteria are strikingly similar to the five-point agenda in Jesus' inaugural speech in Luke 4:16-30. Jesus said he came to proclaim good news to the poor, freedom for prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and release for the oppressed, and to announce the year of the Lord's favor. I like to call this the Jesus Agenda, Jesus' plan for his thousand-day ministry.²

Jesus emphasizes this agenda again when he answers a lawyer who asks, “Who is my neighbor whom I should love as myself?” by telling him the par-

able of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). The Samaritan came across a wounded stranger in the road, took responsibility for him, and met his needs. So what happens when we come across the stranger in our midst today?

The core issue at the center of the immigration reform debate is justice. Where is our American sense of decency, the value of basic human rights, our love for children and families, and fairness toward under-privileged newcomers? Texas Baptists have been asking this question for several years. Messengers to the 2003 annual meeting of the Hispanic Convention of Texas with over 1200 congregations and messengers to the 2003 annual meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Texas with over 5,400 congregations and over 2.5 million members approved resolutions advocating compassionate ministry to the "alien" and the "stranger" in our midst, namely the undocumented and documented immigrant. The Hispanic Immigration Task Force of the Baptist General Convention, formed in 2003, raised the issues of the victimization and exploitation of undocumented immigrants, meeting all immigrants' basic human needs, and advocacy regarding pathways for citizenship for undocumented immigrants.³

Our challenge is that sometimes we confuse our citizenship in the United States of America with our citizenship in the Kingdom of God. Certainly we must protect our borders and have a functional system of immigration into our country. But we must solve the problem of what to do with nearly fourteen million undocumented immigrants in the United States today. We will not be able to avoid comprehensive immigration law reform to provide justice and liberty for all, even the undocumented. We will need to provide a reasonable means for undocumented immigrants to satisfy requirements for legal residency and even citizenship. Many folks will not meet these qualifications and will need to return home or find a way to satisfy immigration requirements.

We must also consider the issue of immigration from a Kingdom perspective. Let me put it another way: What does it mean for redemptive history that the Lord of history has allowed

us to have over fourteen million undocumented immigrants, primarily from Latin American countries, inside our borders?

Think with me from a Kingdom perspective for a moment. Let me remind you of a picture and a vision that we will all see. When John the Revelator glimpsed eternity he saw "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the

In addition to the ethical and biblical perspectives on the issue of undocumented immigration, for Christians there is a missiological perspective that speaks to our role in redemptive history.

throne.... They cried out in a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb’” (Revelation 7:9-10). Will it matter on that day if people had legal documents authorizing them to be in our country? I guess it depends on who you ask. If you ask the Master who separates goats from sheep, I think he will say what mattered, in light of eternity, is whether or not we gave food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, ministry to the prisoner, and caring to the sick. He will say, if you did it to the least of these, you did it unto me.

If we were to think missiologically for a moment, we would have to wonder why God has allowed fourteen million undocumented immigrants to come to our country to live, work, eat, and have a good life. We would have to ask ourselves what kind of Kingdom resource undocumented immigrants might become as their lives are redeemed for the Kingdom. We would have to deal with the Latino-Arab connection for missions and consider that the missionary force best poised to share the love of Christ with our Arab friends is believers from the Latino community. Latinos and Arabs share a common language, history, culture, and similar physical features that translate into an ease of sharing the gospel message. There are 7,000 words in Spanish that have Arabic roots, and 21,000 words in Spanish that are pronounced similarly.



Buckner International, the ministry where I serve, has sought to do the Jesus Agenda since 1879 among children at risk, orphans, and the elderly. It is estimated that 3.1 million children who are U.S. citizens might be abandoned in this country if their undocumented immigrant parents were deported today.⁴ Undocumented immigrants who want to straighten out their legal status with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) fear they will be deported or taken advantage of when attempting to work through proper documentation. This is why the Baptist General Convention of Texas and Buckner International created the Immigration Service and Aid Center (ISAAC) Program, under the leadership of Richard Muñoz. ISAAC exists to provide assistance to congregations that want to become accredited with INS to provide counsel and legitimate support to all immigrants needing help.

I cannot think of a better place to help the “stranger” than the local church. In this way, the local church continues to remain at the cutting edge of redemptive reality.

NOTES

¹ For additional information on my family history and the history of the Hispanic Baptists in Texas, see Albert L. Reyes, “Unification to Integration: A Brief History of the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas,” *Baptist History and Heritage: The Baptist Community*, XL:1 (Brentwood, TN: Baptist History and Heritage Society, Winter 2005).

2 For more information on the Jesus Agenda see Albert L. Reyes, "Pursuing a Jesus Agenda: Remarks from the President of the Baptist General Convention of Texas to the Executive Board of the BGCT" (March 1, 2005), available online at www.bucknerchildren.org/Reyes%20Blog/execboard-mar05.pdf.

3 Much of this paragraph is from Albert L. Reyes, "Does Jesus Still Have a Mission to the Poor, the Prisoner, the Blind, and the Oppressed? Toward a Biblically Informed Debate on U.S. Immigration Reform" (San Antonio, TX: Baptist University of the Americas, April 5, 2006), available online at www.bua.edu/docs/Does%20Jesus%20Still%20Have%20a%20Mission%20to%20the%20Poor_white%20paper.pdf.

4 Neil Conan, interviewing journalist N. C. Aizenman on "The Politics of Enforcing Immigration Law," *Talk of the Nation* (Washington, DC: National Public Radio, August 22, 2007), available online at www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=13867625.



ALBERT L. REYES

is President of Buckner Children and Family Services in Dallas, Texas.

Beyond Risk and Uncertainty

BY DAN ROYER

Moving to Selkirk, Ontario, my wife and I worked to fit our ministry style into a Canadian cultural context. Members of our congregation suggested it was a big step for us to go to a new country. I kept a mental list of things that made the risk-taking worthwhile.

Central Junior High School's four-storied structure towered over me. The building's ancient brick exterior was weather worn and crumbling. As I passed through the olive green metal doors, they seemed to slam behind me with foreboding. This experience was going to be a whole new world compared to my previous years at Park Place Elementary School. Not only were there four floors in each building but also two separate buildings on the campus. My class schedule called for me to begin the afternoon on the third floor of the Central Building, and then proceed to my next class in the basement and down in a narrow corridor that evoked images of a hidden passageway. Normally, the allotted time for changing classes was adequate, but on this day the ink cartridge in my Scripto fountain pen leaked and covered my hands with black ink. A delayed stop to scrub with soap and water did not help the problem. I found myself entering the corridor leading to my science classroom just as the bell rang. Without a word, the door to the classroom abruptly was closed, leaving a few of us stranded outside the class. When the door opened, the teacher invited us in and wrote our names on the blackboard as we entered the room. After making my way to my desk, I shrank into my seat wishing I could blend into the gray metal desk and regain some sense of anonymity. I have often reflected on the way I struggled to adjust to life at Central Junior High School and how much change took place in that one short year.

It has been a long time since I was a nervous twelve-year-old trying to fit into a whole new world at school. However, our decision to immigrate to Canada to accept a ministry at Selkirk Christian Chapel had some of the same elements of risk and uncertainty.



My wife and I arrived in Selkirk, Ontario, in September and started our work in this village of five hundred nestled on the north shore of Lake Erie in the Canadian “Banana Belt.” We began to learn about the community and worked to fit our ministry style into a Canadian cultural context. Prior to this experience, my awareness of Canadian culture was limited to my teenage experience with a short-wave radio on which I occasionally listened to broadcasts from the CBC, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. I had also ridden across southern Ontario between Port Huron, Michigan, and Buffalo, New York, with a stop in Niagara Falls during a memorable family vacation. Other than these brief experiences, my contact with Canadian culture was limited to episodes of *The Red Green Show*.

We understood that we had a lot to learn—a new vocabulary to absorb and new customs to become acquainted with. Some things were minor, like the custom of taking off your shoes when entering a home. Others were a bit more enigmatic, like the time I was talking to one of our church members who said that he had to go to “the mustard.” My puzzled look caused another member of the group to turn in my direction and translate, “that means he is going to the doctor.” We learned that “eh(?)” is not necessarily a question, a “whack” is a large group of the same thing, and that “hydro” is electrical power, not something to do with water. It was clear to those we met that my wife and I possessed traits that marked us as citizens of a different country.



Some of the people in our congregation suggested it must have been a big step for us to go to Canada. I began keeping a mental list of the things that made such risk-taking worthwhile.

Rusty is a man in his early seventies who has worked hard his whole life. He worked in a factory that made gypsum board, and he operated a family farm. His wife, Dorothy, is a devout homemaker. One day Dorothy privately requested prayer for Rusty, who was going through a difficult time following illness. I offered to make a visit and soon we began to stop in and visit the couple regularly. After a number of visits and conversations, Rusty confessed his faith in Christ and soon we arranged for his baptism service.

Geoffrey is a blond-haired dynamo. His family lived next to the church building and on any given day when the weather was warm enough, we would find Geoffrey in the parking lot riding his bicycle. His sister Tasha

frequently accompanied him. When they watched as I changed the church sign, I often let them help me place the new letters for the weekly message. Geoffrey and Tasha were regulars at our midweek Kidzone events. We got to know their parents, Mike and Dawn, and on occasion took an opportunity to have coffee with them.

Ira and Connie were very welcoming on our arrival in Selkirk. Connie went to the hospital for surgery and then discovered that she would have

In the end I realized that risk and uncertainty were not the whole story about our decision and move to another country; divine providence was at work long before we arrived on the scene.

to remain in the hospital to receive treatments for the cancer that had been discovered. We made regular trips to the hospital to visit and pray, and when I received a call that she would not be able to last much longer, I went to her room to read scripture and pray with her. I opened my Bible and read the words of Christ from John: "Very

truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life" (5:24). Connie grasped my hand tightly and with all the strength she possessed (she was barely able to talk) whispered the words, "I believe." I understood that this child of God was prepared to go home. Later that evening Connie left this life and entered into that same eternal life.

We were introduced to John and Tammy through a visitor who came to our church. When we met them, their four-year-old son was being treated for leukemia. Part of the treatment prescribed was a steroid, which produced erratic and sometimes very difficult behavior. As Jacob went through his treatments designed to kill off the deadly cancer cells, each week's treatment brought this young blended family new sources of stress. One hot summer day Jacob collapsed and was unresponsive, and because of his condition he was rushed to McMaster Hospital in Hamilton where he received leukemia treatments. We made the hour-long trip to the hospital to wait in the emergency room with the family as doctors conducted tests and examined their son. After a period of time, we learned Jacob's condition made him more susceptible to heat exhaustion, which caused his collapse. He soon made a full recovery.

Michael and Shannon attended our annual church picnic that was held in September. As I made the rounds and talked to those who were more familiar, I was introduced to this new couple by one of our leaders, Frasier. As we visited and talked, we were introduced to their children, Julia and Carter. I discovered common interests with Michael who also played guitar

and had similar musical tastes to my own. As we talked together I learned that Michael had a real heart for the Scriptures. As our friendship developed we began to see Michael and Shannon grow in their faith and take on significant roles in the congregation. Michael began to teach Middler boys in Sunday school and Shannon took on the task of preparing the bulletin.



In the end I realized that risk and uncertainty were not the whole story about our decision and move to another country; divine providence was at work long before we arrived on the scene. In the 1980s the church had a very good pastor who paved the way for our ministry because he also was an American. His name was Terry, and his faithful ministry made it possible for us to enter a church that already understood American traits and accepted our quirks. I will never be able to thank him enough for his work in Selkirk. Unfortunately, I will not have that opportunity in this life, because Terry has gone on to be with the Lord, but I will always be grateful for him.

I have thought about those whom we came to love, those we served and those we mourned. Their faces are etched in my mind, but space limits the stories I can share. I am awestruck at the way it all fits together. And then I remember that of all people, I should realize when we walk in the path that God lays out before us, risk and uncertainty lose their hold over us.



DAN ROYER

is Pastor of Bainbridge Christian Church in Bainbridge, Indiana.

❖ Other Voices ❖

The émigré Holy Family of Nazareth, fleeing into Egypt, is the archetype of every refugee family. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, living in exile in Egypt to escape the fury of an evil king, are, for all times and all places, the models and protectors of every migrant, alien and refugee of whatever kind who, whether compelled by fear of persecution or by want, is forced to leave his native land, his beloved parents and relatives, his close friends, and to seek a foreign soil.

POPE PIUS XII (1876-1958), *EXSUL FAMILIA* (1952)

In the Old Testament several different terms refer to strangers or foreigners. The Hebrew words *zar* and *nokri*, translated as “stranger” and “foreign,” refer to persons who are not a part of Israel.... *Ger*, on the other hand, is translated “sojourner,” “stranger,” or “alien,” and points to someone who comes from outside the community but who settles within the community....

The *ger* is very much like what we today call “resident alien.” He or she may be a refugee or an immigrant, settling into the community but still as an outsider who brings a different communal identity. Within the covenant community, however, this difference does not justify a double standard of justice.

DANA W. WILBANKS, *RE-CREATING AMERICA: THE ETHICS OF U.S. IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE POLICY IN A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE* (1996)

When people in need are in a strange country, where they do not understand the language and much less know its culture and legislation, they are in a very vulnerable position.... They are therefore often victims of violence, maybe not always physical, but very often psychological and moral, as in cases of marginalization and exclusion, discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance. They are often made “scapegoats” for local unemployment or criminal activities.

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *PEOPLE ON THE MOVE* (2005)

For Christians, the claims and interests of nations should always be evaluated by reference to the God whose love and justice is the center of astonishingly inclusive relatedness.

The second part of a Christian’s perspective is that human particularities are valued.... We are culture-creating and culture-bearing peoples. We

develop a sense of who we are by being related to particular communities, whose identity we come to share....

In biblical traditions there is recognition of both the unity of the human family in God and the diversity of the peoples of the earth. Both are contained in Paul's sermon in Athens, a text that historically has often been cited in support of immigration: "From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live" (Acts 17:26). God is the creator of all human beings through their common ancestor Adam. Indeed, all of us are relatives. Yet nations with their boundaries also reflect God's ordering activity.

DANA W. WILBANKS, *RE-CREATING AMERICA* (1996)

Establishing true partnerships with aliens means recognizing and respecting their identity and their capacity. It means helping them to help themselves whenever possible, often by assisting them with the formation of organizations of their own where they can better identify their priorities and find solutions. In other words, it means allowing the uprooted to develop fully, wherever they are, as individuals and as communities.

The individual and collective responsibility of Christians toward aliens is to take measures to enable them again to be *subjects and not objects* of history. By welcoming strangers, which implies considering them as partners, and by taking action in the public arena, the church makes its struggle for justice, God's will for all, more authentic and credible.

ANDRÉ JACQUES, *THE STRANGER WITHIN YOUR GATES* (1985)

A large number of immigrants, many from Mexico and other South American countries (and to a lesser extent from Asia), are making the United States more communitarian than it has been in recent decades by fostering a stronger commitment to family, community, and nation, as well as respect for authority and moderate religious-moral values.... [They are] changing a country often depicted as divided along immutable racial lines between whites and blacks...to an increasingly varied society in which more fluid ethnic groups will play a greater role and in which victimhood will play an ever smaller role. Their high intermarriage rates serve as but one example of this positive modification, for through intermarriage Hispanic and Asian immigrants help insure that the most intimate ties — those of family — will prevent American society from breaking down along ethnic lines.

I do not claim that all of the effects of recent (or previous) immigrants have been salutary. However, most of the troubling effects are temporary and limited, and they pale in comparison with the constructive ones. American society is light-years ahead of most other societies, which have yet to learn how to incorporate large numbers of immigrants without losing their own core values or abusing the immigrants.

AMITAI ETZIONI, "HISPANIC AND ASIAN IMMIGRANTS: AMERICA'S LAST HOPE" (2007)

Waves of Blessing, Waves of Change

BY RANDY WHITE

Surf's up, brothers and sisters! We can ride this wave of immigration to North America by acknowledging that God is in the current, adopting mutually dependent ministry postures alongside immigrants, and recognizing their contribution to the vitality of the church and the transformation of secular society.

As you gaze over the ocean from the bluff above San Simeon beach on the Central California coast, the waves have a mesmerizing quality. They do not come single file but crisscross, overlapping each other at angles, sometimes combining to build force, sometimes canceling each other out. Not the best for surfing, though surfers try. They will catch a gentle wave, only to have their run altered by an undetected bank of foam, ambushing them from an odd approach. Beginning surfers go under. Old-timers change their strategy.

AN OCEAN OF CHANGE

Surfing as a metaphor for what it means to be the church in the midst of migrant streams? For a world in motion, it makes perfect sense. Some immigrant waves are predictable and powerful. Others go undetected, exercising an unanticipated influence. As the realities of migration, both legal and non-legal, continue to change the dynamic of American cities, the once mono-ethnic, mono-class churches that wish to respond must learn whole new skill sets.

The world is in motion. Today, almost 200 million people live in a country they were not born in. About thirteen and a half million of those are refugees; the rest voluntarily left their homeland to seek a better life.¹ Many mono-ethnic, middle-class congregations ironically moved from the city to escape its prob-

lems, but these once-suburban churches now are being embraced by poor immigrant congregants who have been driven from gentrifying urban contexts. The rules of outreach and disciple making are changing, and church leaders are realizing that navigating their particular ocean is getting more complex.

In my own state of California, more than half of its residents were not born there, the gap between rich and poor has never been wider, and the diversity never greater. Fresno, where I live, now has the sad designation of having the highest rate of concentrated poverty of any city in the nation. Couple that with a growth rate due to migration higher than anywhere in the United States and it is enough to ensure that any strategy of the church devised without regard for these changes is doomed to be ambushed by the undetected wave.² Today, more Mexicans live in Los Angeles than in any city of Mexico, with the exception of Mexico City and Guadalajara. More Cambodians live in Long Beach than in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. More Filipinos live in Daly City than anywhere outside of Manila. Fresno is the Hmong capital of the world outside of Laos, and Central California is the center of Sikh life in the United States. Today, twenty-two percent of U.S. children younger than six have immigrant parents.³ Churches that are unprepared for the leadership challenges presented by rapid population growth, or unwilling to become involved in the social needs of new arrivals, or unaware of how to help their middle-class congregants leverage their privileges for the well-being of these new arms and legs in the body of Christ will become irrelevant, mere socioeconomic enclaves, and ignored by a new humanity set in motion. These are forces more vast and all-encompassing than anyone has anticipated.

STUDYING THE OCEAN

At the very least, these realities require pastors and lay leaders of churches in urban areas to ask at least four key questions. The first question is theological. Given the realities of massive worldwide human migration, both legal and non-legal, due to the “push” factors of displacement and the “pull” factors of a hope for a better life, what do we think God is doing through these large-scale movements of people across national borders, and why? A second question is pragmatic. What are some of the most important and practical ways that Christian churches can participate effectively in this process, cooperating with God’s Kingdom-building work? A third question is evaluative. How will churches that are primarily mono-ethnic and mono-class but wishing to connect with immigrant communities need to design or alter their outreach strategies? And a fourth question is prophetic. What contributions do Christian immigrants make both to the theological vitality and insight of the North American church and to the transformation of secular society?

SURF’S UP!

What is God doing? Appropriately, this first question for churches is theological in its essence. Kit Danley, founder and director of Neighborhood Ministries in Phoenix, Arizona, which has for more than a quarter-century served the

immigrant community from an eight-acre campus in the center of town, believes that the church is at a *kairos* moment, a divinely appointed time, with regard to immigration. She echoes the contention of Timothy L. Smith that we are at a historic "'theologizing moment,' an occasion when many social needs of new immigrants will test and are testing the theology of churches."⁴ Though we do not have the space here to develop this fully (I recommend Danley's full

The dynamic of whole people groups in motion creates a spiritual longing for God. People intuitively gravitate toward the city in their vulnerability. And in God's design, this has something to do with their search for him.

study), we must ask the most basic question: "Is God's hand actively involved in the great migrations of people we see taking place today?" As millions of people cross national boundaries, through legal and non-legal means, heading for the great urban centers, what might God in his sovereignty be accomplishing? This question contains an assumption that he

is either allowing or causing migration. But rather than being sidetracked by that "how-many-angels-can-dance-on-the-head-of-a-pin" discussion, and human factors (war, famine, oppression, economic opportunity, etc.) aside, we should ask, "Now that the situation is as it is, what might God do with it?"

Cities are blessings to the poor. As historian and theologian Ray Bakke observes, Scripture equates the city with the goodness of God and his steadfast love toward his people as they wandered in the desert.⁵ As God's people, refugees from Babylon, "cried to the LORD in their trouble," the city was his answer to their prayer (Psalm 107:1-7). As the apostle Paul addressed that distinguished gathering on the Areopagus in Athens, the urban heart of the Greek world, he reminded them that it is God who has "made all nations [all ethnic groups] to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live" (Acts 17:26). Because we believe in a sovereign God who by his will causes or allows the movements of people across the earth, we can have confidence that the hand of God is active in this process. That same text provides further insight into what he might be accomplishing through urbanization and the internationalization of cities. It says "he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, *so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him*" (17:26b-27a, italics added). There is something about the dynamic of whole people groups in motion that creates a spiritual longing and a thirst for God. People intuitively gravitate toward the city in their vulnerability. And in God's design, this has something to do with their search for him. We need to equip ourselves as disciples to begin at this bedrock foundation.

But the theologizing does not end there. God promised Abraham to bless him in order to make him a blessing. Pastor Jonathan Villalobos of Bethany Inter-City Church in Fresno, California, has ministered among the urban poor for two decades. His offerings on Sundays are often collected in coins, not bills. He is uniquely connected to the lives of immigrants in his congregation and to the Latino leadership community in his city. Pastor Villalobos, himself an immigrant, observes that there have always been movements of people, and that God uses these movements to *save lives*, as in the story of Joseph in Genesis, and the children of Israel in Psalm 107. But he contends that God uses these same lives to bless the world through various disciplines – for instance, labor, science, entertainment, sports, and social change – citing examples such as Guillermo Gonzalez Camarena (1917-1965), a Mexican national from Guadalajara Jalisco who invented the color TV, or actress Selma Hayek, or golfer Nancy Lopez, or civil rights champion Cesar Chavez, or the one who picks grapes in the field. It is a movable feast of talent.

Reverend Mitt Moua of Trinity Christian Church in Sanger, California, leads a denomination and congregation of primarily Hmong and Lao people, former refugees and the children of refugees. He has helped many of these integrate into American culture. He believes that they are operationalizing the words of Jesus when he said “come unto me all who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). He believes that God’s hand is active in bringing good from the transitions caused by both political and economic migration, by bringing belief systems into close contact in a manner that is illuminating. For many coming from animist cultures this provides concrete and liberating examples of another way to view their own lives. They see benefit in the lives of Christians and find new freedom.

The Reverend Sharon Stanley of Fresno’s Interdenominational Refugee Ministry (FIRM) would agree, but would contend that good goes the other way as well. God loves the culture-centric, segregated, consumerist, comfortable Western church too much to leave it that way and brings, in Justo González’s words, “voices from below” to vitalize and renew it. This is Philip Jenkins’s “faith on the move,” the fast-growing churches in the Southern Hemisphere influencing both the face and the practice of Christianity in once vital but now declining Christian centers. I’ll talk more about this later when we discuss our fourth question.⁶

These practitioners operate from a common theological assumption, that God’s hand is active in the immigration process, and that his primary concern is not whether immigrants are legal or non-legal, but that they are *being changed* and are *bringing change* for the praise of his glory and advance of his Kingdom.

RIDING THE WAVE

How can churches participate in this work of God? The pragmatism reflected in this second question has been the primary response of rank-and-file Christians and leadership when presented with the obvious social needs

of the immigrant community. Though nearly one in five express grave reservations about whether or not the scriptural mandate to “welcome the stranger” applies to the immigration debate, according to a survey by *Christianity Today*, when faced with obvious needs individual church members have formulated programs and forms of outreach to contribute something toward alleviating that need.⁷ A national study of Mennonite churches

Churches must directly address members’ misinformation and erroneous assumptions about immigration that are based on politicized and polarized sentiments in the wider culture.

found general willingness on the part of congregants to be involved with immigrants, though many felt confused about how to help. But they also discovered that the normal political divisions of the denomination influenced discussion of outreach to immigrants *more* than did

biblical perspectives.⁸ Thus, perhaps the first answer to the question of how churches can participate in this work of God involves immersing congregations in some of the biblical perspectives addressed above in question one.

Pastor Villalobos feels that participation in outreach to immigrants must not be left to the individual sentiments and good intentions of congregants, but must be built structurally into the stated goals of existing churches that live in the context of migrant streams. He cites examples of churches that include this focus in their infrastructure and budgets in the form of advocacy, legal advice, practical help, and so on. Reverend Mitt Moua would agree, but he warns that church-based programs must be staffed by people who reflect God’s heart. People in transition, people who are vulnerable, are especially sensitive to the attitude of those who help. In addition, the church scattered can make a profound difference in their professions as they encounter members of the immigrant community. Christians working at the Welfare Department, at the Police Department, in the legal profession, or in small businesses they own can play key roles in being the hands and feet of Jesus, providing hospitality, leveraging their privileges for the sake of the last, the least, and the lost. Overall, Reverend Moua contends that there must be a balance of short-term approaches, which focus on meeting immediate needs (providing ESL classes, various training courses, child care, and so on) and long-term approaches, which might involve adopting families and providing economic development, working connections, and networking for the benefit of the immigrant community.

This kind of thoughtful, intentional posture merely reflects the historic posture of churches and synagogues toward foreigners who come to worship. Citing Joachim Jeremias’s *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, Jose Ortiz reminds us how foreigners who were in Jerusalem to conduct commercial

enterprises also demonstrated interest in the religious life of the city. While some were there temporarily to make money and go home, others stayed and settled, similar to immigrant patterns today. "Many were hosted by families or had other connections. Some synagogues had extra rooms and water available to offer hospitality to people coming from faraway places."⁹

The extent to which congregations today in cities being affected by immigration are asking questions about hospitality and care for migrants signals a readiness to adopt a more intentional posture of outreach. Unfortunately, most churches in these contexts are not asking even this most basic question.

Perhaps the most foundational thing a congregation can do to participate in this work of God is to address directly members' misinformation and erroneous assumptions which are based on politicized and polarized sentiments within the wider culture. One denominational survey found that church members depend almost solely on television in forming their opinions about immigration.¹⁰ These assumptions may include the beliefs that undocumented immigrants steal American jobs (they do not, according to the 2006 Pew Hispanic Center study), that they cost American taxpayers a fortune in social services (economist Francine J. Lippman demonstrates they contribute more than they cost), or that most immigrants crossed the border illegally (they did not: seventy-five percent have legal, permanent visas).¹¹

Lay leaders or clergy must be willing to invest some time in researching and communicating responses to these common concerns in a manner that can be heard and acted upon. This is no small request in light of what is already on the full plate of the average pastor, and in light of the politically charged nature of the discussion, which runs the possibility of dividing a congregation. But these disincentives begin to dissolve as the personal relationships among pastors, lay leaders, and immigrant families deepen. Through these firsthand relationships the rhetoric subsides and the power of human dignity takes over. Against the backdrop of these relationships the voice of the immigrant can finally be heard. In the words of Cesar Chavez,

What do we want the Church to do?... We ask for its presence with us, beside us, as Christ among us. We ask the Church to sacrifice with the people for social change, for justice, and for love of brother. We don't ask for words. We ask for deeds. We don't ask for paternalism. We ask for servanthood.¹²

NEW SURFBOARDS?

How will primarily mono-ethnic, mono-class churches that wish to connect with immigrant communities need to redesign or alter their outreach strategies? It is more than providing a few ESL classes or a food pantry. According to Reverend Stanley at FIRM it may involve a fundamental re-imagining of relationships as well as methodologies. Project directors at FIRM learned this lesson as leaders in the immigrant community helped them

reshape the programs FIRM designed to reach out to immigrant needs in the areas of housing, literacy, advocacy, job training and placement, and so on. "Churches and nonprofits seeking to connect with and serve immigrant communities must allow ourselves to be led by others, must allow immigrants to determine the forms and the strategies best suited to both meet their needs and encourage their potential," says Reverend Stanley. This level of parity will lead to appropriate forms of outreach, including contextualized worship, interdependent financial relationships, and shared leadership retreats.

This immigrant/non-immigrant partnership eventually will impact the methodologies we use, including the church rituals at our disposal. For instance, with many of the Southeast Asian refugee population the most effective forms of outreach have included Christ-centered religious protection rituals such as house cleansings or spirit cleansings. Many immigrants live in dilapidated housing where massive infestations of roaches or mold and mildew act as the physical symbols of the oppression of the poor by absentee landlords who do not repair or invest in the safety of their facilities, exploiting the fear many immigrants have over reporting problems. In addition, non-literate methodologies become important. In Stanley's words, "the bulletin won't do it." The use of drama, singing, and dancing become central, and here again the quality of immigrant/non-immigrant ministry partnerships is the most crucial factor. Is there enough trust to allow immigrant lay leaders to reshape the form of the congregation's outreach?

Trusting immigrant leadership is key. Pastor Villalobos notes that more than 20% of Fresno's five hundred churches are Latino, and of these he estimates 60% are led by undocumented pastors. These pastors are the best equipped to understand the needs of immigrant communities, both legal and non-legal, but have few resources with which to work. More often than not they are bivocational, working another job during the week while simultaneously pastoring their congregations. They provide an unbelievable level of service to members and newcomers, often finding jobs for new migrants, sometimes on their own work sites. They provide informal translation, transportation, and referrals to doctors, dentists, and schools. Some provide short-term housing. They are stretched to the limit in what they believe is their calling: many have little formal theological education and work in isolation from other immigrant pastors due to the limitations of their work schedules, the heavy demands of ministry life, and the lack of time and resources. Middle-class, non-immigrant congregations could greatly assist in the development of leadership in this community if they would accompany immigrant pastors through the process of becoming legal residents, provide education for them in formal and informal mentoring, and sponsor aspects of their professional training. In reality, these pastors provide valuable care for many legal immigrants, members of the body of Christ who are not the focus of the middle-class church's evangelism or discipleship efforts, as well as those who are undocumented. Pastor Villalobos feels that the key

issue is not the immigrants' status, but rather their presence. Christian hospitality requires that "the alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 19:33-34, NIV).¹³

IMMIGRANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ART OF SURFING

What contributions do Christian immigrants make to both the theological vitality and insight of the North American church and to the transformation of secular society? Jennifer Doerrie, an immigration attorney for the Mennonite Central Committee in Reedley, California, believes that Christian immigrants, both legal and non-legal, "import practices and traditions from home that freshen and invigorate practices here, but also engender debate and cross-cultural conflict" that is good for the church. A corollary to this contribution, observes Reverend Mitt Moua, is that "recent immigrants experience the love of God and live out their faith without material wealth, relying on spiritual resources, which is a lesson an affluent, Western church needs." Pastor Villalobos points out that recent immigrants from the Catholic tradition bring a high view of God and a reverence that is often absent in many Protestant denominations, providing important balance to a very casual American Christianity. In addition, he feels they bring a more expressive theology and worship, heating up more cold and formal versions of faith and practice in mainline churches.

Those who choose to build real relationships with recent immigrants notice a depth and substance that the immigrant experience has created in the lives of individuals and families that become living metaphors for what God wants to do in the North American church. Many immigrants have had to cultivate faith in the context of a long multistage process of getting to their new home. Along the way there has been pain and sacrifice, some of it forced upon them, some of it chosen.

"The memories and pain of the refugee speak to them as they apply Scripture. This visible awareness of faith forged in loss and pain, where a very real experience of Jesus Christ who has met their needs, can

The depth and substance of the immigrant experience can make recent immigrants living metaphors for what God wants to do in the North American church.

speak volumes to the North American church," observes Reverend Stanley. "This first person perspective gives us in the West a '*noisier*' experience of Scripture." Imagining the journey of Jesus and his parents to Egypt by watching a Christmas pageant is one thing, but listening as an immigrant who has undergone the upheaval of relocation reflects on the refugee status and experience of the Holy Family offers a whole new level of insight.

Beyond contributions in the church, immigrants contribute to the transformation of secular society. Pastor Villalobos notices the disintegration of the family in the United States and feels that Latino immigrants provide a counterbalance because of the high value that is placed on family unity. Immigrants from cultures that are animist, or even immigrants from Pentecostal Christian traditions that have categories for the presence of spirits, demons, and angels, force the secular culture and nominal Christians to consider the life of the spirit and the presence and relevance of an invisible, nonmaterial world. According to Stanley both Christian and non-Christian immigrants “heat up the religious atmosphere of our culture,” which becomes a catalyst for the church to discuss the relevance of the gospel. And in a culture in which mainstream Protestants will soon comprise less than half the population, we need all the help we can get.¹⁴

PADDLING IN

The complexities of overlapping waves of immigration, the need for new surfing skills for church leaders, and the cultural assumptions and political posturing that act like deadly rocks to those who would navigate these waters, have proven too much for many congregations. They have chosen instead to ignore the vast, seismic shifts taking place across the globe.

The U.S. Census Bureau forecasts that by 2050 in America “the Hispanic population will have increased by 200 percent, the population as a whole by 50 percent, and whites, only 30 percent.”¹⁵ These trends will influence the experience of the North American church, period. While the controversy over illegal immigration blazes, some cities actually court immigrants because they are seen as “an elixir for faltering economies. Among some immigrant groups the rate of entrepreneurship is two to three times that of the U.S. population.”¹⁶ It is simultaneously hypocritical, unchristian, and myopic in terms of Christian outreach to depend on immigrant communities in this way while ignoring the need, the opportunity, and the amazing contribution immigrant communities can make to the Kingdom of God in North America. To consciously choose (or even passively allow by inaction) a non-relationship with immigrants in our communities because our culture or our class makes it difficult, inconvenient, or complex is to ignore the Lord himself who said, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35).

Surf’s up, brothers and sisters! The water is crazy and the shoreline is shifting under our feet. We can ride this wave by acknowledging that God is in the current, by helping the North American church choose to get into the water, by adopting mutually dependent ministry postures alongside immigrants, and by recognizing the contribution that newcomers make to the vitality of the church and the transformation of secular society. It is time to grab our boards and learn something new.

NOTES

1 Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, *International Migration 2006* (United Nations Publication ST/ESA/SER.A/256), available online at www.unpopulation.org. An unknown number of undocumented migrants may or may not be counted in official data.

2 Mark Baldassare and Ellen Hanak discuss the wealth distribution in *California 2025: It's Your Choice* (San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California, 2005), 25; available from www.ppic.org. On poverty in Fresno, see Alan Berube, *Confronting Concentrated Poverty in Fresno* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, September 6, 2006); available from www.brookings.edu. On migration in this area of California, see Hans P. Johnson and Joseph M. Hayes, *The Central Valley at a Crossroads: Migration and Its Implications* (San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California, 2004), 1, 7, 10, and 48; available from www.ppic.org.

3 David Crary, "Immigrants Want Good Life for Kids Born U.S. Citizens," *The Seattle Times* (June 5, 2005), citing the Urban Institute's 2005 *Report on Immigration*; available online at seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/nationworld/2002307228_kids05.html.

4 Kit Danley, *Blessing Not a Burden: A Theological Approach to the Immigration Issue* (Phoenix, AZ: Neighborhood Ministries, 2008), 2; available online at www.gum.org/download/Evangelical-TheologicalApproachtoImmigrationbyKitDanley-2007.pdf. The Web site for Neighborhood Ministries, www.nmaz.net, offers many resources for serving immigrant communities.

5 Raymond Bakke, informal comments in Beijing, China, April 2006.

6 See Justo L. Gonzáles, *The Changing Shape of Church History* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002), and Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

7 The Pulse, "I Was a Stranger," *Christianity Today* (September 2007), 96; available online at www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/september/31.96.html.

8 MCC US Listening Project: *What the Church Is Saying* (Akron, PA: Mennonite Central Committee, 2006), 4, 22.

9 *Loving Strangers as Ourselves: Biblical Reflections* (Akron, PA: Mennonite Central Committee, 2006), 27.

10 MCC US Listening Project: *What the Church Is Saying*, 14-15.

11 These and other myths are discussed factually and succinctly in Yoji Cole, "Debunking 10 Myths about Immigrants," *DiversityInc* (September 2007), 51-54.

12 Cesar E. Chavez, "The Mexican-American and the Church" (Sacramento, CA: Second Annual Mexican Conference, March 8-10, 1968); available online from www.farmworker-movement.org.

13 Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

14 John Micklethwait, "In God's Name," *The Economist* (November 3, 2007), 10.

15 "Centrifugal Forces," *The Economist* (July 16, 2005), 4.

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RANDY WHITE

is National Coordinator for Urban Projects with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in Fresno, California.

Back to the Basics of Immigration

BY VIVIANA TRIANA

Though they offer no easy solutions, these two books shed considerable light on our current dilemmas of immigration policy. Together they tell a complex story—who lawful immigrants to America have been and how we have viewed them through history.

For those who mistakenly believe that the immigration controversies in America are just about the recent migration of Hispanics/Latinos, I suggest reading *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, second edition (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002, 576 pp., \$17.95), by University of Cincinnati history professor Roger Daniels. In this accessible and comprehensive guide to the history and diversity of American immigrants, Daniels covers a wide spectrum of people groups from Europe, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, as well as from across the Pacific. Beginning with the colonial-era immigration from Europe, he thoroughly reviews the socio-economic, cultural, political, and religious motivations for migrations to the United States.

Coming to America dispels many commonly held myths regarding the motivations, identity, and origins of those early immigrants. One of the most common myths Daniels addresses is the concept that America was and is a melting pot. "While there has been a continuous genetic mixture of ethnic groups in the United States, most individuals are still aware of their ethnic background," he notes. Indeed, "the melting pot simply did not happen" (pp. 17-18). Although many in American society hope for an integrated nation, the reality is that the country has become more diverse. The political wrangling of today demonstrates that for some people this diversity is a strength, while for others it is a sign of the need to "close the door" to newcomers.

To dispel some common myths regarding the immigrants' motivations, Daniels emphasizes the wide range of "push" and "pull" factors that have encouraged migration to America. "Push" factors are conditions in the country of origin that force people to emigrate; these may be catastrophes like the Irish potato famine in 1845, political events like the Edict of Nantes (1598) that granted rights of emigration to French Huguenots, or various economic pressures usually related to a growing population. "Pull" factors refer to those attractive forces that draw immigrants to leave their home countries, such as the draw that religious freedom had for some English Puritans and Quakers and Baptists during the colonial period. Normally, pull migrants leave their countries because they wish to and because their talents seem to fit the available educational or professional opportunities. Push immigrants, like the immigrant slaves who came from Africa or the recent refugees from Cambodia, are persons who ordinarily would not have left their countries.

A general reader will enjoy this book for the interesting and rarely discussed facts about many of the people groups that have migrated to the United States over the years—facts such as the statistical distribution of national or linguistic ancestries in the 1800s or that most of the first Arab immigrants to America were Christians of several Eastern Rite churches. But Daniels also addresses the current experiences of the different immigrant groups as they settle in the United States.

This combination of historical sweep and contemporary survey is valuable when Daniels turns to discuss the changing resistance to immigration. While much of the resistance today is based on economic concerns, in the early period of American history the basis of resistance was quite different. Citizens in the eighteenth century opposed immigration "largely on ideological rather than ethnic or religious grounds. Federalists opposed radical immigrants from England, France, or Ireland; Jeffersonians in Congress, concerned about the migration and settlement here of exiled nobility from France, got a provision put into the 1795 Naturalization Act requiring an applicant for citizenship to foreswear any hereditary titles of nobility" (p. 116). Eventually, the resistance shifted even more as immigrants who did not resemble Europeans began to appear. Laws like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the "Operation Wetback" in the early 1950s were implemented to prohibit immigration from these "dissimilar" countries.

It may be impossible to write immigration history objectively, but I believe Daniels comes as close to this achievement as anyone could in this comprehensive guide to American immigration. Writing in a clear, concise, and impartial manner, he recounts the captivating but often neglected stories of "the immigrants themselves, their children, and sometimes their children's children, from the earliest European and African 'settlers' to today's jet-age migrants" (p. 29). This encyclopedia of immigrant history is a valuable resource for anyone interested in knowing the cultural contexts of immigrant life.



In *Americans in Waiting: The Lost Story of Immigration and Citizenship in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, 254 pp., \$19.95), Hiroshi Motomura examines America's immigration policies from the perspective of his personal experience as well as historical investigations. "What does it mean to be American?" he asks. "What does this position in society require and imply?" Recommending that immigrants should be seen as "Americans in waiting," he starts unfolding this idea beginning with the 1920s when the concept of "permanent residency" first emerged.

In the formative years of the United States, the road to citizenship was a relatively simple matter. In the early 1800s the government encouraged immigration, but as waves of immigrants arrived from Eastern Europe and Asian countries speaking diverse languages and practicing foreign religions, Americans began to feel threatened. By the end of the nineteenth century, national laws – like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 mentioned above – would discourage and even prohibit the immigration of certain nationalities. But years earlier, individual states had taken matters into their own hands through laws that "addressed migration by citizens and foreigners alike. Some state laws barred criminals, or restricted the movements of free blacks, or quarantined anyone with a contagious disease." To discourage the migration of the poor, some states "required shipmasters to post bonds to guarantee that their passengers would be financially self-sufficient after arrival" or "imposed a head tax on immigrants, paid into a welfare fund for those who became indigent," Motomura notes. "Restrictionists urged that states enforce and expand these laws to keep out various undesirables" (p. 21). This pattern is repeating itself today. In the absence of national immigration reform, some communities are taking matters into their own hands and implementing restrictive laws to deal with the increasing population of immigrants. For example, Farmers Branch, Texas, requires all renters to pay a five-dollar fee and demonstrate U.S. citizenship or legal immigration status to obtain an occupancy license from the city.

Immigration also has been restricted due to concerns over national security and dangerous ideologies. "Over time, the focus has shifted from anarchists to subversives, then to communists, and most recently to terrorists," Motomura writes. Current immigration laws make "noncitizens inadmissible and deportable based on terrorism, espionage, sabotage, or the potential for serious adverse foreign policy consequences" (pp. 38-39). Unfortunately, the border line between these legitimate concerns and the race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion of immigrants is easily blurred. The moral problem of racial profiling after 9/11 is another instance of history repeating itself.

How we "see" immigrants and the immigration process – as people fulfilling an implicit contract, creating a new affiliation with us, or beginning a transition to full citizenship – strongly influences how we treat immigrants.

Generally we have tended to view immigration, says Motomura, as something like an implicit contract that guarantees justice and fairness, but not equality, to immigrants. On this view, citizens and immigrants have expectations of one another: immigrants must agree to certain conditions for their entrance (e.g., not to become a public charge) and continued residence (e.g., not to leave the country for an extended period of time). Congress has the authority to establish such rules on behalf of citizens, and immigrants have little or no constitutional right to challenge them. This paradigm is unsatisfactory, Motomura argues, because it does not lead to true community. In reality the contract is not about fairness but about protection of American resources. "Immigration as contract is based on the sense that fairness and justice for lawful immigrants does not require us to treat them as the equals of citizens. Though immigration as a contract is a model of justice, it is a model of unequal justice that turns not on conferring equality itself, but on giving notice and protecting expectations" (p. 10).

On the immigration-as-affiliation view, immigrants can earn equality with citizens when they prove themselves to be productive members of the community by putting down roots, starting families, and paying taxes. However, some immigrants are not able to integrate fully into society because they do not have a certificate of citizenship. For many newcomers the process of getting their documentation is extremely long, complicated, and expensive. For immigrants from Mexico or China, for instance, the process leading to legal permanent residency and then to citizenship may take more than fifteen years.

The author defends a third perspective which says lawful immigrants should be treated as persons in transition to become citizens. They are "Americans in waiting," endowed with all the rights and responsibilities that position entails as they wait for documentation. He explains,

This is not a proposal to erase the line between

lawful immigrants and citizens. If a lawful immigrant does not apply for citizenship as soon as he is eligible, his status would be only the status that a lawful immigrant has today. He would no longer have the same ability as a citizen to sponsor a family member for immigration. He would have only the limited welfare eligibility for lawful immigrants under current law, and he could no longer vote.

How we "see" immigrants and the immigration process—as people fulfilling an implicit contract, creating a new affiliation with us, or beginning a transition to full citizenship—strongly influences how we treat immigrants.

The essence of my proposal is to treat a new lawful immigrant more generously, but also to use that extra generosity to help him take full advantage of the opportunity to integrate into America. If he chooses not to naturalize, he would lose that better treatment. (p. 13)

This immigration-as-transition paradigm is not new. From 1795 through 1952, a declaration of intent was a prerequisite for naturalization in the United States. Noncitizens who filed the declaration benefited from several rights, including the right to vote and diplomatic protection like any other U.S. national. Motomura calls us back to the basics of earlier immigration history in America, when the nation integrated into its society lawful immigrants who were willing to be part of American life. This does not mean immigrants should be assimilated into American culture to the point that their identity is absorbed and destroyed. He envisions immigration as “a reciprocal process in which immigrants change America as much as America changes them, and yet a process that keeps this nation of immigrants one nation” (p. 164).

Many citizens rightly are concerned that lawful immigrants do not participate in the American way of life and do not support its governing principles. What would happen if they were treated like citizens, with all the rights and responsibilities that citizenship entails? Motomura believes they would fully participate in American community life. Finally, it would be dangerous not to fully include these lawful residents, for “democracy is impaired by having a permanent group of marginalized residents who are governed but cannot acquire a voice in governing” (p. 151). Indeed, the premise of the book rests on this paradox. On behalf of democratic inclusion, Motomura proposes to restore an immigration standard of seeing lawful immigrants as future citizens, a standard that had its birth in a period of American history when the democratic system was considerably less formal than today’s established system.

As a first generation immigrant from Colombia, I am the “American in waiting” Motomura describes. Perhaps this is why I believe he sheds some light on the immigration dilemmas that America confronts. Continuing to treat noncitizens as aliens will only increase economic and social disparity and fan prejudices against them. If we can begin to think of all lawful residents as equal, we may indeed become “one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”



VIVIANA TRIANA

is a cofounder of the Ruth Project: Waco Immigrant Services Center in Waco, Texas.

Planning for Immigration

BY DANIEL G. GROODY, C.S.C.

Unfortunately, few theologians address immigration, and scholars in migration studies almost never mention theology. By building a bridge between the Christian tradition and one of the most vexing problems of our time, these two books provide an ethical compass to help us navigate the difficult issues of immigration policy.

More people are migrating around the world than ever before in human history. Largely because of changes precipitated by globalization, the number is twice as large as it was twenty-five years ago. Today nearly 200 million people are on the move, which is roughly the equivalent of the population of Brazil, the fifth largest country on the planet. Of these, approximately thirty to forty million are undocumented, twenty-four million are internally displaced, and almost thirteen and a half million are refugees. Because it touches so many areas of life and human society, some scholars have referred to our time as the “age of migration.”

Such flows of people cause much conflict and controversy. Amidst the ensuing clash of cultures, identities, and religions, there is a great need to sort out the conceptual issues of immigration and to design just and humane policies that respond to the pressing needs of the new migrants – some of the most vulnerable people living on the planet.

The two books reviewed here take up the hard challenges of thinking through the issues of migration – Dana W. Wilbanks’s *Re-Creating America: The Ethics of U.S. Immigration and Refugee Policy in a Christian Perspective* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996, 236 pp., \$22.00) and Peter C. Meilaender’s *Toward a Theory of Immigration* (New York: Palgrave, 2001, 272 pp., \$75.00) – and both make important contributions to the debate over refugees and migrants. The first looks at how Christian values can help shape and

even transform current U.S. immigration and refugee policy and the second seeks to examine the more foundational conceptual, philosophical, and political premises that underlie this heated public debate.



In *Re-Creating America* Dana Wilbanks, professor emeritus of Christian Ethics at Illiff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado, takes up the formidable challenge of public theology in a democratic society. He examines the premises and values that underlie the immigration debate and develops how a specifically Christian perspective can help inform and transform public policy. Given the plurality of perspectives in the immigration debate, and especially the dehumanizing undercurrents that ground the opinions of many, this is an important work, not only for theologians but also for pastors, practitioners, and political leaders. Presently very little theological reflection has been done about migration, and at the same time scholars in migration studies almost never mention theology. By building a bridge between the resources of the Christian tradition and one of the most vexing problems of our time, this book provides a valuable ethical compass to help us navigate the difficult issues of immigration policy.

Wilbanks examines the contributions that Christian communities can make to public discourse and decision making. He does not specifically argue for open borders, but he does argue for more generous admission policies and for preference for those who are most vulnerable. The book is well reasoned and articulate, and while he does not pretend that Christian churches have easy answers to difficult problems like immigration, he recognizes that Christians must bear witness to a God of life by showing active concern for the poor and practicing specific virtues, such as offering hospitality for the stranger. He acknowledges distinctions between church and state, but he also recognizes that Christians bring an important orientation to the migration issue and can play an important role in building a more humane world through public policies that give priority to those most in need.

The author is versed in theoretical issues of migration, but he offers very practical guidelines as well. His insights into some of the major metaphors related to migration that shape public rhetoric—such as the “the golden door,” “promised land,” “guarded gate,” and various “water” metaphors—are most valuable (p. 22).

To lay the groundwork for the ethical deliberations in later chapters, Wilbanks begins with a picture of the recent situation, gives historical background to the international refugee crisis, and then looks at current U.S. refugee policy. He describes the recurring patterns in U.S. immigration history that have stirred vigorous and sometimes heated debates between “restrictionists and inclusionists, cultural monists and pluralists, nativists and cos-

mopolitanists.” Of course, after he wrote this valuable introduction to U.S. immigration history in 1996, both government policies and popular debates in America continued to evolve, especially in response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Wilbanks looks at how American self-identity influences who is let into the country. He addresses some of the major questions about immigrants, namely, who they are, why they come to the United States, if they will assimilate culturally and linguistically, and finally, if they will contribute to the common good. His analysis is particularly valuable in light of race, culture, and national moral traditions.

The next chapters move more into theological territory and specifically the ethics of hospitality. Here there are some very helpful treatments of immigration from a biblical perspective, particularly the narrative ethics that shape a Christian view of welcoming the stranger. Wilbanks does a good job arguing that Scripture gives us a new imagination to understand the world and our relationships and not simply another rational argument about migration. When he moves to examine in more depth the quest for a just and humane migration policy, Wilbanks perceptively names the tension between the Christian ideal and the politically possible, and he reviews a variety of Christian perspectives that deal with sovereign rights—including reformed covenant ethics and Catholic social teaching among others. “Christian ethics provides no simple solutions to dilemmas and ambiguities in a nation’s migration policy. But it does provide a normative perspective on these questions that is

not identical with the interests of nation states,” he notes. Indeed, “the fact that Christian ethics seems so ‘alien’ to the nationalistic ethos of nation-state politics may not signal its irrelevance so much as, precisely, its relevance” (p. 137). The heart of Wilbanks’s case rests not on arguments over national interests but on relationships—relational encounters between residents and migrants, and

particularly those migrants who are most in need, in this case refugees.

In the fifth chapter, Wilbanks links the issue of hospitality to specific proposals for U.S. refugee policy. Lamenting the fact that refugee protection has little place in a culture that seeks to maximize its own affluence without being bothered by the claims of the poor, he makes a strong case that the moral health of an economy is shown by how it treats its most vulnerable

Lamenting the fact that refugee protection has little place in a culture that seeks to maximize its own affluence, Wilbanks makes a strong case that the moral health of an economy is shown by how it treats its most vulnerable members.

members. He offers many specific recommendations on how to prioritize refugees (by their urgent needs, suffering life-threatening violence, or qualification under the rules of the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees) and then addresses the role congregations can play in resettlement. Churches inevitably will face some internal tensions and external conflict when they resettle refugees, he admits, but they "must be prepared to serve God rather than the state when the lives of neighbors are at stake" (p. 178). Though he discusses some ways congregations and denominations have taken a stand against prevailing policies, more could have been done to emphasize a prophetic Christian response to refugee policies.

Wilbanks concludes by outlining a more generous immigration policy, with specific recommendations for immigrant selection criteria, border control, guest worker programs, worker authorization systems, and social services. He urges us to recognize the rights and meet the needs of migrants, but not avoid the tough issues of "justifiable limits" and "humane enforcement."

This book helpfully addresses the perennial themes of migration by examining the Christian virtues of hospitality and magnanimity and by naming the perennial sins of xenophobia, racism, and nativism. Whatever specific policies we adopt, Wilbanks reminds us, the influx of immigrants and refugees is "re-creating America." Migration is part of a birth process of an ever-evolving, multicultural community.



In *Toward a Theory of Immigration*, Peter Meilaender, a political scientist at Houghton College in Houghton, New York, offers an important map of the complexity of the immigration debate, grounds it in specific instances of theory and practice, and presents a theoretical framework with which to understand and critique the debate. This well-written book for a scholarly audience is a valuable complement to *Re-Creating America*; it is an excellent resource for examining the conceptual, philosophical, and political terrain of migration. Meilaender provides a helpful summary of his main argument in "Loving Our Neighbors, Both Far and Near," on pp. 11-19 in this issue of *Christian Reflection*.

Meilaender begins his book by surveying the complexity of immigration in a globalized world. He considers the various motives people have for migration, why certain countries welcome or reject them, and why border control is so controversial. In a valuable review of the literature on immigration, he charts the intellectual landscape of the debate until about the turn of the twenty-first century. Once again, this subject stands in need of more reflection since 9/11. Although he includes specific case studies, Meilaender does not focus primarily on particular immigration policies but on the larger theoretical issues that shape the public debate. For instance, when he exam-

ines the issue of open borders, he presents even-handedly both the inclusionist and restrictionist perspectives and critiques their relative strengths and weaknesses.

When Meilaender turns to the issue of national identity and its implication for immigration policy, he argues for “broad state discretion in regulating immigration” and demonstrates that immigration policies are closely connected to how a country understands itself and its political community. To demonstrate how a range of possibilities can be advanced to allow or restrict immigration, in part because “immigration policies are closely tied to particular understandings of political community” (p. 8), he contrasts the policies of Germany and the United States in some detail. Chapter four looks at immigration in light of law and policy, and chapter five examines the relationships between politics and culture.

In a final chapter, Meilaender examines how the human rights of immigrants put a moral limit on a nation state’s right to control its borders. “Justice requires a world of far more open borders than now exists,” he argues (p. 3). Each nation’s right to control its borders is not an absolute right. Overly restrictive immigration policies should be challenged by citizens, and even by non-citizens, who cry out on behalf of a world of need.



Both books reviewed here present fine scholarly analyses of the conceptual issues behind the global immigration debate and outline a Christian-based response to refugees. This makes them valuable resources not only for the political leaders and scholars who struggle to balance national security and human insecurity, sovereign rights and human rights, and civil law and natural law, but also for Christians who must negotiate the boundaries of citizenship and faithful discipleship.



DANIEL G. GROODY, C.S.C.,

is Assistant Professor of Theology and Director of the Center for Latino Spirituality at the University of Notre Dame in Notre Dame, Indiana.

Editors



ROBERT B. KRUSCHWITZ

General Editor

Bob Kruschwitz is Director of the Center for Christian Ethics and Professor of Philosophy at Baylor University. He convenes the editorial team to plan the themes for the issues of *Christian Reflection*, then he commissions the lead articles and supervises the formation of each issue. Bob holds the Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Texas at Austin and the B.A. from Georgetown College. You may contact him by phone at 254-710-3774 or e-mail at Robert_Kruschwitz@baylor.edu.



HEIDI J. HORNİK

Art Editor

Heidi Hornik is Professor of Art History at Baylor University. With the M.A. and Ph.D. in Art History from The Pennsylvania State University and the B.A. from Cornell University, her special interest is art of the Italian Renaissance. With Mikeal C. Parsons she coedited *Interpreting Christian Art* and coauthored the three volume *Illuminating Luke*. Her current book, *Michele Tosini and the Ghirlandaio Workshop in Cinquecento Florence*, will be published in 2009. You may contact her by phone at 254-710-4548 or e-mail at Heidi_Hornik@baylor.edu.



NORMAN WIRZBA

Review Editor

Norman Wirzba is Research Professor of Theology, Ecology, and Rural Life at Duke Divinity School. He is the author of *The Paradise of God* and *Living the Sabbath* and editor of *The Essential Agrarian Reader*. You may contact him by phone at 919-660-3400 or e-mail at nwirzba@div.duke.edu.



WILLIAM D. SHIELL

Proclamation Editor

William D. Shiell is Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tennessee. He has served on leading committees of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. After receiving the B.A. in religion from Samford University, he earned the M.Div. in theology from George W. Truett Theological Seminary and Ph.D. in religion from Baylor University. His weekly sermons are published online in audio format at www.fbcknox.org. You may contact him by phone at 865-546-9661 or e-mail at shiell@fbcknox.org.

Contributors

JAMES E. CLEMENS

Composer of choral and instrumental works, Shenandoah Valley, VA

DANIEL G. GROODY, C.S.C.

Assistant Professor of Theology, and Director of the Center for Latino Spirituality, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN

JOHN J. HOFFNER

Attorney, Villanova, PA

HEIDI J. HORNICK

Professor of Art History, Baylor University

LEIGH JACKSON

Minister of Granada Hills Retreat Center, Austin, TX

ROBERT B. KRUSCHWITZ

Director, Center for Christian Ethics, and Professor of Philosophy, Baylor University

PETER C. MEILAENDER

Associate Professor of Political Science and Chair of the Department of Integrative Studies, Houghton College, Houghton, NY

MICHAEL S. MOORE

Instructor, Fuller Theological Seminary, Southwest, and Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ

RICHARD M. MUÑOZ

Attorney, and Director of Immigration Service and Aid Center (ISAAC), Dallas, TX

MICHELE R. PISTONE

Professor of Law and Director of the Clinic for Asylum, Refugee, and Emigrant Services (CARES), Villanova University School of Law, Villanova, PA

ALBERT L. REYES

President, Buckner Children and Family Services, Dallas, TX

DAN ROYER

Pastor, Bainbridge Christian Church, Bainbridge, IN

VIVIANA TRIANA

Cofounder, The Ruth Project: Waco Immigrant Services Center, Waco, TX

RANDY WHITE

National Coordinator for Urban Projects, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Fresno, CA

DAVID WRIGHT

Poet and Visiting Assistant Professor of English, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL