Whatever Happened to the Canaanites? Principles of a Christian Ethic of Mass Immigration

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Abstract
This article aims to articulate a set of general principles of a Christian ethic of mass immigration. Toward this end, it considers: biblical and theological grounds for cosmopolitanism (and ‘open borders’); biblical and theological caveats against cosmopolitanism; elements of a Christian ethic of the treatment of near and distant neighbours; what Francisco de Vitoria’s ‘On the American Indians’ has to contribute; what lessons should be learned from the history of European colonialism; and the nature of mass immigration into twenty-first-century Europe and the problems it entails. The article concludes with six principles: relevant empirical data should be mastered before developing a judgement; concerns about mass immigration should not be dismissed out of hand as ‘racist’; care of the alien may take a variety of forms, not only that of granting asylum; illegal economic immigrants should normally be returned home; compassion should look in several directions—not only at the migrant, but also at the working-class competitor for jobs and services, and at members of government burdened with the responsibility of making hard decisions; and the Christian is obliged to exercise, not only compassion, but justice and prudence.

Keywords
immigration, borders, cosmopolitanism, Christian ethics, Francisco de Vitoria, Paul Collier

Introduction
The mass migration of people has been a recurrent phenomenon in world history, and it is recurring now in our own time. On the far side of the Atlantic, Latin Americans press on the southern borders of the United States; and on this side, people from the northern half of Africa, from Syria, and from as far east as Afghanistan and Bangladesh, make heavy financial investments and take huge risks with their lives to gain entry to Europe. And,
once inside Europe, thousands of them choose to pay more money and take further risks in crossing the English Channel in order to reach Britain.

Mass migration is not just a phenomenon, of course; it is also a problem. It is certainly a political problem insofar as the citizens of receiving countries perceive it as a problem, regardless of whether it really is one. Insofar as citizens are anxious about heightened competition for unskilled jobs; or about the increased demands upon and so reduced availability of public services; or about the presence among them of people with whom they cannot communicate and whom they barely understand and are unable to trust; or about the introduction of customs and attitudes they find objectionable—insofar as any of these anxieties obtain, whether warranted or not, a political problem is created. And this problem can ramify. So, for example, the tens of thousands of migrants washing up on the shores of Greece or Italy has put considerable strain on the European Union, opening up a rift between western and eastern members. And the unexpectedly large number of economic migrants, who exercised their legal right to move from one part of the European Union’s Single Market to another by moving to the UK, contributed to Brexit and the departure of one of its most powerful members.

Of course, insofar as the problem is merely one of misperception, the solution lies in its correction and the communication of the factual truth. However, although anxieties over mass migration may sometimes be exaggerated, they are not entirely groundless—as I will explain later.

Biblical and Theological Grounds of Cosmopolitanism (and ‘Open Borders’)

So, in the present phenomenon of mass migration we have a problem. How should a Christian respond? The answer to that question should begin with Scripture, because, while biblical tradition cannot be expected simply to hand Christians a ready-made ethic, it can be expected to provide them with guiding moral principles. So, what does the Bible have to say that bears on this matter?

On the one hand, the biblical stories of God’s calling Abraham and his people to migrate out of Ur of the Chaldees, of Moses leading the exodus of Hebrew refugees from Egyptian economic exploitation, of the infant Jesus’s fleeing Herod’s murderous tyranny into Egyptian exile, and of St Paul’s missionary migration to Rome—these should all incline Christians to view, prima facie, migrants with compassion. This inclination should then be strengthened by the explicit Deuteronomic injunction, ‘You shall also love the stranger [or resident alien], for you were strangers in the land of Egypt’ (Deut. 10:19, NSRV).

This migrant species of ‘bias to the poor’ appears even stronger, when informed by the downgrading of natural, including national, loyalties in the New Testament. Although Jesus did not cease to identify himself with the Jewish nation, he did distance himself from militant nationalist resistance to Roman imperial domination. We are told explicitly in the Gospel of John that he evaded those who would make him ‘king’ (Jn 6.15). More generally, however, the pacific tenor of his teaching and conduct indicated a vision of God’s reign alternative to that espoused by militant nationalism. Moreover, Jesus
distanced genuine religious faith from the rites and authority of the Temple in Jerusalem, recognized that it was not the monopoly of his own people, and acknowledged its presence in Samaritans and Gentiles (Matt. 8.5, 27.54; Mk 15.39; Lk. 7.3, 23.47). After Jesus’ death, St Paul further loosened the connection between faith on the one hand, and blood and land on the other. Although he too insisted on maintaining and asserting his Jewish identity, he nevertheless developed an understanding of religious faith that is not oriented toward the particular location of Jerusalem, which transcends ethnicity, and has no proper interest in the restoration of a Jewish nation-state. Out of such an understanding emerged the trans-national religious community known as the ‘Church’.

Given these origins, it should not surprise that some interpret Christianity as implying a cosmopolitan stance over and against a nationalist one, and as preferring love for humanity in general over love for a particular nation. One expression of this can be found in Richard Miller’s argument that Christian love for others is properly indiscriminate and unconditional: ‘Christianity requires an indiscriminate, unconditional love of others, irrespective of political, social, or national affiliation … Christian agape, exemplified by Jesus’ teaching and example, is altruistic and cosmopolitan’.1

This claim has two main grounds, one biblical and the other theological. The biblical ground comprises those passages in the New Testament where ‘natural’ loyalty to family is severely downgraded. Among them are those in the Gospels where Jesus is reported as saying that only those who hate their mothers and fathers can be his disciples,2 that those who would follow him must ‘let the dead bury the dead’,3 and that his ‘family’ now consists of those who have joined him in his cause.4 Also among them, by implication, are those passages in his Epistles where St Paul recommends virginity or celibacy as a higher good than marriage—that is to say, where he downgrades investment in the future of human society.5

The theological ground of Christian cosmopolitanism consists of the typically Protestant concept of God’s love as showered graciously on every human creature regardless of their moral status—a concept that was classically developed in the 1930s by the Swedish Lutheran theologian, Anders Nygren. According to Nygren, God’s love is utterly spontaneous and gratuitous; it is not attracted to the beloved by any of their qualities (how could it be, since those whom it loves are all sinners?) and is in no sense beholden to them; it is simply and absolutely gracious.6 As God loves us, so should

1. Richard B. Miller, ‘Christian Attitudes towards Boundaries: Metaphysical and Geographical’, in D. Miller and S. Hashmi (eds.), *Boundaries and Justice: Diverse Ethical Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
2. Matt. 10.37; Lk. 14.26.
3. Matt. 8.22; Lk. 9.60.
4. Matt. 12.46-50; Mk 3.31-35; Lk. 8.19-21.
5. 1 Corinthians 7.
6. Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 75–81. Nygren uses the New Testament word *agape* to designate this radically altruistic kind of love, which he believes to be peculiarly Christian, and to differentiate it from the Greek concept of love as essentially self-serving *eros*. *Agape and Eros* was originally published in Swedish in 1930 (Part I) and 1938 (Part II).
we love our neighbours: with a pure altruism that entirely disregards their qualities. It is quite true that Nygren himself was not directly addressing the question of whether or not a certain local or national partiality in our affections and loyalties is justifiable; and that his focus was on the religious relationship between God and sinful creatures. Nevertheless, he made it quite clear that Christians are to mediate to their neighbours the same unconditional and indiscriminate love that God has shown them.7

Given all this, we might conclude that Christians should be cosmopolitans, regarding themselves and national governments as having no less a duty to care for foreign people as for their own, and even a greater duty toward foreigners, if they are poorer and more vulnerable. And from this we might infer that Christians should favour entirely open borders.

**Biblical and Theological Caveats against Cosmopolitanism**

Before we do either of those things, however, we need to take into account some countervailing considerations.

First of all, I do not think that the biblical and theological material that I have presented so far really does imply that Christian love should be oblivious to ‘natural’ loyalties and preferences. Certainly, the so-called ‘hard sayings’ of Jesus imply that natural loyalties are subordinate to the requirements of loyalty to God; and that sometimes the latter might enjoin behaviour that contradicts normal expressions of the former. But, given that Jesus is also reported as criticizing the Pharisees for proposing a piece of casuistry that effectively permitted children to neglect the proper care of their elderly parents8—and given that, notwithstanding his affirmation and commendation of Gentiles,9 he maintained his identity as a Jew10—there is good reason not to take these ‘hard sayings’ at face value, and to read them as hyperboles intending to relativize rather than repudiate natural loyalties. As for St Paul, it is notable that, although he reckoned virginity and celibacy superior, he persisted in regarding marriage as a good. In other words, in spite of his urgent sense of the imminent ending or transformation of the world by God, and of how this revolution of the current order of things would severely strain marital and family ties, St Paul never went as far as to say that investment in society through marriage and children should cease. What he thereby implies is that, although the arrival of the world-to-come will involve the transformation of this world and its natural social bonds, it will not involve their simple abolition.

Upon closer inspection, then, the New Testament grounds for supposing Christian love to be properly unconditional and indiscriminate are not very firm. That is even more so in the case of the theological ground. Nygren’s *agape* is specifically love-as-*forgiveness*, which he supposes to be properly indiscriminate, offered, not because of, but in spite of the sinful qualities of the forgiven. My own view of forgiveness

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7. Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, pp. 733–37.
8. Mk 7.9-13.
9. Matt. 8.5-13; 15.21-28.
10. Matt. 15.24, 26; Jn 4.22.
is that it is not simply indiscriminate, as I have explained elsewhere. I do not need to explain it again here, because it would be beside the relevant point, which is that, however one conceives of forgiveness, it is only one of many forms of love. Even if the love that a Christian should show a wrongdoer is indiscriminate, it does not follow that all forms of love that a Christian should show are also indiscriminate. *Agape*, as Nygren thinks of it, is that which bears on how God treats sinners and so how we should treat those who have wronged us. What it does not bear upon is how we should distribute our limited emotional, physical, temporal and material resources in caring for the billions of fellow humans who can now claim to be—more or less closely—our neighbours. The argument from God’s *agape* to Christian cosmopolitanism does not work.

**Christian Treatment of Near and Distant Neighbours**

So how *should* we relate to near and distant neighbours? My view is that Christians should begin their answer to this question with the concept of human being as creaturely. On the one hand this implies basic human equality. If all human beings are creatures of the one God, then they all share a common origin and destiny, and a common subordination. If human creaturehood is then specified in terms of being made ‘in God’s image’, then all human beings are thereby dignified with responsibility to manage the rest of the created world, and each is the subject of a vocation to play a unique part in God’s work of bringing the created world to fulfilment. If we add to the doctrine of creation that of universal sinfulness, then humans are also equal in the fact (if not the degree) of their sinful condition and so in their need of God’s gift of forgiveness, and consequently none has the right to stand to another simply as righteous to the unrighteous.

Given these various kinds of basic equality, each human being owes any other a certain respect or esteem, such that, for example, he will not take the other’s life intentionally or wantonly, whatever his national affiliation may be. A Briton cannot regard the life of an Indian or a Chinaman as any less valuable than that of a compatriot, for

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11. I have explained my analysis of forgiveness into the two moments of compassion and absolution in several places. One of the most recent of these is ‘Melting the Icepacks of Enmity: Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland’, *Studies in Christian Ethics* 24.2 (May 2011), pp. 200–204.

12. The seminal notion that humankind is made ‘in God’s image’ derives from one verse in the book of Genesis: ‘Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion … over all the earth”’ (1.26). In the history of Christian tradition this phrase has been interpreted in many different ways. However, the interpretation that is closest to the text understands it in terms of the practice of kings in the ancient world of setting up statues of themselves in outlying provinces or having their image imprinted on coinage, in order to represent the presence of royal authority throughout their empire. To be made in God’s image, then, is to be made a representative or vice-gerent of God, charged with exercising dominion in God’s name over the rest of creation. For a history of the exegesis of Gen. 1:26-27, see Claus Westermann, *Genesis I–11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion, SJ (London: SPCK, 1984), pp. 147–55.
they too are loved by, and answerable to, God, and they too might mediate God’s prophetic Word. But human beings might owe others more than mere respect and a commitment to refrain from intentional or wanton harm. They might also owe them aid. In addition to non-maleficence, that is, they might also owe beneficence. However, whereas we are always able to refrain from harming other people intentionally or wantonly, we are not always able to benefit them. We always have the negative power not to harm; we do not always have the positive power to confer a benefit. We may be responsible, but ours is a responsibility of creatures, not of gods; and our creaturely resources of energy, time and material goods are finite. Therefore, we are able only to benefit some, not all; and there might be some to whom we are more strongly obliged by ties of gratitude or by the duties of public office, or whom we are better placed to serve on account of shared language and culture or common citizenship. In short, notwithstanding the fact that all human beings are equal in certain basic respects, no matter what their native land, we might still be obliged—depending on the circumstances—to benefit near neighbours before or instead of distant ones.

However, whether near or far, human neighbours are not the only proper objects of our respect and care. So are customs and institutions. Humans come into being and grow up in a particular time, and if not in one particular place and community, then in a finite number of them. A human individual is normally inducted into particular forms of social life by her family, civil society, and national institutions—schools, churches, clubs, workplaces, political associations, parliaments. These institutions and their customs mediate and embody certain understandings of the forms of human flourishing—that is to say, basic human goods—that are given in and with the created nature of human being. Among these goods is the ability of an individual to follow a vocation and build a life, confident in the reliability of surrounding institutions and free from the fear of arbitrary violence. This basic human good is secured by national states through their provision of the rule of law, law’s enforcement, and therefore peace among citizens. These instrumental, public goods are a vital condition of the intrinsic human good of an individual’s ability to build a life. Therefore, insofar as national institutions provide these public goods and thereby secure intrinsic human good, they deserve to be supported and defended.

The Bible and Public Policy Regarding Mass Immigration

Before I proceed further, let me take stock of what guidance biblical tradition gives us regarding the extent of our duties of care. On the one hand, our duties certainly extend beyond our own people to foreigners, especially the poor, of which migrants are usually a species. On the other hand, we retain duties of care toward our own people. Because we are finite creatures with limited resources, we cannot care for everyone equally. We have to decide to direct our finite care to this place rather than that, to some people rather than others. We have to discriminate. Further, we have a duty to care for national institutions that mediate public goods, just because we care about the people that those goods benefit. This, I think, is the guidance that biblical tradition gives us. It is important, but it is also very general. And that is because biblical tradition,
and especially the New Testament, does not directly address those who bear responsibility for the making of public policy.

In particular, it does not address the problem of the threats posed by mass migration and the task of responding to them. With regard to the overwhelming of the Canaanite peoples by Israelite migrants in the mid-thirteenth century BC, the biblical tradition interprets it as a righteous judgement of God and accords the Canaanites no sympathy whatsoever. And while it does lament the forced displacement of the Israelites and their being carted off to Babylon in the early sixth century BC, and although it admires those Jews who remained loyal to their traditions and their homeland while in exile, it also interprets their fate as a divine judgement. The only general principle that we might glean from this, it seems to me, is the disturbing idea that the overwhelming of a people by foreigners and the mass displacement of natives may sometimes be justified. As for how a people who feel threatened by mass migration ought to respond, it tells us nothing at all.

Francisco De Vitoria’s ‘On the American Indians’

Sometimes these threats posed by mass migration may be simply perceived and not real at all. But that is certainly not always the case. While many on the political left in the West are strongly inclined to sympathise with contemporary migrants from Africa, Asia and Latin America, and to dismiss as xenophobic or racist the fears of their fellow citizens (usually poorer whites), their sympathies typically go into reverse when it comes to European migration to the Americas, Australia and New Zealand. For there, with the exception of the Maori in New Zealand, the native peoples were overwhelmed by European migrants, their number, their guns, but most of all their diseases.

One of the earliest Christian attempts to think about this problem can be found in Francisco de Vitoria’s lectures in the early 1530s, which were published under the title, De Indis or ‘On the American Indians’.13 Considering the arrival of the Spanish in the Americas, Vitoria asserted the Spaniards’ natural right to migrate. They ‘have the right to travel and dwell in those countries, so long as they do no harm to the barbarians [that is, the pagan native Americans]’, he writes.14 This is, firstly, because ‘amity between men is part of natural law … it is against nature to shun the company of harmless men’15 and because it is ‘inherently evil’ to refuse to welcome strangers and foreigners.16 Therefore, according to the ius gentium or ‘law of nations’, which either is or derives from natural law, it is considered inhuman to treat strangers and travellers badly without some special cause. Second, in the beginning of the world all things were held in common and everyone was allowed to visit and travel through any land he wished, and this permission was not taken away by the (post-lapsarian) division of property.

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13. Francisco de Vitoria, ‘On the American Indians’, trans. Jeremy Lawrance, in Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance (eds.), Political Writings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 231–92.
14. Vitoria, ‘On the American Indians’, q.3, a.1, p. 278.
15. Vitoria, ‘On the American Indians’, q.3, a.1, p. 279.
16. Vitoria, ‘On the American Indians’, q.3, a.1.5, p. 281.
What applies to travel and residence applies also to trade and citizenship: according to the law of nations, travellers may trade so long as they do no harm to native citizens;\textsuperscript{17} and anyone born in a political community is a citizen, otherwise he, a civil animal, would not be a citizen of any community at all.\textsuperscript{18} Should the barbarians refuse the Spanish their right in these matters, then it is permissible for the latter to go to war to obtain it.\textsuperscript{19}

These natural rights of travel, residence, trade and citizenship are clearly not unconditional, since they are qualified by the duty not to harm the natives. Nevertheless, they are supposed to be presumptive: in the absence of harm, these trans-national rights stand, and the burden of proof lies with those who would restrict them. What Vitoria’s argument could be taken to imply is that the natives should adopt a policy of open borders, until harm is proven. However, this assumes that strangers, traders and immigrants are normally benevolent and trustworthy, and that their numbers normally pose no threat of harm to the social cohesion and political stability and even survival of the receiving society. Sadly, that is not a reasonable assumption. Sometimes it will be true, but, except in an Edenic state of nature, it will not be normally true and to presuppose otherwise would be naïve. Indeed, it would have been naïve of the native Americans to pre-suppose it of the Spanish in the 1500s—and it would have been even more naïve of the native Americans to presuppose it of European immigrants to the Wild West in the 1870s. Whether strangers are trustworthy and threaten no harm depends entirely on the circumstances and cannot be presumed, prudently. Indeed, Vitoria himself implicitly argues against such a presumption when he asserts that the ‘barbarians’ ‘undoubtedly’ have ‘true dominion’, both private and public, over their lands and political organization, just as much as Christians do.\textsuperscript{20} That is, the natives have a presumptive right to political autonomy—even if that right is conditional and can be forfeited by native tyranny over the innocent, for example, in the form of human sacrifice or cannibalism.\textsuperscript{21}

In the end, Vitoria’s two presumptive rights cancel each other out, leaving us with the position that migration is morally justified, provided that it does no harm to native peoples and, in particular, leaves their political autonomy intact. What this implies is that borders should not be open as a general rule. How open they should be will depend on the circumstance of whether or not immigration poses a threat, and what kind of threat it poses. In sum, as I read him, Vitoria argues for controlled immigration.

**Lessons from European Colonialism**

The problem during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with European migration to the Americas and Australasia was that it was uncontrolled—indeed, it was often uncontrollable. In the eighteenth century about 500,000 people emigrated from the British Isles. From 1815 to 1924 the number rocketed to 25 million during a period when mass migration was a global phenomenon, involving about 35 million continental Europeans, 7 million Russians, and

\textsuperscript{17} Vitoria, ‘On the American Indians’, q.3, a.1.3, p. 279.

\textsuperscript{18} Vitoria, ‘On the American Indians’, q.3, a.1.5, p. 281.

\textsuperscript{19} Vitoria, ‘On the American Indians’, q.3, a.1.5, p. 282.

\textsuperscript{20} Vitoria, ‘On the American Indians’, q.1, pp. 239–51.

\textsuperscript{21} Vitoria, ‘On the American Indians’, q.3, a.5, pp. 287–88.
(from 1846 to 1940) 50 million Chinese and 30 million Indians.\textsuperscript{22} The preferred destination for British and Irish emigrants was North America, followed by Australia. From 1810 to 1860 the number of settlers in Australasia shot up from 12,000 to 1.25 million, expanding a hundredfold in fifty years. From 1790 to 1860 the population of British North America grew from about 250,000 (mostly French) to 3.25 million (mostly Anglophone), and from 1891 to 1911 the four provinces of western Canada grew sevenfold from 250,000 to 1.75 million.

The motives of migrants, then as now, were various. Some had no choice in the matter. Until the American colonists won their independence in 1783, Britons convicted of crimes judged not deserving of hanging were transported across the Atlantic to serve out their sentences on the far side. From 1788 their destination changed to Australia, where an estimated 168,000 convicts were shipped until penal transportation ceased in 1868. Of those who chose to migrate, some went in search of religious freedom—most famously, the ‘Pilgrim Fathers’, who sought to escape the Church of England and landed on the coast of what would become Massachusetts in 1620. Others fled a victorious enemy: in 1783 about 50,000 loyalists (including freed black slaves and native American allies) left the emergent United States for what remained of British North America—mostly to Nova Scotia, where they inadvertently and suddenly tripled the settler population, upsetting its \textit{modus convivendi} with the native peoples.\textsuperscript{23} Emigrants from Ireland and Highland Scotland were typically driven to escape dire poverty—most notably during the Great Famine in 1840s Ireland—but their counterparts from Lowland Scotland and England were probably less pushed by misery than pulled by the prospect of betterment—freehold farms, a life with leisure as well as work, an egalitarian social environment, and (for men) the right to vote.\textsuperscript{24} As James Belich puts it, ‘Settlers wanted a life as well as a living’. What is more, they ‘were not ogres. They were whining bundles of hopes and fears just like us’.\textsuperscript{25}

And, one might add, just like the Africans and Asians now making their way into Europe.

The problem with this European migration is that it was not well controlled, with the result that native peoples were overwhelmed by unregulated immigration. And sometimes this was either because there was no government to control it or because such colonial government as there was did not have the power to control it. To take one famous example, after the end of the American part of the Seven Years War (known as the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} James Belich, \textit{Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 126.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Belich, \textit{Replenishing the Earth}, pp. 80–81.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Belich, \textit{Replenishing the Earth}, pp. 128–33, 156–65. Belich reports that there is a ‘vexed migration debate’ (Belich, \textit{Replenishing the Earth}, p. 131) among economic historians about what caused the explosion in British and Irish migration in the nineteenth century, in which ‘pull’ theories (the attraction of economic opportunities) ‘currently have an edge on push theories’ (Belich, \textit{Replenishing the Earth}, p. 130): ‘The dominant explanation for American migration as for others is the classic pull factor, rational choice, whereby people moved west for higher wages and better opportunities’ (Belich, \textit{Replenishing the Earth}, p. 132). To this, Belich himself adds two further factors: increased ‘ease of transfer’ (Belich, \textit{Replenishing the Earth}, p. 132) and ‘a great shift in attitudes to emigration’ (Belich, \textit{Replenishing the Earth}, p. 146).
\item \textsuperscript{25} Belich, \textit{Replenishing the Earth}, pp. 164, 558.
\end{itemize}
‘French and Indian War’) in 1763, King George III issued a Royal Proclamation, which declared that the native tribes in the territory west of the Appalachian and Allegheny Mountains as far as the Mississippi river ‘live under our protection’, and that it was essential to the security of the colonies that the Indian nations not be ‘disturbed in the possession of such part of our dominions and territories as, not having been ceded to or purchased by us, are reserved to them’. In enforcement of the Royal Proclamation, the British stationed 10,000 troops along the Appalachian and Allegheny Mountains to stop settlers moving west into native territory. The British were perfectly sincere in their attempts to preserve the peace of the natives. As the Commander-in-Chief of British forces in North America, Thomas Gage, commented in 1767, ‘I find everywhere that the Soldiers agree perfectly well with the Indians, and they seem to look upon them at present, as People who are to protect them from Injurys’. However, the best intentions of the redcoat cordon did not suffice. The following year, Gage wrote that ‘[a]t present there is a total Dissolution of Law and Justice on this head, amongst People of the Western Frontier; and the Indians can get no Satisfaction but in their own way, by retaliating on those who unhappily fall into their hands’. Not only did the imperial government’s attempt at restricting migration fail, it also so irritated both settlers and land-speculators (among them, George Washington) that it became a major cause of American colonists’ wholesale rejection of imperial authority in 1775. That is why so many natives fought alongside the imperial British during the American Revolutionary War: to resist the westward expansion of an alternative, American colonial empire. As the Mohawk chief, Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea), put it: ‘the Rebels … in a great measure begin this Rebellion to be sole Masters of this Continent’. The irony is that it was the imperial government that sought to defend the autonomy of the native Americans against anti-imperial colonists. In this case, the problem for the natives was not that the power of imperial government was too strong, but that it was too weak.

Mass Migration into Twenty-first-Century Europe, and its Problems

The tragic fate of native peoples in nineteenth-century North America and Australia is lamentable, and we rightly lament it. But theirs was the fate of people overwhelmed by uncontrolled migration. If we extend sympathy to them, who were overwhelmed, fairness obliges us to reserve some sympathy for contemporary peoples, including our own, who fear being overwhelmed. In the USA and Europe, there has been considerable disquiet

26. Belich, Replenishing the Earth, p. 61.
27. Belich, Replenishing the Earth, p. 75.
28. Alan Taylor regards the British prohibition of American settlers from the trans-Appalachian West as a cause of the subsequent revolutionary conflict equal to that of the imposition of taxes. Alan Taylor, American Revolutions: A Continental History (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016), pp. 6, 77.
29. Taylor, American Revolutions, p. 251. Commissioned in 1786 by his former comrade-in-arms, Hugh Percy, later 2nd Duke of Northumberland, Joseph Brant’s portrait now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC.
at uncontrolled, illegal immigration. Maybe some of this disquiet is motivated by racism, but not all of it, and indeed probably not much. For the objection is usually not to immigration as such, but to uncontrolled or too-little-controlled immigration. One might say that the fears that motivate the objection are groundless, that uncontrolled or loosely controlled immigration in fact poses no threat. Whether or not that is true is an empirical question. However, while it might seem improbable that we in Britain are about to be overwhelmed by immigrants, it is not so improbable to people on the coasts of eastern Greece and southern Italy. And indeed, in June 2021, Kent County Council in England announced that it would start to turn away child migrants arriving at Dover, lest its public services be overwhelmed, unless other councils agree to take their fair share.\footnote{‘Kent County Council in child migrant legal threat to Home Secretary’, 7 June 2021; https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-57369175 (accessed 21 June 2021).}

Besides, immigration need not threaten to overwhelm public services and political stability in order to be a problem. As Paul Collier argued in his 2013 book, *Exodus*, sudden immigration on a massive scale typically creates two major problems, one in the receiving country, the other in the sending country. The first is that lots of people arriving from the same part of the world in a foreign place naturally tend to congregate together, creating ghettos, which are not well integrated into the host society and may strain social cohesion, trust and solidarity by perpetuating cultural customs that are not merely foreign to natives, but morally objectionable—such as the degradation of women, forced marriage, honour killing, the incitement of violence against infidels, and a customary readiness to resort to violence.\footnote{Collier, *Exodus*, chapter 9, and pp. 252–53. The dissident intellectual from the Ivory Coast, Ernest Tigori, concurs: ‘Welfare Europe is a powerful magnet for the thousands who keep washing up on its shores … Meanwhile, the exodus causes standards of living to decline steadily back home … uncontrolled migration from the South to the North shore of the Mediterranean may destabilize it beyond repair’ (Raymond Ibrahim, “‘I’m Saddened by the White Man’s Emasculation”: An African Sets the Record Straight’, *PJ Media*, 15 January 2020; https://pjmedia.com/columns/raymond-ibrahim/2020/01/15/im-saddened-by-the-white-mans-emasculaton-an-african-sets-the-record-straight-n123156 (accessed 22 June 2021).} The second problem is that, since migrants tend to be among the more enterprising of the citizens of the sending country, sudden emigration on massive scale can strip the sending society of much of its talent.\footnote{Paul Collier, ‘Meeting the Migration Challenge and Reforming Capitalism through Mutual Solidarity’, *Social Europe*, 25 July 2018; https://socialeurope.eu/the-migration-challenge-and-reform-capitalism-through-mutual-solidarity (accessed 22 June 2021).} Thus in 2018 about 40 per cent of all Syrians with university degrees were resident in Germany.\footnote{Paul Collier, *Exodus: Immigration and Multiculturalism in the 21st Century* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), chapters 1 and 3.}

## Principles of a Christian Response to the Public Policy Problem of Mass Immigration

Mass immigration can be a problem. How, then, in the light of biblical and subsequent theological tradition, should Christians respond to it? First of all, they should say nothing at all until they have thoroughly considered the empirical data and the practical,
political problems that these raise. Moral ideals that do not care to take into account the actual nature of the matter they are being applied to, will produce moralistic prescriptions, which those burdened with the heavy responsibility of making policy decisions will be unable to respect. Besides, such moralism, lacking in pastoral care, lacks love.

Second, Christians should withhold themselves from dismissing out of hand as ‘racist’ concerns about the control of immigration and objections to a policy of open borders. This is not only because of the thoughtless and aggressive profligacy with which the word ‘racist’ is thrown about nowadays. It is also because middle-class Christians should be aware that problems raised by mass immigration that may be invisible to them, are not so invisible to their working-class fellow citizens. To members of the middle class, if I may stereotype for a moment, immigrants mean cheap and industrious home-help and polite coffee-shop baristas. But to the working class they can mean competition for jobs and housing, or a reason for employers not to invest in training the native unemployed.

Third, of course, Christians should acknowledge the duty of care for the alien, but they should also recognize that that care can take different forms. It should certainly involve providing asylum for those suffering political persecution, and maybe those fleeing war and failed states, too. It should also involve giving international aid in the form of investing in the stability and prosperity of poor, unstable countries, so that talented citizens do not feel the need to pay the exorbitant expense and take the high risks of escaping into very alien environments.

Fourth, as a rule, illegal economic migrants should be returned home. The reasons for this are several. One is that if illegal migrants are not returned home, then many others will be encouraged to follow them. In that case, we would have open borders *de facto*, if not *de iure*. Another reason is that, whatever its duties to foreign peoples, a national government does have a primary duty of care towards its own people and their legitimate interests. The pursuit of self-interest is not always selfish. Rather than follow Immanuel Kant (or at least a popular version of him), I follow Thomas Aquinas’s combination of Augustine’s strong, biblical affirmation of the original goodness of God’s creation with the philosophy of Aristotle, which holds that there is such a thing as morally obligatory self-love. The human individual has a duty to care for herself properly, to seek what is genuinely her own good. As with an individual, so with a national community and the organ of its cohesion and decision, namely, its government: a national government has a moral duty to look after the well-being of a large political body of human individuals—and in that sense to advance their genuine interests. As the French political philosopher, Yves Simon, wrote during the Abyssinia crisis of 1935, ‘What should we think, truly, about a government

34. I say that illegal migrants should be returned home ‘as a rule’, because there can be good reasons why illegal migrants long resident in the receiving country should be given leave to remain.

35. See David M. Gallagher, ‘Thomas Aquinas on Self-Love as the Basis of Love of Others’, *Acta Philosophica* 8 (1999), fasc 1. Protestants with their typical emphasis on human sinfulness and self-sacrificial love, tend to regard self-love as sub-Christian (e.g., the Swedish Lutheran, Anders Nygren, in *Agape and Eros*). However, Jesus’ command was not simply to love God and one’s neighbour. Rather, it was to love God and ‘your neighbour as yourself’ (Mk 12.30-31).
that would leave out of its preoccupations the interests of the nation that it governs? Among the legitimate interests of citizens are upholding the rule of law, maintaining the confidence and compliance of law-abiding citizens, and protecting social cohesion, trust and solidarity. In other words, a national government has a duty to preserve precisely those features of a society that make it attractive to migrants.

I imagine that some will find this last point heartless, lacking in compassion. So the fifth response of Christians to the problem of mass migration should be to remember that compassion needs to look in more than one direction. Certainly, it should look upon the migrants, who, however illegal, have been propelled by great need and great desire to pay high costs and take great risks to get here. But it should not overlook the poor who are already among us, many of whom may be white but are not at all privileged, and who may feel, with some good reason, threatened. Nor should compassion avert its eyes from what Reinhold Niebuhr nicely termed ‘the burden-bearers of the world’—that is, those members of government and the civil service, to whom we have delegated the onerous responsibility of making hard decisions.

Finally, sixth, Christians should recognize that compassion is not the only virtue that they are obliged to exercise. They are also obliged to do justice (to all parties) and to display prudence. And sometimes justice and prudence should qualify compassion in requiring difficult decisions that knowingly cause other people distress. Sometimes, as Martin Luther famously put it, God’s love—and so ours—must operate with its left hand.

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36. Yves R. Simon, The Ethiopian Campaign and French Political Thought, ed. Anthony O. Simon, trans. Robert Royal (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2009), p. 55.
37. This phrase appears on a few occasions in Reinhold Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics (New York: Seabury Press, 1979)—e.g., on p. 15.
38. See Veli-Matti Karkkainen, ‘Evil, Love, and the Left Hand of God: The Contribution of Luther’s Theology of the Cross to an Evangelical Theology of Evil’, Evangelical Quarterly 74.3 (2002), esp. p. 222:

‘Here Luther introduces one major aspect of his “theology of paradoxes”: God’s alien work (opus alienum Dei) and God’s proper work (opus proprium Dei). God’s alien work means putting down, killing, taking away hope, leading to desperation, etc. God’s proper work means the opposite: forgiving, giving mercy, taking up, saving, encouraging, etc. The following quote clearly depicts how Luther uses these two terms:

You (God) exalt us when you humble us. You make us righteous when you make us sinners. You lead us to heaven when you cast us into hell. You grant us the victory when you cause us to be defended. You give us life when you permit us to be killed.

The alien works Luther sometimes calls “the works of the left hand” and the proper works “the works of the right hand”. It is important to understand that, while these two kinds of works seem to be the opposite of each other, they result from the same love of God. Luther in fact says that God’s proper work is veiled in his alien work and takes place simultaneously with it.”