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The Bible and Borders

A Conservative Protestant Looks at Immigration Control

By John Vinson

Does Christianity, historically the faith of the West, require the West to commit demographic and cultural suicide by admitting all who would enter? Given what many churches teach today, it would seem so. Their general line of thinking runs something like this: God is love. God loves all men equally. Therefore, all barriers, i.e. race, nation, national boundaries, etc., must fall so as to permit God's love to equalize all men (presumably even if that means an equal level of misery).

In his preface to *The Camp of the Saints*, author Jean Raspail states that "so-called Christian charity will prove itself powerless" against the onrushing tide of humanity surging toward Western gates. Raspail, however, raises an intriguing question with his use of the word "so-called," namely: is what many regard as Christian charity really Christian?

The only way to answer that question is to ask by what standard one judges Christianity and Christian ethics. To illustrate: how do pro-immigration churchmen know that God is love? After all, many of the gods men have worshipped have not been particularly loveable. The source of their statement, of course, is the Bible. Without the Bible, Christianity would have no form or substance. Historically (at least for Protestants) it has been the primary standard of judgment.

Most modern churchmen, however, like to pick and choose through the Book. They embrace, for example, certain passages about love, but ignore the passages about divine wrath. A common tendency is generally to ignore the first three-fifths of the Bible (the Old Testament) and do most of their selective scriptural cutting from the New Testament. (This "modern" outlook is actually a retreat of the ancient heresy of Marcion who maintained that the Bible reveals two gods: the wicked wrathful God of the Old Testament and the loving God of the New.)

But picking and choosing implies that they have chosen a standard higher than the Bible for judging the Bible. What is it? Some would say the universal love displayed by Christ. Yet what is their standard for judging the nature and person of Christ? Hardly could it be the Christ of the Bible who identified Himself as one and the same as the wrathful Old Testament deity.

And as for a Jesus always meek and mild, surely Jerusalem's money changers, scribes, and Pharisees would have told a different story.

Thus again the question: what is the standard that modern churchmen use to judge the Bible and create their version of Jesus? A good answer came more than a century ago from noted theologian R. L. Dabney, who observed that "The fell spirit of Jacobinism has invaded the church of Christ." By that he meant that the spirit of the Enlightenment and French Revolution — universalism and radical egalitarianism — was replacing the Bible as the standard for Christian truth in many churches. So it is today. Scarcely is it a coincidence that pro-immigration priests sound more like the Jacobin Robespierre than the Prophets of Old.

These priests, of course, are entitled to their opinions, but their views are just that: opinions. They should not pretend to speak for the God of the Bible.

What does the Bible have to say on topics related to immigration? It would be useful to examine three concepts: 1) love; 2) equality; 3) nationality-ethnicity.

Love

Along with teaching that God is love, the Bible affirms His truth, law, and justice. These attributes guide and direct divine love, much as stream banks direct a stream. As this love flows along boundaries of commandments, it makes distinctions between God and man and distinctions among men. To love God, according to the Decalogue, is to shun idols. To love neighbors is to respect (i.e. neither steal nor covet) their property. The commandment to honor one's parents reflects the importance of the ties of kinship.

Equality

The God of the Bible is not a partisan of equality. He offers salvation to all, but esteems those more who accept the offer. He loved Jacob and hated Esau. While the Bible commands Christians to feed and clothe the deserving poor, it offers no trace of suggestion that all men should have equal incomes and status. The parable of the talents teaches different rewards for different efforts. Christ denied He was a divider of worldly goods and warned that preoccupation with such things stems from envy. The Apostle Paul said men had

different God-given abilities which suit them to different tasks.

Nationality and Ethnicity

On nationality and ethnicity, the Bible is plain that God abhors the blending of all peoples into a single world state. He defeated such a plan at Babel. "In days of old," says the book of Deuteronomy, "the Most High" divided the nations and set boundaries among them. The Apostle Paul, in the New Testament book of Acts, says that boundaries were set among nations "that men might seek after God." Some nations God loves more than others, e.g. ancient Israel.

Application to the Present

From these biblical principles what may we conclude about current immigration problems?

1) Nationhood is not an arbitrary human arrangement, but a principle of divine order. The separation of vastly different peoples helps reduce conflict and promote fruitful diversity. Massive uncontrolled immigration defeats God's order. Love and compassion fare poorly in chaos — and also in the tyranny that often follows chaos.

Israelite nationhood sheds true light on the often-made claim that Christ's command to love strangers requires open immigration. Christ, as God, commanded the same of Israel in the Old Testament, but that benevolence to strangers never extended to opening Israel to foreign cultures and foreign domination.

2) The Western nations have the right to exist and preserve the cultural, ethnic, and other characteristics which define their nationhood. This right to exist implies the right to control borders. These nations need not feel guilty that they have more than other countries. The wealth of Western countries exists to a large extent because of a Christian heritage which affirms justice, the rights of property, and the work ethic.

Their wealth, indeed, is a witness to the blessings offered by Christian faith and principles. To throw away that wealth is to throw away that witness.

3) Christians of the West should provide humanitarian help to people in Third World countries. For this very reason, Western Christians cannot allow their countries to be overrun and depleted to Third World status. Then there would be no Western wealth to help anyone. This obligation to help, however, is no endorsement of government foreign aid programs of governments which, in the words of one humorist, tax poor people in rich countries to enrich rich people in poor countries.

The biblical viewpoint of nationhood is one that few liberals and other latter-day Jacobins find the least bit congenial. Man, they exclaim, needs no bounds or borders to be good. In fact, borders only frustrate his natural goodness. Man is not sinful and needs no redeeming God. If we just have faith and optimism,

they reassure us, men can rebuild Babel's tower to the heavens and bring on a New Age—with a new heaven, a new earth, and, again, no need for God.

Like their predecessors in France, these neo-Jacobins believe that the best of all men are Noble Savages, i.e. men untainted by the "corrupting" influences of Western civilization. Thus, to our Jacobins a Third World invasion of the West would be no calamity, but a glorious opportunity for moral and spiritual rebirth!

If this be suicide, they may think, it is truly a righteous act done for love of mankind. But just how righteous, many will wonder, are people who so carelessly cast away the memory of their ancestors, the future of their descendants, and the birthright of their nations? Could a deeper — and more base — motive be at work? The words of God recorded in Scripture offer a possible explanation: All they that hate me love death. ■