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**THE IMMIGRANT AS 'OTHER':  
A CRITICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND ETHICAL ANALYSIS OF IMMIGRANTS AS A  
PERCEIVED THREAT TO AMERICAN NATIONAL IDENTITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE IMMIGRANT AS 'OTHER': A CRITICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND ETHICAL ANALYSIS OF IMMIGRANTS AS A PERCEIVED THREAT TO AMERICAN NATIONAL IDENTITY**

**Gene Lankford**

This dissertation will engage in a critical analysis of discourse related to the reception of migrant workers coming to the United States especially from Latin America. The thesis will propose that at the center of arguments for a more restrictive immigration policy in the U.S. is a construction of the immigrant as “other” and as a threat to the purity of American national identity. This construction will be examined historically, sociologically, and theologically, and will be contrasted with Christian theological and ethical models for dealing with human social and cultural difference, proposing an alternative approach of envisioning the immigrant as enhancing rather than threatening our identity as a people.

The analysis will include insights from anthropology, postcolonial and feminist thinkers, critical race theories, and a historical exploration of racial ideologies. Christian theological responses will include insights from Latin American liberation theology and the Aristotelian-Christian virtues tradition, along with a theology of reconciliation. The dissertation will also address political and economic aspects of immigration and the relationship between globalization (including NAFTA) and migration.

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Finally, I thank my wife Lea for her patience and understanding during my times of stress and limited functioning as a husband, for keeping me going when I was tempted to give up, and for her support in countless ways throughout these past six years of working on this degree.

**DEDICATION:**

*To my loving wife Aida Lea Barrera Segura: my constant companion, soul mate, and closest friend. You have supported and encouraged me in my struggles and celebrated with me in my joys and successes. You kept me going when I was ready to give up. Your strength has compensated for my weakness. You are my most significant "other" and the immigrant without whom my life would not be complete.*

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*“When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”*

*--Covenant Commandment, in Leviticus 19:33-34*

*“I was a stranger, and you welcomed me. . . Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these. . ., you did it to me.”*

*--Jesus, in Matthew 25:35,40*

*“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”*

*--From the poem, "The New Colossus," by Emma Lazarus, engraved at the base of the Statue of Liberty<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus," Statue of Liberty National Monument, <http://www.libertystatepark.com/emma.htm>.

## INTRODUCTION

Immigration is certainly a very timely and hotly debated topic in American social and political discourse of the early twenty-first century, particularly in terms of who should be allowed to immigrate into the United States, how many, under what circumstances, and what should be done about the fact that some 11 to 12 million persons, mostly from Mexico, are living in the United States without legal authorization. Should they be deported? Is it even conceivable to deport that many people? What impact would such a mass removal of immigrant labor have on our industries and the national economy, to say nothing of the lives of the immigrants themselves? At the time of this writing, there is a major political debate over what to do about a sudden influx of tens of thousands of refugees from violence in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, a substantial portion of whom are unaccompanied children. Some political leaders are arguing for immediate and indiscriminant deportation of these persons. Others insist that they be granted political asylum rather than sending them back to their potential death. Still others seek middle ground between these alternatives.

Immigration is also a subject riddled with great complexity. Some advocates for one policy or another speak as if there were only two "sides" to the issue of immigration, when in fact, there are multiple different perspectives, just as there are multiple different facets to the question of who can come to or remain in the United States. Even the question of undocumented immigrants, disparagingly referred to as "illegal aliens," is more complex than most people realize. There are asylum seekers and other persons granted a temporary legal status even though they crossed the border illegally; persons who entered the United States on a non-immigrant visa, such as tourists, students, religious workers, etc., and overstayed the

expiration of that visa; as well as the more familiar case of workers who crossed the border illegally from Mexico in search of jobs; along with still other categories of migrants without a permanent legal status, including deferred action, temporary protected status, and suspension of deportation.

There are many dimensions to this large and complex issue of immigration, far more than could be treated in one dissertation or book. There are economic arguments for more or less immigration and how immigrants either help or hurt the economy, either take jobs from American workers or fill job vacancies so as to expand the number of jobs, and are either a drain on tax dollars and community resources or an addition to tax revenues, including social security. These are vitally important practical concerns that must be analyzed and debated in the course of shaping public policy on immigration. Yet, there are many resources dealing with these topics. I only touch upon these briefly in Chapter 1 and, to some extent, in Chapter 5. There are the questions of border security and illegality, what it means to be a nation with borders for its own protection and a nation of laws, and when and how the laws should be enforced. These are good topics to explore but more than I can deal with in the present work (though briefly addressed in Chapter 5 also), given my focus elsewhere. There are the realities of local communities impacted by immigration and the problems they encounter. This is another good topic, but one that must await a future treatment. And, of course, there are the realities and the lives of the immigrants themselves, which could be a good topic to explore in a future project, though there are many fine books on those themes, especially those written by immigrants themselves.

There is the history of immigration and of public reactions to immigrants, including historical patterns of “nativism” that are very relevant to today’s immigration debate. This is ground that is well-covered by John Higham in his *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*<sup>1</sup> and by Roger Daniels in his *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*<sup>2</sup> and *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882*.<sup>3</sup> I considered making connections between the nativist reactions of the past and those of the present, but I opted for considering the current arguments for restricting immigration in their own integrity, rather than as a recycling of older arguments, since many proponents of these arguments reject the comparisons with past reactions to immigrants and insist that today’s realities are different.

My focus will be on the issues of collective identity, difference, and otherness-- specifically the question of whether immigrants are or are not a threat to American national identity, looking at the question of how we respond to the immigrant other, and contrasting the narratives of exclusion offered by prominent thinkers and activists seeking a more restrictive immigration policy, with counter-narratives from the Christian faith. Is the immigrant “other” a threat to our identity or a gift that enlarges and enhances that identity?

Herein, I will attempt to offer a Christian theological perspective on otherness, difference, and welcoming the immigrant strangers in our midst. I acknowledge that

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<sup>1</sup> John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, Corrected and with a new pref. ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1963).

<sup>2</sup> Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 2nd ed. (New York: Perennial, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants since 1882*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004).

differences exist among Christians in their interpretation and application of Scripture and the resources of the Christian tradition. Yet, as a theologian and ethicist, I am bold to proclaim certain truths that are decisive for all Christians based on theological understandings and commitments that are shared by all—or virtually all—Christians. (I must qualify the “all” because there are divergences among Christians even on such a core theological affirmation as God’s Tri-Unity, recognizing that, for example, Unitarians do not accept the doctrine of the Trinity, and there are other Christian groups that have different understandings of the relational dynamics of the Trinity than that of the mainstream church. Nonetheless, such a doctrine unites the vast majority of Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christians, as is the case with some other Christian theological affirmations.)

I acknowledge that mine is a particularly *Christian* theological approach, rather than an attempt to arrive at a universal perspective that cuts across all religions and/or non-religious traditions of inquiry. Nonetheless, the approach I offer here can be placed in dialogue with, and find points of intersection with, other traditions. Some I am sure would object that because the United States is a secular, pluralistic society, with the disestablishment of religion built into our Constitution, in its First Amendment, it is inappropriate to inject religion into matters of public policy—or at least, any particular religious perspective. While I agree that public policy should not be based on a particular faith stance but should seek a broad perspective that approaches one that is universally human—or at least a perspective shared by a large consensus of the body politic, I would argue that this *requires*, rather than negates, each religious (and/or non-religious) perspective making its own particular voice heard, as a part of the broader dialogue. Universality is not attained by denial of the particular, in an attempt to

impose as a universal perspective that which is in reality a situated perspective pretending to universality. One view/ culture/ theological tradition cannot be imposed as the universal but must enter into dialogue with others, while bringing its own full integrity to that dialogue. Each individual, each group, each faith tradition, and each culture must bring its own voice to the discussion, within a dialogue that seeks common ground. A faith community that does not offer its own particular perspective to that dialogue is denying its voice and abdicating its responsibility. All must be heard.

Let me say a word about the specificity of my focus. Though cognizant of the fact that immigration is a global phenomenon and not merely an issue in the United States, my focus is on immigration into the United States. I do discuss the global context of immigration to some extent in Chapter 1, but I do not offer any detailed account of the immigration realities and problems in Europe and other regions. As far as the question of who the immigrants are, my focus is primarily on immigrants from Mexico and other parts of Latin America, who are by far the majority of immigrants into the United States currently, and arguably the most controversial. Some of my conclusions may or may not apply to immigrants from other regions. In an American context, immigrants from Canada or from European countries are considered less “other” than immigrants from Latin America and other countries where the people emigrating are mostly poor and are classified as “non-white.” As a white Anglo Christian non-immigrant myself, I am especially speaking in this work to other white Anglo Christian non-immigrants, as the primary locus of enunciation in the United States for determining who and what are “other.” I have attempted to listen to the voices of those who are other-than my own situated perspective, but I cannot claim to be their voice.

In Part 1, consisting only of Chapter 1, I discuss the context of the immigration debate, in terms of the economic and political realities of globalization and their impact on human migration, while also exploring a brief history of immigration and immigration policy, taking note of the contradictions within that policy, including the failure of intensified border security measures to accomplish their intended objective.

In Part 2, I examine some representative thinkers and activists seeking to restrict immigration policy based substantially on seeing immigrants as a threat to American national identity, if not to the entirety of Western civilization. I also include in Part 2 a chapter on deconstructing race as a determinant of collective identity, since race at some point becomes a factor in many people's fear of the immigrant other as a threat to our national identity. One of my conclusions in Part 2 is that there is a widespread narrative about the immigrant as a threat to destroy the unity of the United States and to destroy all of Western civilization, a narrative that circulates among the general public in a generic way but has been given systematic written form in a novel by Jean Raspail, *The Camp of the Saints*,<sup>4</sup> a novel which both captures, and to some extent shapes, the fears in circulation.

In Part 3, I explore a number of counter-narratives from the Christian faith to the narrative of immigrants as a threat. These include the Christian theme of God's work of reconciling the world and our participation in that work; Latin American liberation theology's witness to the biblical God who takes sides with, and can best be found in relation to, the poor and the marginalized; and the pervasive biblical theme of hospitality toward the stranger as not only an ideal but a formative Christian practice and a defining Christian virtue.

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<sup>4</sup> Jean Raspail, *The Camp of the Saints*, trans. Norman Shapiro (Petoskey, Mich.: Social Contract Press, 1995).

I do not herein propose, and the Christian faith does not offer, a prefabricated immigration policy. To arrive at a coherent, rational, workable, and just immigration policy will require debate and discussion of many practical issues and dimensions of life in the United States impacted by immigration. Yet, it does make a huge difference how we frame the issues. What is the narrative context in which immigration issues are considered? What guiding principles, values, and understanding of human life do we bring to the discussion? What is our fundamental approach to the immigrant other? Is the immigrant other a threat to be excluded or a gift to be embraced?

In other words, the question I seek to answer in this dissertation is: Are immigrants—particularly Latino immigrants—a threat to our identity as a people or a gift that enhances our identity, rather than diminishing it? Answering that question will not tell us everything we need to know about formulating a just and workable immigration policy, but until we answer that question, all efforts to objectively examine the facts, discuss and debate the social, political, and economic issues involved, and arrive at a broad consensus on how to fix our broken immigration system are doomed to failure.

## PART 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE

### CHAPTER 1: GLOBALIZATION AND MIGRATION: THE REALITIES OF MEXICAN IMMIGRATION AND THE FAILURE OF U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICY

*In NAFTA the nation committed itself to a joint framework for the continentwide integration of markets for goods, capital, information, commodities, and services; but since then it has refused to recognize the inevitable fact that labor markets will also merge in an integrated economy. In practical if not logical terms, it is impossible to create a single North American market characterized by the free movement of all factors of production except one.<sup>1</sup>*

--Douglas Massey

Immigration is a very timely and hotly debated policy issue in the United States during these opening years of the twenty-first century—particularly in relation to the influx of undocumented workers from Mexico.<sup>2</sup> It is an issue that tends to evoke strong emotional reactions that are not always grounded in factual information, and certainly not in rational analysis of the facts at hand, but instead often stem from prejudices or preconceived notions about “the foreigner” —“the other” —or about Mexicans particularly, combined with myths and misconceptions that distort the facts, while undermining the possibility of a critical, non-ideological assessment of factual information.

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<sup>1</sup>Douglas Massey, "Backfire at the Border: Why Enforcement without Legalization Cannot Stop Illegal Immigration," in *Trade Policy Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2005), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Vocabulary for describing these migrants is itself a contested issue. For many who are angry about their presence in the U.S., they are best known as “illegal aliens,” “illegal immigrants,” or simply “illegals.” The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), which, as amended and updated by subsequent legislation, defines U.S. immigration policy, uses the term “alien” to refer to any non-citizen. Rather than referring to those who are present in the U.S. without legal authorization as “illegal” or “illegals,” the INA refers to their presence itself as “unlawful presence” and, if they entered the country without legal authorization (only one category of unlawful presence, since many have instead overstayed expired visas), the INA refers to this as “entered without inspection.” In my assessment of the law, the facts, and the ethics of how we refer to other human beings, it seems that a person can do an illegal act but cannot be an illegal person. Moreover, the legal status of those who are unlawfully present in the U.S. is that they have no documentation authorizing such presence. Therefore, in my estimation it is not only more respectful and morally defensible but in fact more accurate to refer to them as “undocumented.”

There are many dimensions and angles to explore in connection with this important, controversial, and timely issue. In this chapter, I will focus upon the realities of Mexican immigration, documented and undocumented, into the United States, substantially as a consequence of processes associated with social and economic globalization, and the failure of U.S. immigration policy in response to those realities. This will provide a historical, political, and socio-economic framework for the critical, theological, and ethical analysis of responses to immigrants that constitutes the major thrust of this dissertation. Here the focus will be primarily descriptive and analytical, though at points there will be at least a seminal reference to some of the ethical implications of the realities discussed, while a more complete reflection on ethical considerations will await the final section of the dissertation.

### **Migration as a Consequence and Component of Globalization:**

The migration of laborers from one country to another is a natural outcome of economic globalization, and the free movement of labor is fundamental to the process of “free trade” that is constitutive of the integration of world markets referred to as globalization.

David Henderson, former chief economist of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, defines globalization as: free movement of goods, services, labour and capital, thereby creating a single market in inputs and outputs; and full national treatment for foreign investors (and nationals working abroad) so that economically speaking, there are no foreigners.<sup>3</sup>

Increased global trade during the early twentieth century was substantially the outcome of cheaper transportation and shipping costs. According to an analysis of the data by economists Eli Heckscher and Bertil Ohlin, this led to a “convergence of the prices of the three basic input

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<sup>3</sup> David Henderson, *The MAI Affair: A Story and Its Lessons* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999). Cited in: Martin Wolf, *Why Globalization Works* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 14.

factors: wages, rents, and interest rates.”<sup>4</sup> This price convergence was the result of a freer movement of commodities, capital, and labor from nations in which one or more of these elements of production was in abundance to nations where the particular mobile resource was scarce. In the United States, there was an abundance of land (obviously immobile) and capital but a shortage of labor, in contrast with an abundance of labor in European nations. The consequent higher wages in the United States provided the primary incentive for Europeans to emigrate to the United States in search of higher wages. This migration created a convergence of wages, as wages declined in the United States due to the influx of laborers and rose in Europe as labor became less abundant, which, in turn, reduced the flow of immigrants as the wage differentials gradually disappeared.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, as economists Wolfgang Stolper and Paul Samuelson explained in the Stolper-Samuelson theorem, in the immediate situation a move toward protectionism is generated by those who have the scarce factor of production and thus stand to lose from the free movement of that factor.<sup>6</sup> In the case of the United States, therefore, protectionism against the free movement of labor has taken the form of restrictions on immigration. Fear of immigration and stricter immigration policies have especially arisen in response to income inequalities in the developing world, as it “exports” its abundant supply of low-skilled workers, who then compete with American workers, driving their wages downward.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> William J. Bernstein, *A Splendid Exchange : How Trade Shaped the World*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 339.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 339-41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 341-43.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 379.

Prior to World War I, international travel and border crossing were fairly free, easy, and rarely required the use of passports. In fact, most countries eagerly tried to draw immigrants. The United States itself was seeking to expand its frontier and needed the people power to develop large tracts of uninhabited land, help find gold, and “provide the hands and minds to support industrialization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>8</sup>

Between 1820 and 1880, political and economic conditions brought more than 2.8 million Irish immigrants to the United States. German Catholic immigrants came during the 1840s. In 1875, Congress passed the first restrictive statute for immigration, barring convicts and prostitutes from admission. Ethnic restrictions fell on certain nationalities, such as Chinese immigrants (the Chinese Exclusion Act was finally repealed in 1943) and then in 1907 on the Japanese. By 1920, nearly 14 million of the 105 million people living in the United States were foreigners.<sup>9</sup>

“Then military and security restrictions on travel and migration during World War I ushered in a world of passports, visas, and work permits.”<sup>10</sup> The first restrictive per-country immigration quotas in the United States were established in the Immigration Act of 1924, later revised by the Hart-Celler Immigration Bill of 1965, which was an amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. Prior to the 1924 law, the United States, with a few exceptions to be mentioned later, had been mostly open to immigration from the rest of the world.<sup>11</sup>

As the twentieth century progressed, wealthy industrialized countries began to make distinctions in their visa structures between different categories of immigrants based on their

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<sup>8</sup> Andrés Solimano, *International Migration in the Age of Crisis and Globalization: Historical and Recent Experiences* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Gordon H. Hanson and Institute for International Economics (U.S.), *Why Does Immigration Divide America?: Public Finance and Political Opposition to Open Borders* (Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 2005), 11-12, including note 2 on 12.

skill levels, education, and special expertise and knowledge, seeking the immigration of those with the abilities that they believed would benefit their own economies, while excluding others. In addition to visas and passports, immigration was restricted by the erection of physical walls, tank traps, and fortifications along borders and by the use of imprisonment and physical deportation of undocumented immigrants.<sup>12</sup>

Ludwig von Mises, of the Austrian school of economics and writing between the two World Wars, considered “the free mobility of labor in international trade” to be an essential component of “liberal”<sup>13</sup> economic policy.<sup>14</sup> It is an element of freedom—every person’s “right to live wherever he wants.”<sup>15</sup> He described how the previous struggle for freedom of emigration had evolved into a struggle for freedom of immigration, from punitive laws preventing inhabitants from leaving their homeland in search of a better life to more recent restrictions preventing their entrance into those countries where their life prospects might improve. Von Mises was writing in 1927, when large numbers of European workers were seeking to emigrate to the United States looking for employment but were hindered by immigration barriers. He described the predicament as Americans seeking to protect their higher wages, at the expense of the European workers. However, he asserted that this is the mistake of seeking immediate gain at the expense of long-term loss, as in the worldwide

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<sup>12</sup> Solimano, 7.

<sup>13</sup> “Liberal” is used here in the European sense of classical economic theory, to mean unrestricted free markets, not the muddled American usage that has many different connotations but is essentially a political label meaning the opposite of “conservative.”

<sup>14</sup> Ludwig Von Mises and Bettina Bien Greaves, *Liberalism : The Classical Tradition* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), 102.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

picture, this inefficient allocation of labor resources diminishes the overall productivity of human labor and thus reduces the supply of goods available to all humankind. Conversely, he believed that “the increase in the general productivity of human labor which could be brought about by the establishment of complete freedom of migration” would likely compensate for any short-term loss of wages due to the immigration of foreign workers.<sup>16</sup> In other words, as is often the case in economic theory, economics is not a “zero-sum game.”

Charles Wheelan, in his book *Naked Economics*, makes a similar argument about the threat of job losses due to immigration, as he points out that “huge waves of immigrants have come to work in America throughout our history without any long-run increase in unemployment.”<sup>17</sup> There certainly are short-term displacements. However, in the bigger picture, over time, “new workers must spend their earnings somewhere in the economy, creating new demand for other products. The economic pie gets bigger, not merely resliced.”<sup>18</sup>

Likewise, Ian Bremmer, in *The End of the Free Market*, argues that the free mobility of labor is essential to American and global prosperity, while at the same time acknowledging the persistence of resistance to immigration:

Immigration has always been a hot topic in the United States for reasons political, cultural, and ideological, but wave after wave of immigrants over more than two centuries *have helped power American prosperity*. . . Unfortunately, every new generation meets resistance from those who fear change,

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 104-05.

<sup>17</sup> Charles J. Wheelan, *Naked Economics : Undressing the Dismal Science*, Fully revised and updated. ed. (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 132.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

competition, or both. . . *Globalization draws its power to create wealth from the cross-border flow not only of goods and services but of people.*<sup>19</sup>

These authors cited thus far are all economic theorists. Their concern is not to defend immigration out of a sense of moral obligation or concern for immigrants. Rather, they are describing migration as a natural part of the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor that are fundamental aspects of free trade and the economic integration of markets that is referred to as globalization and that they believe to be essential to economic prosperity. From their point of view, the free flow of labor is both a reality and a necessity of globalization, and restrictive immigration policies are an impediment to the economic self-interest of nations and their citizens.

Two other prominent economists who have written on globalization address the migration of peoples with some degree of ethical concern regarding the alleviation of poverty. Martin Wolf, in his book *Why Globalization Works*, states that although theoretically, when capital flows freely, free trade should equalize wages without workers needing to move, this does not happen in the developing world, because workers with high skill levels will earn higher wages in wealthier developed countries, while at the same time generating a higher return on capital there than in poor countries. This is because “productive efficiency diverges immensely across countries.”<sup>20</sup> Wealthier countries are able to invest much more in their workers’ skills, and the aggregation of skills in such countries brings a higher return on all skills. At the same time, wealthy nations, while striving to block the entry of *unskilled* workers,

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<sup>19</sup> Ian Bremmer, *The End of the Free Market : Who Wins the War between States and Corporations?* (New York: Portfolio, 2010), 193. Emphasis is mine in all cases.

<sup>20</sup> Wolf, 85.

actively seek out the world's *skilled* workers, and those workers naturally tend to migrate to where their wages will be higher. Yet, since the skilled workers raise the wages of unskilled workers where they live (by raising the productivity of labor), the movement of skilled workers from poor countries to rich ones benefits laborers in the rich countries, while harming those in the poor countries.<sup>21</sup> As a result, "the simplest thing we can do to alleviate mass human poverty is to allow people to move freely or their labour services to be traded freely, though perhaps temporarily."<sup>22</sup> Wolf cites an analysis by Peter Lindert of the University of California-Davis and Jeffrey Williamson of Harvard University concluding that "all the real wage convergence before World War I was attributable to migration" and that, "in contrast, capital mobility had virtually no impact. Yet today migration has been largely removed as a mechanism for convergence of wage and living standards."<sup>23</sup>

While trade and some capital flows may be more liberally treated and bigger in relation to global economic activity than a century ago, the reverse is unquestionably true for movement of people. All the high-income countries operate controls on immigration that vary between tight and very tight. The exception is the freedom of movement of labour within the European Union. . . . These controls on migration create the world's biggest economic distortion—the discrepancy in rewards to labour. The market for labour is certainly the world's most unintegrated. That is why critics of globalization find the rewards to labour in poor countries shockingly unjust. But nobody seems to be suggesting the obvious answer: free migration.<sup>24</sup>

The other economist concerned about the implications of immigration restrictions for workers in developing countries, and the resulting impoverishment of those nations, is Joseph

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 85-87.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 85-86.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 117.

Stiglitz. In his book *Making Globalization Work*, he states that just as developed countries have an abundance of capital moving around the world seeking the highest returns, “Developing countries have an abundance of unskilled workers, who want to move around the world in search of better jobs.”<sup>25</sup>

For the past couple of decades, the United States and the EU have pressed, with considerable success, for liberalization of capital markets, which enables investment to flow more freely around the world, arguing that this is good for global efficiency. But even modest liberalization of labor flows would increase global GDP by amounts that are an order of magnitude greater than the most optimistic estimates of the benefits of capital market liberalization. Furthermore, liberalizing migration would benefit developing countries. For one thing, workers employed in the developed world send remittances back home; already billions of dollars are being sent back every year.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, problematically not only do developed countries place severe restrictions on the immigration of unskilled workers, but they simultaneously seek out the migration of high-skilled labor, which “amounts to taking the developing countries’ most valuable intellectual capital without compensation,” after those poorer countries have already invested their scarce resources in the education and training of the same skilled workers being recruited away from them.<sup>27</sup>

### **A History of Mexican Immigration and U.S. Immigration Policy:**

Within the framework of this general overview of the interrelation of globalization and migration from a historical and worldwide perspective, I will now focus specifically on how these same dynamics have functioned in the history of Mexican migration to the United States,

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<sup>25</sup> Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Making Globalization Work*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 89.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

drawing largely upon the historical and demographic data and analysis of Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone, in their book *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*<sup>28</sup> and in Massey's more recent report for the Cato Institute, "Backfire at the Border: Why Enforcement without Legalization Cannot Stop Illegal Immigration."<sup>29</sup>

The methodology used by the authors includes a historical, statistical, and demographic analysis of international migration over the past century and a half, and specifically migration from Mexico to the United States, as correlated with historical documentation of the policies and politics of immigration in the United States since the end of the nineteenth century. Massey (professor of sociology and public policy at Princeton University) and Durand (professor-investigator in the Department for the Study of Social Movements at the University of Guadalajara in Mexico) are co-directors of the Mexican Migration Project (MMP), "a binational research project affiliated with the University of Guadalajara and [formerly] the University of Pennsylvania"<sup>30</sup> (where the third author, Malone, was a doctoral student in sociology and demography).

Since 1982 the Mexican Migration Project (now based at Princeton University) has undertaken representative surveys of Mexican communities and their U.S. destination areas to create a database of detailed information on the characteristics and behavior of documented and undocumented migrants. At present, the MMP database contains surveys of 93 binational communities, yielding detailed information on 16,840 households. Each head of household with migratory experience in the United States is interviewed to obtain a

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<sup>28</sup> Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002).

<sup>29</sup> Massey, "Backfire at the Border: Why Enforcement without Legalization Cannot Stop Illegal Immigration."

<sup>30</sup> Massey et. al., *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*, 165.

complete history of border crossings, where the crossings occurred, and the number of attempted entries and apprehensions that took place.<sup>31</sup>

The MMP, since its inception, has been a significant source for data on Mexican migrants, documented and undocumented, to the United States, in addition to available data from government and other official sources, including the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the Mexican National Statistical Institute, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations. All of these have been sources of data for the authors in their research on Mexican migration patterns.<sup>32</sup>

The book's two appendices<sup>33</sup> provide a detailed explanation of the data collection process of the MMP and several tables listing some of the key data configurations in its database. In summary form, the data collection strategy uses "ethno-surveys" by anthropological fieldworkers in various communities in Mexico to collect data on the migration of persons, family members, etc., from those communities (along with other demographic data on the families), followed by similar surveys of migrant individuals and families in the United States identified from the surveys in Mexico. This data is compared with data from official sources and data collected by other researchers, particularly for validation of the results where comparable data sets exist. One of the greatest challenges lies in quantifying undocumented immigration, since for obvious reasons official sources would not have adequate data of this nature. The authors map the historical trends in undocumented migration largely through the use of apprehension data from the border patrol. Since 1982, this data is compared with

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<sup>31</sup> Massey, "Backfire at the Border," 6.

<sup>32</sup> Massey et. al., *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*, 165.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 165-81.

migration data from the MPP database. There are certainly limitations to the accuracy of documenting the undocumented from such methods. However, it does seem that fairly accurate general trends can be observed even within these limitations.

The authors have researched migration patterns for Mexicans coming to the United States from the early twentieth century through about 2002, within the framework of the development of, and changes in, U.S. immigration policy; the larger context of international migration, as impacted by globalization; and additional data on migration patterns in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere. As the authors explain it, international migration is a complex phenomenon that is based upon several different interrelated factors including economic changes and realities, government actions, and family and social networks, among others. Their primary focus is on migration precipitated by economic changes, with no exploration of migration patterns of refugees fleeing from various forms of persecution (which has not been a primary motivating factor in migration specifically from Mexico to the United States, though it has played a larger role in migration from some other Latin American countries like Guatemala and El Salvador, with Cuba being a more complex case).

Basically, globalization and related economic development in so-called “Third World” countries, including Mexico, has resulted in the displacement of farmers and agricultural workers, which initiates the migration process. As the authors point out, “contrary to common perceptions, *international migration does not stem from a lack of economic development, but from development itself.*”<sup>34</sup> The pattern is as follows:

Driven by a desire for higher profits and greater wealth, owners and managers of large firms enter poor countries on the periphery of the world economy in

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 144. Emphasis is that of the authors.

search of land, raw materials, labor, and markets. Migration is a natural outgrowth of the disruptions and dislocations that occur in this process of market expansion and penetration. As land, raw materials, and labor come under the control of markets, flows of migrants are generated. For example, when farmers shift from cultivating for subsistence to cultivation for markets, competition pushes them to consolidate land holdings, mechanize production, introduce cash crops, and apply industrially produced inputs. . . Mechanization decreases the need for labor and makes unskilled agrarian workers redundant to production. The substitution of cash crops for staples undermines traditional social and economic relations, and the use of modern inputs, by producing high crop yields at low unit prices, drives out peasant farmers. All of these forces contribute to the creation of a mobile labor force: agricultural workers, displaced from the land, experience a weakened attachment to the community and become more prone to migrate internationally.<sup>35</sup>

The arrival of foreign factories in these same regions of the world also undermines traditional economies “by producing goods that compete with those made locally” and by drawing women into the workforce “without providing sufficient factory-based employment for men,” while simultaneously altering patterns of consumption “without providing a lifetime career” capable of sustaining those changes in consumption. “The result once again is the creation of a population that is socially and economically uprooted and prone to migration. . .”<sup>36</sup>

In addition to these “push factors in sending countries (such as low wages or high unemployment),” migration is also driven by “pull factors in receiving societies (a chronic and unavoidable need for low-wage workers).”<sup>37</sup> This is substantially due to a “segmented labor market” in the more highly industrialized nations, in which there is a “capital-intensive primary sector” with “stable, skilled jobs working with tools and equipment” that require an investment in training and education, such that these workers are less expendable; and a “labor-intensive

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 15.

secondary sector” that is “composed of poorly paid, unstable jobs from which workers may be laid off at any time with little or no cost to the employer.”<sup>38</sup>

Low wages, unstable conditions, and the lack of reasonable mobility prospects make it difficult to attract native workers into the secondary sector. They are instead drawn into the primary, capital-intensive sector, where wages are higher, jobs are more secure, and there is a possibility of occupational advancement. To fill the shortfall in demand within the secondary sector, employers turn to immigrants.<sup>39</sup>

Once this migration process begins, it tends to accelerate due to migrants’ formation of family and social networks in the receiving country, plus the emergence of a “black market in migration services” to work around immigration restrictions.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, there eventually comes a point of saturation in both these social networks and the job market, and “If migration continues long enough, labor shortages and rising wages in the home community may further dampen the pressures of emigration” and therefore reduce the rate of immigration from that country.<sup>41</sup>

This pattern is not unique to the migration of laborers from Mexico to the United States but typified migration from Europe to the United States in the late-19<sup>th</sup> to early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries and into northern Europe from countries on its south in more recent decades. Korea, Japan, and other Asian countries have demonstrated similar patterns. Emigration patterns tend to follow a curve of increase over a time period of economic development, followed by eventual decrease until a point of development is reached in which there is no longer statistically

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 18-20.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 20.

significant emigration, but instead a shift to a pattern of immigration from newly developing countries. This process lasted for about eight to nine decades in the countries of Europe but has accelerated in some more recently developing nations such as Korea, in which the same pattern was condensed into three to four decades.<sup>42</sup> Philip Martin, agricultural economist for the University of California-Davis and writing for the Washington think-tank Institute for International Economics at the time when NAFTA was being negotiated, refers to this pattern as a “migration hump.” He states that 48 million Europeans emigrated from Europe between 1850 and 1925 in such a migration hump.<sup>43</sup>

There has been a long history, from near the beginning of the twentieth century, of migration of Mexican workers needing jobs to the United States, in response to labor shortages in key sectors of the U.S. economy needing huge amounts of low-skill, low-wage workers in jobs that are socially undesirable for U.S. citizens. The pattern of migration has varied, increasing during times of U.S. labor shortages and decreasing during times of recession/ depression. The current approximately two-thousand mile border between the United States and Mexico was established by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ending the Mexican-American War, with the U.S. acquiring from Mexico the present-day states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, as well as parts of Colorado, Nevada, and Utah, along with about 50,000 former Mexican inhabitants of those territories.<sup>44</sup> Initially, the “border” was more an official territorial boundary than a practical reality and only became a defined and restrictive border through a

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 146-49.

<sup>43</sup> Philip L. Martin, *Trade and Migration: NAFTA and Agriculture*, Policy Analyses in International Economics 38 (Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 1993), 2.

<sup>44</sup> Massey et. al., *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*, 24-25.

slow process, with the most important step being the formation of the U.S. Border Patrol in 1924.<sup>45</sup>

The real beginning of significant migration of Mexican workers to the United States was precipitated by a shortage of laborers during the development and settlement of the southwest in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the 1907 Gentlemen's Agreement with Japan brought Asian immigration to an abrupt halt, creating serious labor shortages in key sectors of the western economy, particularly railroads, mining, agriculture, and construction. Desperate for workers, U.S. employers turned to private labor contractors, who employed a variety of coercive measures to recruit Mexican laborers and deliver them to jobs north of the border.<sup>46</sup>

World War I brought a halt to European immigration in 1914, again creating a tighter labor market, at the same time when the war itself was generating a large expansion of industries in the U.S. Under these circumstances, the U.S. government created its own worker recruitment program, which ended with the war, though a lax immigration policy toward Mexico continued during the booming economy of the 1920s. Numerical immigration limits were not initially applied to Mexico, so that large numbers of workers continued to come, spurred by economic development in Mexico during the same time period, which produced the displacement of agricultural workers following the pattern already discussed.<sup>47</sup> Most of these earliest Mexican migrants did not relocate permanently but moved northward "temporarily to solve economic problems their families faced at home."<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the period from 1900 to 1929

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 25-26.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 28-30.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 31.

witnessed a “dramatic explosion” of Mexican migration to the United States, up from a mere 13,000 such migrants during the five decades from 1850 to 1900, to about 728,000 over the next three decades.<sup>49</sup>

This surge of Mexican immigration continued through the 1920’s in spite of a growing “nativism” that viewed immigrants as a threat to American well-being and that resulted in legislation establishing increasingly restrictive quotas against immigration from southern and eastern Europe, along with the creation of the U.S. Border Patrol in 1924, which began “the first systematic, federally directed deportation campaign in U.S. history.”<sup>50</sup> None of this slowed the migration pattern until the Great Depression of the 1930s generated not only fear of immigrants “taking away jobs from Americans” but also a level of unemployment that dried up the effective demand for Mexican labor. Meanwhile deportations continued and escalated during the 1930s.<sup>51</sup>

Through the massive use of repressive force and political powers, the U.S. government sought to undo in the 1930s what it had actively encouraged over the preceding two decades.<sup>52</sup>

However, the mobilization of American industry for World War II, starting at the end of 1941, along with the ensuing postwar economic boom, once again created a demand for immigrant workers and increased the flow of Mexican immigrants. Agricultural growers were especially faced with labor shortages, so that in 1942 the Roosevelt administration created a program of temporary work visas that became known as the “*bracero*” (loosely translated by

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 34.

the authors as “farmhand”) program, based on the Spanish word *brazo*, “arm.”<sup>53</sup> About 168,000 *bracero* were recruited during the war years, from 1942 to 1945, and after the war Congress extended the program on a year-to-year basis until 1965. However, this process still provided an insufficient number of farm laborers to meet the demand, so that “during the late 1940s agricultural growers increasingly took matters into their own hands by recruiting undocumented workers.”<sup>54</sup>

Gradually the *bracero* program fell into disuse, as growers found it unmanageable and relied increasingly upon undocumented workers, and the program itself faced civil rights opposition due to rampant exploitation of migrant workers, until in 1965 the *bracero* program was allowed to expire.<sup>55</sup> By then agricultural growers had become heavily dependent upon Mexican laborers. Theoretically, they could have induced native workers to return to the agricultural workforce by raising wages and improving working conditions. However, this would have also increased prices and put them at a competitive disadvantage in a highly competitive market. Moreover, agricultural work had become less acceptable to citizens at any wage because it had come to be identified socially as “foreign” work.<sup>56</sup>

During time periods of relatively unrestricted movement of workers and/or availability of a quantity of nonimmigrant and immigrant visas comparable to the availability of jobs for migrating workers, relatively few Mexicans made “illegal” border crossings. During the period from 1965 to 1986, on the other hand, when new quotas severely restricted immigrant visas,

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 36-41.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 41.

and nonimmigrant visas for agricultural workers ceased to be available, there was a huge upsurge in the number of undocumented workers. Amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act in 1976, extending the annual 20,000-per-country limit on immigrant visas to the countries of the Western Hemisphere, resulted in a 40 percent drop in legal Mexican immigration.<sup>57</sup>

Between 1968 and 1980, therefore, the number of visas accessible to Mexicans dropped from an unlimited supply to just 20,000 per year (excluding immediate relatives of U.S. citizens), and even these were allocated in competition with immigrants from other nations against a fixed worldwide cap.<sup>58</sup>

Meanwhile, the demand in the U.S. for Mexican laborers remained high, rapid population growth and declining economic fortunes in Mexico continued to create an emigration “push,” and the *bracero* era had generated large social networks for integrating migrant families. All of these factors, combined with the relative unavailability of avenues of legal migration, resulted in “an explosion of undocumented migration.”<sup>59</sup> From 1965 to 1986, approximately 28 million undocumented Mexican migrants entered the United States, compared with only 1.3 million legal immigrants and 46,000 contract workers.<sup>60</sup>

Yet, that time period was characterized nonetheless by a stable and workable system. Border security was relatively lax, as the Immigration and Nationalization Service (INS) sought to please conflicting political constituencies wanting both an appearance of border security and the availability of cheap labor, so that a pattern developed of apprehending and deporting

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 45.

Mexicans crossing the border, in full awareness that they would return, and probably successfully. There was an illusion of border enforcement, but only about a 33 percent apprehension probability.<sup>61</sup>

Up to this point, few migrants tended to settle in the United States. Most returned to Mexico, in a circular pattern of spending a few years at a time working in the United States before returning to home and family. Douglas Massey and Audrey Singer estimate that the entry of 28 million undocumented immigrants during this time period was “offset by 23.4 million departures, yielding a net increase of only 4.6 million.”<sup>62</sup> The system was working well to supply labor needs in the United States and meet Mexican workers’ need for jobs and income, with just enough tightening of the border to “select” the workers needed—mostly males of prime working age entering without families and returning to Mexico after a few years, sometimes entering again for a few more years as needed.<sup>63</sup>

During the 1980s, however, there was a growing political sentiment of feeling threatened by “porous borders” and a perceived need to tighten border security, as “border control was framed by U.S. politicians as an issue of ‘national security,’ and illegal migration was portrayed as an ‘alien invasion.’”<sup>64</sup> This national mood-shift resulted in far-reaching legislative changes that transformed a functional system into dysfunctional chaos.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 40-47.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 40-47, 69-72.

<sup>64</sup> Massey, “Backfire at the Border,” 4.

<sup>65</sup> Massey et. al., *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*, 47-50, 84-104.

The 1986 Immigrant Reform and Control Act (IRCA) ushered in a new era of restrictive immigration policies and repressive border controls that transformed what had been a well-functioning, predictable system into a noisy, clunking, dysfunctional machine that generated a host of unanticipated outcomes that were in neither country's interests. These errors were compounded by additional legislation passed in 1990 and 1996 that reduced Mexican access to legal visas, militarized key sectors of the Mexican-U.S. border, and penalized legal but noncitizen immigrants.<sup>66</sup>

The IRCA was a political compromise, negotiated to secure sufficient legislative votes for passage, while balancing the interests of growers, immigrants, restrictionists, free traders, nativists, and employers through the inclusion of both “deeply restrictive and wildly expansive provisions.”<sup>67</sup> It immediately increased the INS enforcement budget by 50 percent, “imposed sanctions against employers who knowingly hired undocumented migrants and increased the Labor Department’s budget to carry out work-site inspections.” Yet, in order to garner support from immigrant advocacy groups, Latino lobbies, civil rights organizations, and farmers, the IRCA also provided a special legalization program for undocumented farm workers and granted amnesty and permanent residency to about 2.3 million undocumented Mexicans, which in turn enabled them to bring family members, increasing Mexican immigration to the United States exponentially.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, the primary thrust of the legislation was to try to bring undocumented migration to a halt and “gain control” over the border through a massive increase in government spending on border security and a progressive militarization of the nation’s

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 48-49.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

southern border. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA) of 1996 intensified this enforcement buildup.<sup>69</sup>

In 1986 the budget of the Immigration and Naturalization Service stood at just \$474 million, and that of the Border Patrol was \$151 million. . . By 2002 the Border Patrol's budget had reached \$1.6 billion and that of the INS stood at \$6.2 billion, 10 and 13 times their 1986 values, respectively. With this additional revenue, more Border Patrol officers were hired. Between 1986 and 2002 the number of Border Patrol officers tripled, and the number of hours they spent patrolling the border ('linewatch hours') grew by a factor of about eight.<sup>70</sup>

This beefing up of border security was especially concentrated on the two principal border crossing points when in 1993 the Border Patrol launched Operation Blockade in El Paso and Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego.<sup>71</sup> Yet, as Massey points out, blockading selected areas of the border merely shifted undocumented migration to other, more remote regions where many more died trying to cross into the United States but where apprehension was less likely.

Ultimately, the net effect of the border blockades has been to push undocumented Mexican migrants into crossing at more remote and less accessible locations in mountains, deserts, and untamed sections of the Rio Grande River. The tragic result for undocumented migrants has been a tripling of their death rate during entry. But if migrants are more likely to die while crossing remote sectors of the border, they are also less likely to be caught, and a less-known consequence of U.S. border policy has been that it has decreased the odds that undocumented Mexican migrants are apprehended while attempting to enter the United States.<sup>72</sup>

The true outcome of the intensified border security was that the risks and the costs of crossing the border increased for undocumented migrants. Yet, rather than being deterred from illegal entry, they "invested more money to minimize the risks and maximize the odds of a

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<sup>69</sup> Massey, "Backfire at the Border," 4.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 6.

successful border crossing,” as in response to enhanced border security on the U.S. side of the border, “smugglers on the Mexican side upgraded the package of services they offered.”<sup>73</sup> “The net effect of U.S. policies, in other words, was to increase the quality but also the price of border-smuggling services.”<sup>74</sup> The average cost for hiring a *coyote* (the name commonly used by undocumented Mexican migrants to refer to smugglers) went up from the pre-1992 stable rate of \$400 to \$1,200 by 1999.<sup>75</sup> This resulted in the ironic outcome that increased border security failed to decrease the inflow of undocumented migrants but instead reduced the outflow, to the effect that it actually increased the number of undocumented in the U.S.

Compared to 1990 and before, in other words, by the year 2000 it cost undocumented migrants three times as much to gain entry to the United States. If the first order of business on any trip to the United States is to recover that cost, then holding constant the rate of remuneration and hours worked per week, the stay would have to be three times as long. Although beefing up the Border Patrol may not have reduced the inflow, therefore, it did substantially increase the length of trips to reduce the outflow. Another way of viewing the increase in trip lengths is in terms of a decline in the probability of return migration: fewer migrants return within one year of their original entry.<sup>76</sup>

So Massey and his colleagues argue and document with a wealth of data that this policy direction of severely tightening border security did not produce the intended outcome but did produce many unintended negative consequences. About \$3 billion per year was added to the U.S. federal budget for increased border security measures, vastly increasing the budget for border control. Yet, despite this massive buildup of enforcement resources and mechanisms, the pace of Mexican immigration was unabated, and “the undocumented population grew at

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

an unprecedented rate.”<sup>77</sup> At the time of Massey’s 2005 report, the undocumented population had grown to an estimated 10 million and was continuing to grow at a rate of about 400,000 per year.<sup>78</sup> The estimate as of 2010 is closer to 12 million.<sup>79</sup> In fact, the seeming paradox is that in spite of (Massey argues because of) the massive buildup of border security, the rate of apprehension of illegal border crossers has gone down, not up.

Through the 1970s and early 1980s, the probability of apprehension along the border was relatively steady, averaging about 33 percent. Thereafter, the probability of apprehension fell into the 20 to 30 percent range, and following the implementation of Blockade and Gatekeeper in 1993 and 1994, the likelihood of arrest plummeted. By 2002 the probability of apprehension had reached an all-time low of just 5 percent. Rather than increasing the odds of apprehension, U.S. border policies have reduced them to record lows.<sup>80</sup>

Thus the data do not show a curbing of the number of undocumented *entering* the country. What the data do show is a substantial decrease in the number *returning* to Mexico, as the expense and risk of border crossings has risen too high to maintain the circular pattern, and many more have chosen to remain in the United States.

Roughly speaking, the average probability of return migration went from around 45 percent before IRCA to around 25 percent today. If 1,000 migrants were to enter the United States each year at the former rate, 950 (or 95 percent) would be back in Mexico within five years and the average length of trip would be 1.7 years. At the latter rate, of 1,000 migrants who entered the United States within a given year, only 763 (or 76 percent) would have returned to Mexico within five years, and the average trip duration would have grown to 3.5 years.

If the number of undocumented Mexicans entering the United States each year after 1986 remained constant or was increasing, as the evidence suggests, and probability of return migration was simultaneously falling, then only one

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Solimano, 42.

<sup>80</sup> Massey, “Backfire at the Border,” 6.

outcome is possible: a sharp increase in the size of the undocumented population living in the United States at any point in time.<sup>81</sup>

The outcome of this trend:

From 1980 through the mid 1990s, the Mexican population of the United States grew at a steady if rapid rate, roughly tripling in the 15 years from 1980 to 1995. After 1990 the trend accelerated, with the population growing from 7 million in 1997 to around 10 million in 2002, an increase of 43 percent in just five years.<sup>82</sup>

So the system “backfired,” being unsuccessful in stopping the inflow of migrants but effectively shutting off the outflow and turning a circular pattern into a growing wave of permanent immigration, mostly undocumented, and thus producing the opposite of the intended effect.

That the policy would fail was almost preordained and should not be surprising to anyone who understands the nature of markets and their integration over time and across international borders. What many do not realize, however, is that U.S. policies have not simply failed: they have backfired—bringing about outcomes precisely opposite those they originally sought to achieve. Not only have U.S. policies failed to deter Mexicans from migrating to the United States, they have promoted a more rapid growth of the nation’s undocumented population.<sup>83</sup>

The pattern also shifted increasingly from mostly young men without families coming as temporary workers to a growing number of families coming to settle in the United States.<sup>84</sup> Meanwhile, what was mostly a regional phenomenon in a handful of border states has become a nationwide influx of new undocumented immigrants.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, the “illegal” status of this large pool of laborers has reduced access to worker rights and thus both depressed

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>84</sup> Massey et. al., *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*, 128-33.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 126-28.

wages and generated exploitation of workers, while denial of access to government services (especially by the 1996 legislation) has contributed to the impoverishment of this permanent underclass of workers and their families.<sup>86</sup>

In addition to the contradiction of an economy needing Mexican workers while its government attempts to prevent their entry, Massey, Durand, and Malone point out another, more fundamental systemic contradiction within U.S. government policy directions. While simultaneously trying to restrict the flow of immigrant workers, U.S. policy was directed toward the integration of North American markets "to facilitate the cross-border movement of goods, capital, commodities, and information, a vision that became reality with the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994."<sup>87</sup> In effect, there was an irrational and unworkable attempt to integrate all aspects of the market except one: labor. Such contradictory policy goes against the inner logic of sound economic theory and free trade, as elaborated by economic theorists cited at the beginning of this chapter.

As the foregoing data clearly show, the 1990s were a period of growing self-contradiction in U.S. policy toward Mexico. On the one hand, under NAFTA the United States committed itself to lowering barriers to the cross-border movement of goods, capital, raw materials, information, and services. As a result, the volume of binational trade increased dramatically as did cross-border movements of people. On the other hand, the United States attempted to harden the border against the movement of labor by criminalizing the hiring of undocumented workers and fortifying the frontier with massive increases in money, personnel, and equipment. By 2002 the Border Patrol was the largest arms-bearing branch of the U.S. government next to the military itself.

Few in Washington stopped to consider the fundamental contradiction involved in militarizing a long border with a friendly, peaceful nation that posed

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 118-26, 33-36.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 2.

no conceivable strategic threat to the country and was, in fact, an ally and a large trading partner.<sup>88</sup>

Massey concludes his report for the Cato Institute with the following observation:

In NAFTA the nation committed itself to a joint framework for the continentwide integration of markets for goods, capital, information, commodities, and services; but since then it has refused to recognize the inevitable fact that labor markets will also merge in an integrated economy. In practical if not logical terms, it is impossible to create a single North American market characterized by the free movement of all factors of production except one.<sup>89</sup>

Proposals to “repair” the damaged system start with recognizing the realities of international migration as a natural consequence of globalization and economic development and acknowledging the contradiction of attempting to restrict the free movement of labor in the midst of integration of North American markets. Then, a more productive approach would be, rather than engaging in a futile attempt to prevent the influx of workers as part of this economic integration, working to manage it in ways that enhance its positive impact while reducing its negative impact. A key component of this process would be to increase the availability of *legal* avenues for Mexican workers to migrate--with a substantial increase in the number of immigrant visas annually from a quota of 20,000 per year to at least 60,000 per year, and an even larger number of nonimmigrant visas for temporary workers, as many as 300,000 visas for a two-year stay. Other proposals include regularizing the status of the millions of undocumented who have been living peacefully in the United States for a long time, investments in Mexico’s economic development, and provision of federal funds to states most adversely impacted by having to absorb the influx of immigrants (funds generated by visa

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<sup>88</sup> Massey, “Backfire at the Border,” 5.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

processing fees and additional tax revenues paid by the immigrants themselves).<sup>90</sup> By 2005, Massey had revised his proposal for annual immigrant visas to 100,000, while also pointing out that a redirection of the training and resources of border patrol personnel could produce a more intensive focus upon apprehending criminals, potential terrorists, and other real security threats (as opposed to a mass expenditure of resources pursuing migrating laborers).<sup>91</sup>

In the short run, the disruptions that follow from the consolidation of the North American market will continue to produce migrants to the United States, but long-term economic growth and development within Mexico will gradually eliminate most of the incentives for international migration. We should seek not to stamp out the inevitable migratory flows but to help Mexico get over what Philip Martin at the University of California at Davis calls the 'migration hump' as quickly and painlessly as possible. This will move North America toward a more balanced economy in which fewer Mexicans will experience the need to migrate northward.<sup>92</sup>

The record of the past two decades demonstrates that merely enforcing current U.S. immigration law is bound to fail. Current law itself is fundamentally at odds with the reality of the North American economy and labor market. As long as that remains true, enforcement alone will fail to stem the flow and growth of illegal immigration to the United States. . . . The time is thus ripe for the United States to abandon its illusions and to accept the reality, indeed the necessity, of North American integration.<sup>93</sup>

The work of Massey and his colleagues is primarily descriptive and sociological, rather than a project of normative ethics, though there certainly are ethical overtones at various points in the description, and without a doubt, there are profound ethical implications of the realities they document and analyze. Some of these ethical implications are mentioned in *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*, such as the growing number of deaths among those attempting to

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<sup>90</sup> Massey et. al., *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*, 142-64.

<sup>91</sup> Massey, "Backfire at the Border," 11.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

cross the border, the exploitation of undocumented workers and undermining of wages and worker protections more generally, and the impoverishment of noncitizen immigrants and their families.

However, for me the real importance of this research is in documenting the facts and realities of Mexican migration to the United States, within the framework of international patterns of migration, and the consequences of immigration policies and strategies. This provides the raw data that is of utmost importance for accurately and adequately entering into a discussion about ethical ramifications. Ethical deliberations, in order to be well-informed and grounded in reality (an important ethical principle in itself—commitment to truth), must operate with an accurate and reliable set of facts, as well as, to such an extent as is possible, a realistic assessment of the consequences of a given set of actions and interactions. Principles applied to inaccurate facts, however noble and well-intentioned (if even that be assumed, though in some cases there are deliberate distortions of facts in the service of particular interests), result in misleading conclusions.

#### **Additional Perspectives on Immigration:**

Bill Hing, who teaches Immigration Law and Policy at the University of San Francisco and the University of California-Davis and is the founder of the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, in his book *Ethical Borders: NAFTA, Globalization, and Mexican Migration*,<sup>94</sup> sheds additional light upon the impact of NAFTA on the migration of Mexican workers to the United States. The purported intention of NAFTA, in accordance with economic theory on free trade generally, was

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<sup>94</sup> Bill Ong Hing, *Ethical Borders: NAFTA, Globalization, and Mexican Migration* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010).

not only to increase trade between the United States, Canada, and Mexico, in a mutually beneficial integration of markets, but to generate more jobs in Mexico and thereby reduce migration from Mexico to the U.S. Yet, while trade between the U.S. and Mexico has increased over the past twenty years more than eightfold, the increase in jobs for Mexican workers did not materialize.<sup>95</sup> In fact, NAFTA has been a primary factor in the loss of more than 2 million agricultural jobs in Mexico—down from 8.1 million before NAFTA to 6 million in 2006 (a more than 25 percent drop).<sup>96</sup>

This outcome is substantially the result of the dumping of subsidized agricultural products from the United States on Mexican markets at prices with which Mexican farmers could not compete, driving many of them out of the market. The competitive advantage of the U.S. was not only due to the higher agricultural productivity stemming from mechanization but also due to agricultural subsidies that allowed food products to be sold in Mexico at prices below the cost of production. An imbalance in the provisions of NAFTA allowed these U.S. agricultural subsidies to continue—and even to increase, while the Mexican government was required to discontinue its system of price supports for producers that had lowered the costs of agricultural products.<sup>97</sup>

Mexico's ten thousand-year heritage of corn production was destroyed under the NAFTA rules. Mexican corn prices spiraled down in competition from heavily subsidized U.S. imports. Local farm incomes were slashed, resulting in rural suffering and misery from which millions of workers sought escape. Oxfam goes so far as to call the arrangement 'rigged,' as U.S. corn was dumped into Mexico

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 12-14.

at artificially low prices—essentially between \$105 million and \$145 million a year less than the cost of production.<sup>98</sup>

Net exports from the northern part of Mexico grew after NAFTA, but that expansion paled in comparison with new imports of grain, oilseeds, and meat from the United States. After ten years under NAFTA, Mexico was dependent on the United States for much of its food.<sup>99</sup>

Meanwhile, the expansion of production in large-scale agricultural operations in the United States, boosted by subsidies and the expanding market under NAFTA, created additional demand for immigrant labor.<sup>100</sup>

Agricultural job loss was accompanied by the loss of domestic manufacturing jobs.

Aside from the *maquiladoras*, foreign-owned factories at the border with the U.S., there were 130,000 fewer manufacturing jobs by 2006 than before NAFTA. The total manufacturing employment in Mexico, including the *maquiladoras*, initially increased to a high of 4.1 million jobs in 2000 but declined to 3.5 million by 2004.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, “After ten years of NAFTA, real wages in Mexico were lower, and income inequality grew, even though productivity was up.”<sup>102</sup>

At the same time:

. . . the gap between U.S. and Mexican wages actually widened under NAFTA. In 1975, Mexican wages were about 23 percent of U.S. wages; just before NAFTA was implemented in 1994, they declined to 15 percent; by 2003, they had dropped further, to 12 percent of U.S. wages.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 171. Hing cites as a source Oxfam America, *U.S. Farm Subsidies Fuel Mexican Corn Crisis*, press release, August 27, 2003.

<sup>99</sup> Hing, 13.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. Hing cites as a source of data Celia W. Dugger, *Report Finds Few Benefits for Mexico in NAFTA*, NEW YORK TIMES, November 19, 2003 (citing study by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace).

In other words, the wage convergence that is the expected outcome of free trade did not materialize. Instead, wages between the two nations diverged even further.

In addition to the realities connecting NAFTA to Mexican migration on the Mexican side of the equation, Hing discusses the other side of the equation, the need for immigrant workers by the United States economy.<sup>104</sup> Contrary to complaints that immigrants take jobs from American workers, Hing states that immigrants "fill jobs that are hard to fill, and, perhaps more important, the presence of immigrants helps to create jobs."<sup>105</sup> As consumers themselves, immigrants generate additional demand for goods and services that creates a need for more workers in order to produce them. "Time and again, studies demonstrate that areas of the country with the most immigrants actually have the lowest unemployment rates, and those regions with the fewest immigrants have the highest unemployment rates."<sup>106</sup>

The retirement of the baby-boom generation is, in fact, dramatically increasing the need for immigrant workers. Ben Bernanke, former chairman of the Federal Reserve, estimates "that the U.S. economy will need 3.5 million additional laborers each year to replace the 78 million baby boomers who began to retire in 2008."<sup>107</sup> In the absence of a visa system that is sufficient to accommodate this need for immigrant workers, "market forces have made adjustments

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<sup>103</sup> Hing, 15-16. Here he cites as a source Jeff Faux, *The Global Class War: How America's Bipartisan Elite Lost Our Future—and What It Will Take to Win It Back* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley and Sons, 2006), 136.

<sup>104</sup> Hing, 151-54.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

through the employment of undocumented workers.”<sup>108</sup> Hing cites research from the Pew Hispanic Center in 2005 showing that undocumented migrants make up about 4.3 percent of the civilian labor force—approximately 6.3 million workers out of 146 million overall.<sup>109</sup> Undocumented workers are especially overrepresented in occupations requiring little education and without licensing requirements. “Three times as many undocumented immigrants work in agriculture, construction, and resource extraction as do U.S. citizens.”<sup>110</sup>

Some interesting data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) support Bernanke’s projection and help explain a growing market for undocumented workers.

The BLS estimates that the number of people in the labor force age 25-34 is projected to increase by only 3 million between 2002 and 2012, while the number of those 55 and older will increase by 18 million. By 2012, those who are 45 and older will have the fastest growth rate and will constitute a little more than 50 percent of the labor force. According to estimates by the United Nations, the fertility rate in the United States is projected to fall below replacement level by 2015-2020, declining to 1.91 children per woman (lower than the 2.1 children per woman rate needed to replace the population). By 2010, 77 million baby boomers will have retired, and by 2030, according to projections, one in every five Americans will be a senior citizen.<sup>111</sup>

To wit, the U.S. population is aging and retiring at rates that make it increasingly impossible to meet the demands of a growing labor market without an influx of young immigrant workers.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce projects continued job growth and reports that

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. He cites Jeffrey S. Passel, *Unauthorized Migrants: Numbers and Characteristics* 26 (Washington, D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center, 2005).

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Hing, 153.

most of the jobs in the U.S. economy do not require a college degree, and nearly 40 percent require only short-term on-the job training.<sup>112</sup>

Importantly, the Cato Institute, a libertarian [sic] public-policy research foundation based in Washington, D.C., has found that, of the thirty job categories with the largest expected growth, more than half fall into the least-skilled categories, such as combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food; waiters and waitresses; retail sales personnel; cashiers; security guards; nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants; janitors and cleaners; home-health aides; manual laborers and freight, stock, and material movers; landscaping and groundskeeping workers; and manual packers and packagers. But with the supply of American workers suitable for such work continuing to fall because of an aging workforce and rising educational levels, Cato concludes, Mexican migrants provide a ready and willing source of labor to fill the growing gap between demand and supply on the lower rungs of the labor ladder.<sup>113</sup>

Out of his analysis of the realities of NAFTA and its impact on Mexican workers, combined with the hiring practices of U.S. industries and the enforcement practices of U.S. immigration policy administration, Hing draws a number of ethical conclusions:

Our current border policy is not an ethical one. It fails to respect the dignity of workers and families who cross the border. It fails to recognize how NAFTA and other global phenomena have helped to exacerbate the economic imbalance between the United States and Mexico. It fails to seriously consider the implications of U.S. trade and agricultural subsidies on developing nations and future migration flows. Yes, failed leadership in Mexico has been a problem, but the United States helped to set the stage for many of those failures. The militarization of the border and stepped-up emphasis on raids in residential neighborhoods, as well as at workplaces, are difficult to justify in that light.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid. He cites as a source *The Need for Comprehensive Immigration Reform: Serving Our National Economy: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Citizenship of the S. Comm. On the Judiciary, 109<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2005, 3-5* (statement of Thomas J. Donohue, president and chief executive, U.S. Chamber of Commerce).

<sup>113</sup> Hing, 154. He cites Daniel T. Griswold, *Willing Workers: Fixing the Problem of Illegal Mexican Migration to the United States*, Center for Trade Policy Studies no. 9 (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2002).

<sup>114</sup> Hing, 167.

In addition to the failure of U.S. immigration policy to take account of the impact of NAFTA in generating Mexican emigration to the United States, he points out the disparity in immigration enforcement, as demonstrated in raids conducted by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) division of the Department of Homeland Security, punitively targeting undocumented workers more than the employers who hire them.<sup>115</sup>

All too often, the undocumented workers who are paid less than minimum wage and work in conditions that violate health and safety standards are hauled away, and the employer receives no punishment.<sup>116</sup>

Moreover, a focus exclusively on the legality or illegality of immigration ignores the complexity and irrationality of current immigration law. Employment-based visas for low-skilled workers are nearly impossible to obtain, and family-based immigration has backlogs of up to twenty years, even for those relative few who qualify. Furthermore, nonimmigrant work visas such as the H-2A visa contain their own built-in injustices. H-2A visas permit the entrance of temporary agricultural workers, but the migrant workers are allowed “to work only for the petitioning employer and only in the job for which the labor certification was granted.” This binds workers to a single employer, which effectively undermines their capacity to enforce their legal rights as a worker and undermines enforcement of the regulations governing the program. Fear of losing both their job and their visa prevents these workers from complaining about violations.<sup>117</sup>

Compounding the problem, the U.S. Department of Labor lacks the staff and resources ‘to adequately police the program.’ The Department of Labor rarely imposes penalties on growers for violating regulations. Being undocumented

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 167-68.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 169.

allows workers at least to switch jobs if they are being mistreated, whereas obtaining H-2A status carries the danger that workers can be mistreated by their employer. So it does not make sense for many workers to take part in such a program and follow these procedures.<sup>118</sup>

Andrés Solimano, founder and President of the International Center for Globalization and Development in Santiago, Chile, and an economist who formerly served as a Country Director at the World Bank, Executive Director at the Inter-American Development Bank, and Regional Adviser at the U.N.'s Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago, in his book *International Migration in the Age of Crisis and Globalization*, describes how the contradiction between “the restrictions to legal migration and the strong demand for immigrant workers in recipient countries” drives the increase in the early twenty-first century in “irregular (or illegal) migration,” wherein workers “reside and work in a recipient country without proper immigrant status and without labor rights.”<sup>119</sup> The consequences of this irregular migration are manifold, affecting the receiving countries, the migrants, and the source countries. Irregular migration provides the receiving country a source of cheap and abundant labor for many economic sectors that have difficulty procuring a sufficient number of workers, while avoiding many of the “transaction costs” associated with visas, contracts, legal permits, and social benefits, though at the same time dealing with the tension of violating laws that are inconsistently enforced. Irregular migration at the same time provides some benefits to the

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid. He cites as a source U.S. General Accounting Office, *H-2A Agricultural Guestworker Program: Changes Could Improve Services to Employers and Better Protect Workers* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997).

<sup>119</sup> Solimano, 17.

migrants themselves, including a readily available job market offering salaries several times higher than those available in the home country.<sup>120</sup>

However, the dark side of irregular migration is that it puts the migrant and his or her family in a legal limbo, a situation of fragility with respect to legal protection, access to social benefits, and labor rights. Irregular migration brings fragmentation of global labor markets. Increasingly, in developed countries, there is a sort of dual labor market with a formal and informal segment. The formal segment of the labor market operates with native and foreign workers and employees working under a formal contract, with regulated working hours, under a regular visa status, often with some health benefits and access to social security. On the other hand, the informal market segment is characterized by (mostly) foreign workers hired without formal contracts in an irregular migrant status and without access to social benefits.<sup>121</sup>

Solimano cites the absence of a “multilateral framework for regulating international migration” as a major cause of this problematic trend in international migration. Whereas there are international institutions such as the World Trade Organization to establish rules governing the international trade of goods and services, and the International Monetary Fund to oversee the stability of the international monetary system and global capital markets, “there is no equivalent global institution regulating international migration.”<sup>122</sup> Individual countries define their own policies about sending and receiving migrants, without any “global or regional framework of principles and rules governing the international flow of people.”<sup>123</sup> Although trade agreements have a strong impact on migration, those agreements do not include any

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

policy negotiation regarding how migration will be part of the interchange that takes place in international trade.

Like other economists discussed earlier, Solimano sees international migration as an outcome of globalization, especially in relation to the widening income gaps it creates.<sup>124</sup>

Globalization is bringing prosperity, new products, technological advances, and closer connections among people to many parts of the world. However, the new prosperity is not distributed uniformly across all nations and regions. According to existing statistics, international differences in per-capita income levels among countries a century or so ago were on the order of 1 to 6 or 1 to 8. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, these differences in per-capita income levels are much larger, on the order of 1 to 20 or 1 to 30. . . . These ‘developmental gaps’—vast differences in per-capita income, the quality of jobs, and technological and institutional capabilities throughout the world—are critical factors driving international migration from low-wage countries to high-wage countries (or from developing and newly industrialized countries to advanced countries.)<sup>125</sup>

This analysis may seem to be a statement of the obvious. However, if one of the fundamental principles of free trade and economic globalization is that it will work for the benefit of all, an equally obvious observation is that to restrict the global movement of laborers seeking to participate in the prosperity of free trade is to create an unjust distortion of the market that perpetuates and exacerbates, rather than alleviating, current disparities. In other words, international migration is one of the market’s mechanisms for self-correcting.

Remittances are another part of the global market’s self-correction. As defined by Philip Martin, “Remittances are that portion of the monies earned or obtained by migrants that are returned to their country of origin.”<sup>126</sup> These remittances assist in the economic development

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

of the countries of emigration, as the incoming funds not only help the families of the migrants in the home country who are the primary recipients of this money, but also help stimulate the local economy.<sup>127</sup>

The spending of remittances in areas that receive them generates jobs: most studies suggest that each \$1 in remittances generates another \$1 to \$2 in local economic activity, as recipients buy goods or invest in housing, education, or health care. Remittances clearly improve the lives of the households that receive them, and also can improve the lives of non-migrant neighbors as they are spent.<sup>128</sup>

In fact, data from the Mexican Migrant Project led by Massey and Durand reveal that by 1985, the combination of remittances sent and savings brought back by Mexican migrants working in the United States exceeded two billion dollars per year, “and in some communities the flow of ‘migradollars’ exceeded the value of all locally earned income.”<sup>129</sup> An estimated \$3.6 billion was remitted back to Mexico from workers in the United States in 1995,<sup>130</sup> which, “according to a model of the Mexican economy developed by Irma Adelman and Edward Taylor,”<sup>131</sup> “would

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<sup>126</sup> Philip Martin, "Sustainable Labor Migration Policies in a Globalizing World," in *Challenges of Globalization: Immigration, Social Welfare, Global Governance*, ed. Andrew Carl Sobel (London ; New York: Routledge, 2009), 35.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Massey et. al., *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*, 62.

<sup>130</sup> Fernando Lozano Ascencio, “Las Remesas de los Migrantes Mexicanos en Estados Unidos: Estimaciones para 1995.” In *Migration Between Mexico and the United States: Binational Study, Vol. 3, Research Reports and Background Materials*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform. Cited in: Massey et. al., *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*, 153.

<sup>131</sup> Irma Adelman and J. Edward Taylor, “Is Structural Adjustment with a Human Face Possible? The Case of Mexico.” *Journal of Development Studies* 26: 387-407. Cited in: Massey et. al., *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*, 153-54.

have an \$11.7 billion effect on Mexican GDP once the effects of investment and consumer spending are allowed to work their way through the economy.”<sup>132</sup>

In contrast to petrodollars and other sources of foreign exchange, migradollars have particularly dynamic effects on sending nations because they are spent rapidly and have large multiplier effects.<sup>133</sup>

Thus, through remittances, emigration can actually serve as a boon to economic development in the migrant-sending country, thereby accelerating passage over the “migration hump,” or in other words, contributing toward the decline and end of the pattern of emigration itself. In this way, for developed nations such as the United States to simply allow this process to take its course is one of the best, most cost-effective and productive forms of “foreign aid” conceivable.

### **Conclusion:**

Proponents of free markets, free trade, and economic globalization describe these realities as positive forces that create prosperity and enhance human well-being. Unfortunately, such prosperity and well-being is not the present reality for all people, particularly the poorest people from the periphery of the industrialized world. Rather, there are flaws in the workings of globalization that create poverty in a world of plenty. One of the flaws recognized by a large number of the world’s best economic theorists and social scientists, including several quoted and/or referenced herein, is a contradiction in which the operations of global and regional economic integration have simultaneously promoted the free flow of goods, services, knowledge, and capital, while restricting the movement of laborers. Given the

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<sup>132</sup> Massey et. al., *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*, 154.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

interrelation of these factors of production, there is an inherent injustice in removing government restrictions so as to allow *market forces* to dictate the flow of goods, services, capital, and information, while simultaneously *intensifying* government restrictions on the movement of labor. Such inconsistent policy works to the benefit of the wealthy developed nations (though far from perfectly even there), particularly since they are able to simultaneously enjoy the benefits of undocumented laborers while denying those laborers the full rights, privileges, and protections afforded to other workers. At the same time, this contradictory approach to economic and political policy works to the detriment of the developing countries and their workers.

Such contradictions and their deleterious effects upon the world's poor nations and persons have profound theological and ethical implications in denying the full humanity and dignity of persons created in the image of God and in thwarting God's purposes for humanity, some of which will be discussed in detail in the final section of this dissertation. First, however, I will seek to elaborate in the next section what I believe to be the primary driving force in the ongoing debate over immigration policy in the United States, the issue of collective identity.

## PART 2: IMMIGRANTS AS A PERCEIVED THREAT TO AMERICAN NATIONAL IDENTITY (AND/OR WESTERN CIVILIZATION)

### INTRODUCTION

Arguments for more or fewer restrictions on immigration draw upon statistical and logistical data to back up their case. The problem is that the data as presented conflict, with persons and groups on either side of the divide citing a strikingly different set of “facts” in support of their argument. Each side seems confounded that those on the other side will not respond to its hard evidence and its version of the dictates of reason based on that evidence. As Ira Mehlman, who is definitely an advocate for a more restrictive immigration policy, states the situation:

Economic arguments from one set of PhDs, contending that our immigration policies are an economic disaster, have always been countered by claims from another group of PhDs, who have data to show that they are an economic windfall. *For those without a burning passion for one side or the other*, the clash of the PhDs provided the impression that the jury was still out on this issue. This gentlemanly argument among economists could potentially go on forever.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, it is important that debates over significant social and political issues such as immigration be grounded as much as possible in facts rather than myths and rumors, in evidence rather than mere opinions. Yet, facts and evidence are often slippery and contextual, and statistical data can be framed in different—perhaps even contradictory—ways.

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<sup>1</sup> Ira Mehlman, "Brimelow Drops 'the Big One'," in *Immigration and the Social Contract: The Implosion of Western Societies*, ed. John Tanton, Denis McCormack, and Joseph Wayne Smith (Aldershot, UK: Avebury, 1996), 229. Emphasis is mine.

## **Facts and Opinions:**

Hannah Arendt in her essay, "Truth and Politics,"<sup>2</sup> expresses concerns about the manipulation and distortion of facts for political purposes and the blurring of the distinction between facts and opinions.<sup>3</sup>

What seems even more disturbing [i.e., more disturbing than totalitarian governments' suppression of the truth] is that to the extent to which unwelcome factual truths are tolerated in free countries they are often, consciously or unconsciously, transformed into opinions. . . . What is at stake here is this common and factual reality itself, and this is indeed a political problem of the first order.<sup>4</sup>

Arendt insists that facts do have an objective existence that cannot be reduced to the subjective beliefs, opinions, or consensus of different individuals deliberating over them.

Opinion is a matter of individual perspective and preference. Facts exist independently of the person perceiving and communicating them. They have a compelling nature that is either truthfully represented or falsified, regardless of personal preference or belief system.

Facts inform opinions, and opinions, inspired by different interests and passions, can differ widely and still be legitimate as long as they respect factual truth. Freedom of opinion is a farce unless factual information is guaranteed and the facts themselves are not in dispute.<sup>5</sup>

In relation to the widely debated immigration issue, there are certainly alternate versions of what the facts are about immigrants—particularly the undocumented. Do immigrants have a net effect of "taking away jobs" from Americans, or do they fill niches in our

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<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehr, The Viking Portable Library (New York: Penguin Books, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 552-54.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 552.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 554.

economy that are difficult to fill and thereby have a net effect of generating additional jobs through economic growth? Do undocumented immigrants pay taxes or not? (They actually cannot avoid paying some types of taxes. Basically the principal area of dispute would be whether or not they are able to avoid paying income taxes.) Are they overrepresented or underrepresented in the distribution of criminal behavior per capita? Do they tend to learn English and identify with American culture, or do they remain unassimilated over time? Are they a net cost or benefit to the U.S. economy?

Of course, proposed answers to some of these questions frequently involve the use of statistical data which can be organized in various ways to support contradictory conclusions, and to a large extent, these data are assembled by interest groups supporting a particular social, political, and economic agenda. Though in some cases, the raw data themselves may be of questionable facticity, in other cases the data may be factual but nevertheless selectively appropriated, taken out of context, and placed within interpretive frameworks that present a distorted—or at least questionable—representation of the facts at hand.

Arendt states that facts are non-negotiable and cannot be reduced to matters of opinion nor established by popular consent.<sup>6</sup> Even the presentation of opinions and interpretive commentary in public discourse has an obligation to respect, rather than altering, factual truth. There may be disagreement about what the facts are. The facts may be in dispute. In cases where determination of the facts depends upon witnesses who disagree, there may even be a necessity of relying upon the testimony of the majority of witnesses, though she asserts that

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 555-56.

this is “a wholly unsatisfactory procedure.”<sup>7</sup> Yet, a blatant disregard for and distortion of factual truth is not opinion, error, or illusion but deliberate falsehood—an attempt to alter reality by changing the record and rewriting history.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, facts only become meaningful within an interpretive framework that selectively appropriates them, organizes them according to its ideological priorities, and invests them with significance. Arendt admits that the selection and arrangement of facts into “a story”—a meaning-making narrative—is a subjective process that can be constructed in a variety of ways, while at the same time insisting that the factual data themselves are not subject to opinion or interpretation but have their own objective existence as verifiable truth.

But do facts, independent of opinion and interpretation, exist at all? Have not generations of historians and philosophers of history demonstrated the impossibility of ascertaining facts without interpretation, since they must first be picked out of a chaos of sheer happenings (and the principles of choice are surely not factual data) and then be fitted into a story that can be told only in a certain perspective, which has nothing to do with the original occurrence? No doubt these and a great many more perplexities inherent in the historical sciences are real, but they are no argument against the existence of factual matter, nor can they serve as a justification for blurring the dividing lines between fact, opinion, and interpretation, or as an excuse for the historian to manipulate facts as he pleases. Even if we admit that every generation has the right to write its own history, we admit no more than that it has the right to rearrange the facts in accordance with its own perspective; we don’t admit the right to touch the factual matter itself.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, an important distinction must be made between the facts themselves and the interpretive framework into which those facts are fitted, the latter of which renders the clarification of what constitutes political and historical truth more complex. Arendt’s example

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 557-58.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 562-63.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 554.

of the historical declaration, “In August 1914 Germany invaded Belgium,”<sup>10</sup> is a clear statement of fact that, once established, is “beyond agreement, dispute, opinion, or consent.”<sup>11</sup> However, the interpretation of that event, e.g., within a framework of establishing responsibility and culpability for World War I, is another matter altogether, given the complex sequence of events leading up to the war. In other words, the content, “In August 1914 Germany invaded Belgium,” though it cannot be altered without falsification, nonetheless assumes different meanings according to the form—a particular historical narrative—into which it is fitted.

Given the simultaneous complexity and indispensability of distinguishing truth from distortion, while maintaining a responsibility toward historical and political truth, it is evident that historical and political truth can be ambiguous and difficult to establish with certainty. Facts have a compulsory nature that cannot be reduced to matters of opinion nor established by consensus or the will of the majority. Yet, facts themselves are the raw data of historical narratives which become meaningful only within an interpretive framework which *is* open to debate and a process of striving for consensus. Nevertheless, political, historical, scholarly, and journalistic responsibility—responsibility on the part of all who participate in and shape public discourse—is not limited to the avoidance of intentional falsification. Those who wield significant shaping influence over public discourse especially have an ethical responsibility to weigh carefully the potential damage that may be caused by their assertions of that which they constitute as truth, and to cautiously consider how thoroughly they have researched their information and what ideological biases they bring to the search for truth.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 555.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

What the “facts” are is often in dispute, particularly when statistical data can either be manufactured or framed in ways that use it to express different conclusions. Secondly, we do not come to “facts” as blank tablets. Facts and “hard data” are not biased at all, but the way they are framed and used may well be. How they are organized, framed, and presented—the interpretive framework that gives them meaning—is certainly not a given but is in accordance with certain “biases.” As Alasdair MacIntyre aptly points out, it is a conceptual error “to suppose that the observer can confront a fact face-to-face without any theoretical interpretation imposing itself.”<sup>12</sup> “What each observer takes himself or herself to perceive is identified and has to be identified by theory-laden concepts.”<sup>13</sup> Otherwise, “we would be confronted with not only an uninterpreted, but an uninterpretable world, with not merely a world not yet comprehended by theory but with a world that never could be comprehended by theory.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, facts in and of themselves have no meaning but are given meaning only within the context of an interpretive framework. Without that framework humans only experience a continuum of unrelated and meaningless phenomena.

### **Collective Identity as The Dividing Line on Immigration:**

Since facts, data, and evidence, therefore, are meaningful only within an interpretive framework, and the data on immigrants and immigration are so often presented in contradictory ways, what might be the hermeneutical principle that guides the selection, organization, and interpretation of the contrasting presentations of the evidence pertaining to

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<sup>12</sup> Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 79.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

this issue? I think it has much to do with the question of how we respond to the immigrant as the “other.” In the final section, I will discuss a number of hermeneutical principles for those advocating an openness to reform that offers legalization to undocumented immigrants and a more liberal visa process for persons seeking to migrate to the United States. For now I will just say that they can be viewed substantially through the thematic lenses of “welcoming the stranger,” “justice for the poor,” and the “oneness of humanity.” My focal point in this second section will be on those who express a desire for a reduction in immigration, not only by stopping the flow of undocumented immigrants who are unlawfully present in the United States but by scaling back the flow of *legal* immigrants as well. I would argue that the primary hermeneutical principle which guides their selection and presentation of available data revolves around the issue of collective identity, particularly a perspective that sees immigrants—or at least the current influx of immigrants from Mexico and Latin America—as a threat to American national identity.

My contention is that this is the core concern that lies behind such issues as the breaking of the law by undocumented immigrants who enter the United States without proper authorization, claims that immigrants bring disease and drugs into the country and cause a spike in the level of criminal activity, the perception that immigrants either take jobs away from citizens or lower wages for unskilled labor, concerns about immigrants overburdening hospitals, schools, and government assistance (welfare) programs, and other pragmatic considerations. I have seen theories and data that “prove” immigrants are a problematic presence in all of these ways and other theories and data that “disprove” the same. Yet what is it, aside from the authority and credibility of the sources of the data and questions about how it is construed,

that determines which evidence one believes? I am convinced that to a substantial degree, the hermeneutical principles I have identified above are the answer to that question. Indeed, while arguments for restricting immigration are based on a variety of concerns, my belief is that until the question of collective identity and whether or not immigration is a threat to the cohesion and continuity of the United States—or indeed, of “Western civilization”—is addressed, it is virtually impossible to have a reasonable and intellectually honest debate over these other issues.

Now, to talk about immigrants as a threat to American identity is to immediately raise the question—perhaps the accusation—of “racism.” The problem with the use of such a term is that people have varying definitions of what it means, which in turn generate confusion as to who might legitimately be called a “racist,” or whether it may, in fact, be merely a derogatory label used to dismiss an argument with which one disagrees, as many people who have been called a racist maintain. Peter Brimelow, author of *Alien Nation*,<sup>15</sup> is among those who claim that “racist” is a term used primarily in the latter sense, as he gives the word a “new definition: *anyone who is winning an argument with a liberal.*”<sup>16</sup> He goes on to state:

I sincerely believe I am not prejudiced—in the sense of committing and stubbornly persisting in error about people, *regardless of evidence*—which appears to me to be the only rational definition of ‘racism.’ I am also, however, not blind.<sup>17</sup>

From this statement, in the context of Brimelow’s broader argument about the need to retain a certain racial balance in the United States, he clearly does not consider it racist to make

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Brimelow, *Alien Nation: Common Sense About America's Immigration Disaster*, 1st HarperPerennial ed. (New York: HarperPerennial, 1996).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11. Emphasis is Brimelow’s.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, emphasis mine.

judgments about people based on race, insofar as he considers such judgments to be based on “evidence.” But this merely begs the question: What counts as evidence?

The fact is that people use—or refute the use of—the terms “racism” and “racist” in a multitude of different ways. I am reminded of a point made well by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, two theorists describing language as a symbol system and addressing the question of “the meaning of meaning,” that words do not have any inherent, fixed meaning but only the meaning that different persons out of their different experiences invest in them.<sup>18</sup> It seems that virtually everyone who would use these terms at all would agree that they have something to do with harmful and prejudicial beliefs, attitudes, and actions toward certain human beings based on the category of “race,” which some believe to be a biological category and others a socially constructed category. The difference seems to lie substantially in terms of the threshold required to meet one’s definition, with some believing that only acts of overt violence—or at least verbal assaults—against persons based entirely upon those persons’ race count as racism; others believing that attitudes of hostility toward persons based on race, with or without racially charged words or actions, also qualify; others including overt and intentional discrimination in affording social benefits to persons based on race; and still others including such discrimination, *with or without intentionality*, whether *conscious or unconscious*. Then there is the divide between those who believe racism is an accusation solely directed toward *individuals* and others who affirm the existence of *structural* and *systemic* racism within societies.

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<sup>18</sup> C. K. Ogden et al., *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language Upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism*, 8th ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1959), 1-23.

These certainly do not exhaust the variations in people's definition of what constitutes racism, but they indicate some of the complexity involved and therefore some of the problems with the use of the term "racism" in relation to the construction of immigrants as a threat to American identity. Therefore, perhaps a more useful approach to the issue of whether or not immigrants do pose such a threat would be to steer clear of emotionally charged terminology with contested meanings, insofar as this may be possible, and instead focus on the actual ideas expressed by key intellectuals and leaders who make the claim in one way or another that immigrants do pose a threat to American national identity, and who wield significant influence upon public policy debates over immigration. Toward this end, I will herein conduct an analysis of the *discourse* on immigration, focusing on restrictionist perspectives.

This analysis will include, in Chapter 2, the renowned scholar Samuel Huntington, whose works are frequently cited in high profile arguments for a moratorium on or reduction in immigration, and in Chapter 3, political activist and organizer John Tanton, who is or has been the founder and primary leader of some of the most powerful and influential organizations lobbying Congress and mobilizing people across the United States to take action for the implementation of stronger border controls and a more restrictive immigration policy. After seeing the way race functions in the thinkers considered here, I will engage, in Chapter 4, in a deconstruction of race as a determinant of collective identity, including an analysis of the way it has functioned and continues to function in shaping identity. Then, in view of the fact that I will be offering a number of Christian theological themes in Part 3, I will include here, in Chapter 5, some explicitly Christian voices arguing for a more restrictive immigration policy, though their focus is less on collective identity and the exclusion of immigrants generally and more on the

issue of the undocumented, those who are unlawfully present in the United States, within the context of the rule of law and the state's God-given mandate to protect its people and to preserve order.

## CHAPTER 2: SAMUEL HUNTINGTON: THREATS TO AMERICA'S ANGLO-PROTESTANT CULTURE AND IDENTITY AS PART OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION<sup>1</sup>

*The resulting controversies over racial preferences, bilingualism, multiculturalism, immigration, assimilation, national history standards, English as the official language, 'Eurocentrism,' were in effect all battles in a single war over the nature of American national identity.*<sup>2</sup>

--Samuel Huntington

In my estimation, the case that immigrants—and Hispanic/ Latino immigrants in particular—are a threat to American national identity is most forcefully and eloquently set forth by the esteemed late Harvard Professor of Political Science Samuel P. Huntington, whose arguments have been cited widely by advocates for immigration restrictions as giving their position strong academic credibility. Here I want to consider and critique some of Huntington's core arguments, taken primarily from two of his major works, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* and *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity*.

Huntington offers the useful analytical category of civilizations as a paradigm for world order, as "the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species."<sup>3</sup> Yet, rather than regarding civilizations as one analytical category among others, analogous to the useful but somewhat arbitrary division of the solar spectrum into "colors," Huntington tends to reify and essentialize civilizations as if they were fixed and distinct, impermeable entities, when in fact

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<sup>1</sup> A shorter version of this chapter was previously published as Gene Lankford, "Immigration, Multiculturalism, and American Identity: A Critique of Samuel Huntington," *Journal of Religious Studies, History and Society* 12, no. 1 (2014).

<sup>2</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 142.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 42.

they have historically always been fluctuating configurations of human culture, with fluid boundaries and continual evolution. He does give verbal assent to this reality, stating that: “Civilizations have no clear-cut boundaries and no precise beginnings and endings. People can and do redefine their identities and, as a result, the composition and shapes of civilizations change over time.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, many of the conclusions he draws about the “clash” of these civilizations seem to ignore this truth, particularly his firm division between “the West and the rest,”<sup>5</sup> in which he sees mostly a unidirectional influence of Western civilization upon the others he identifies, without any serious consideration of the way other civilizations have contributed to the shaping of Western civilization.<sup>6</sup> Huntington can also be critiqued for seeing the various civilizations of the world as primarily and essentially in conflict,<sup>7</sup> while disregarding the prevalence of coexistence and cooperation among them historically.<sup>8</sup>

Uma Narayan points out the flaws in “cultural essentialism” that draws rigid boundaries between cultures and attributes certain cultural traits exclusively to “Western” culture, while offering stereotyped contrasts with other, non-Western cultures, as Huntington does when he states, for example, that Europe is the “*unique source*” of the ideas of “individual liberty, political democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and cultural freedom.”<sup>9</sup> Narayan refutes this

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 50-55.

<sup>6</sup> Among other sources on the impact of non-Western civilizations upon the West, see Warwick Ball, *Out of Arabia: Phoenicians, Arabs, and the Discovery of Europe*, Asia in Europe and the Making of the West (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> See especially Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 130.

<sup>8</sup> Ball, 11-12; Deepa Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* (Chicago, Ill.: Haymarket Books, 2012), 3-4, 9-24.

claim, as she points out the way such sharp contrasts between “Western” and “Other” cultures were constructed in order to serve the political end of proclaiming Western superiority as a rationale for colonialism. Meanwhile, the Western nations contradicted these articulated values by engaging in “slavery, colonization, expropriation, and the denial of liberty and equality not only to the colonized but to large segments of Western subjects, including women” and simultaneously ignored “*similarities* between Western culture and many of its Others, such as hierarchical social systems, huge economic disparities between members, and the mistreatment and inequality of women.”<sup>10</sup> She adds:

Essentialist pictures of culture represent ‘cultures’ as if they were natural givens, entities that existed neatly distinct and separate in the world, entirely independent of our projects of distinguishing between them. This picture tends to erase the reality that the ‘boundaries’ between ‘cultures’ are human constructs, . . . representations that are embedded in and deployed for a variety of political ends.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, Narayan states, the values of equality and rights substantially arose out of the political struggles *against Western imperialism* rather than being inherently “Western” values.<sup>12</sup>

### **The “Clash of Civilizations” and the “Threats” of Immigration and Multiculturalism:**

Huntington’s delineation of the world’s civilizations is somewhat arbitrary, as he identifies seven—possibly eight distinct civilizations:<sup>13</sup> Sinic/ Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic,

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<sup>9</sup> Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 311.

<sup>10</sup> Uma Narayan, "Essence of Culture and a Sense of History: A Feminist Critique of Cultural Essentialism," in *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World*, ed. Uma Narayan and Sandra Harding (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 83-84.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>13</sup> Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 45-48.

Orthodox, Western, Latin American, and possibly African. He partially recognizes the wide diversity of cultural, civilizational, and tribal identities in Africa, but he is ambiguous about whether to classify Latin American as a “subcivilization within Western civilization or a separate civilization,” while insisting that “Latin America . . . has a distinct identity which differentiates it from the West.” “It has had a corporatist, authoritarian culture. . .” and “incorporates indigenous cultures, which did not exist in Europe” and “were effectively wiped out in North America. . .”<sup>14</sup> Interestingly here, while Huntington identifies religion as the most important element and “central defining characteristic of civilizations,”<sup>15</sup> Islam is identified with one civilization all its own—as is “Hindu(ism),” which in reality encompasses a huge diversity of beliefs, practices, and cultural configurations; Christianity is divided into at least three; and most of the other major religions of the world do not define any of its civilizations. In reality, other than the case of Islamic, his civilizational divides seem to be defined more geographically than in terms of their religion, particularly when one considers that even “Western” civilization varies from Protestant to Catholic to parts of Western Europe being characterized by the virtual absence, or at least marginalization, of any religious commitments.

The arbitrary nature of Huntington’s attempt to define Latin America as a civilization distinct from the West is of particular importance here, even though Latin America predominantly speaks European languages (Spanish and Portuguese, and in some instances English) and shares Christianity as the major religious influence. In the end, his separation of Latin America seems more based on economic and political considerations than cultural or

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 42, 47.

civilizational, particularly when he describes Westernization in Latin America in terms of economic reforms consistent with the “Washington Consensus” (privatization of public enterprises, promotion of foreign investment, entrance into free trade agreements, challenging the power of labor unions, etc.)<sup>16</sup> even though these economic measures are far from monolithic in their application in the “West.”

The exclusion of Latin America from Western civilization is important to Huntington’s argument of a Hispanic threat to American cultural identity. In order for this threat to exist, Latinos must be sufficiently “other” as to disrupt American cultural continuity. As Huntington states the case, a result of shifting demographics and an upsurge of Muslims in Europe and Hispanics in the United States is that:

Westerners increasingly fear that they are now being invaded not by armies and tanks but by migrants who speak other languages, worship other gods, belong to other cultures, and, they fear, will take their jobs, occupy their land, live off the welfare system, and threaten their way of life.<sup>17</sup>

He adds that many Americans see their nation as fundamentally European in its origin, laws, institutions, values, and religion (Judeo-Christian), rooted in the Protestant work ethic, and therefore see immigration as a “threat to American culture.”<sup>18</sup> “While Europeans see the immigration threat as Muslim or Arab, Americans see it as both Latin American and Asian but primarily as Mexican.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 149-50. On the Washington Consensus see Stiglitz, *Making Globalization Work*, 16-17.

<sup>17</sup> Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 200

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 202-03.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 203.

Huntington asserts that Mexican culture is non-European, with an indigenous core.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, as Walter Mignolo points out, the very idea of “Latin America” was a political project promoted by American-born European (Creole) colonial and postcolonial leaders who formed the ruling elite in this region and shaped its cultures, as they sought to identify themselves with Europe, while subordinating Mestizos/as and excluding any effective participation in the formation of these societies by indigenous and African peoples.<sup>21</sup> Ironically, what these Creole leaders actually carved out for themselves and their countries was a marginalized identity in relation to their European ideal, as the ideological division of Europe into a “Latin” (Roman), Catholic south contrasted with a Teutonic (German and Anglo-Saxon), Protestant north resulted in a parallel ideological division of the Americas.<sup>22</sup> As a result:

‘Latin’ America became darker and darker in relation to the increasing discourse of White supremacy that was implemented during the last decade of the nineteenth century in the US by the ideologues of the Spanish-American War. In parallel fashion to the way Spaniards were seen by Northern Europeans (as darker skinned and mixed with Moorish blood), ‘Latin’ America began to be perceived more and more as ‘Mestizo/a’; that is, darker skinned. And although ‘Latin’ American Creoles and elite Mestizos/as considered themselves White. . . , from the perspective of Northern Europe and the US, to be ‘Latin’ American was still to be not White enough. This was the waiting room for the next step, to come after World War II: ‘Latin’ America became part of the Third World, and the Indian and the Afro population remained invisible.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, Huntington’s “indigenous core” to Mexican and Latin American culture is an ideological supposition that is imposed upon these cultures from outside themselves, in spite of their

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>21</sup> Walter Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, Blackwell Manifestos (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2005), 57-59.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 70-71, 74-79.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 90.

leaders' efforts to suppress indigenous elements and identify with Europe—a supposition infused with notions of a racial hierarchy of cultures.

Immigration from Mexico and Latin America is one of two threats to American national identity named by Huntington, the threat of “immigrants from other civilizations who reject assimilation and continue to adhere to and to propagate the values, customs, and cultures of their home societies.”<sup>24</sup> The other threat, which he sees as “more immediate and dangerous” is that of “multiculturalism,” as in the late twentieth century both the cultural and political definition of American national identity:

. . . have come under concentrated and sustained onslaught from a small but influential number of intellectuals and publicists. In the name of multiculturalism they have attacked the identification of the United States with Western civilization, denied the existence of a common American culture, and promoted racial, ethnic, and other subnational cultural identities and groupings.<sup>25</sup>

Multiculturalism, says Huntington, promotes a diversity that the “Founding Fathers” saw as a problem and a danger, as they “made the promotion of national unity their central responsibility.”<sup>26</sup> Here Huntington sees unity and diversity as opposites, seemingly either unaware of or at least discounting the possibility of a unity in diversity as one manifestation of the very individualism he proclaims to be a central feature of Western civilization. In fact, built into the Christian faith which he sees as part of America’s cultural core are two central images of unity in diversity, the differentiated unity of the godhead as a unified Trinity of Father, Son,

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<sup>24</sup> Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 304-05.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

and Holy Spirit, and Paul's image of the church as the Body of Christ, with many diverse parts working together for the good of the whole.

Huntington associates with this "onslaught" of multiculturalism affirmative action measures and other efforts to confront societal inequities based upon race, ethnicity, and sex:

The multiculturalists also challenged a central element of the American Creed, by substituting for the rights of individuals the rights of groups, defined largely in terms of race, ethnicity, sex, and sexual preference.<sup>27</sup>

He operates on a false premise here, as the alleged "group rights" are actually individual rights denied to persons on account of a marginal, non-normative group identity *imposed* upon them by the dominant group, white heterosexual males. These persons' racial, ethnic, and gender identity was entirely imposed upon them to render them "other." While sex and sexual preference are arguably biological givens, their social definition and significance and their status as "other"—as non-normative—is an imposed identity rather than a self-chosen one.<sup>28</sup>

White male heterosexuals are the implied and hidden "group," not seen as a group but nonetheless forming the locus of enunciation for defining other groups and their place within American society. Meanwhile, to ignore other group identities in the name of "individual" rather than "group" rights, is to preserve the current social system of privileges and hierarchies as it exists, unchallenged. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant state it, the government

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> See Audre Lorde on the "mythical norm" for humanity as white, male, heterosexual, etc., in Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, ed. Nancy K. Bereano, The Crossing Press Feminist Series (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984).

“cannot suddenly declare itself ‘color-blind’ without in fact perpetuating [already existent] differential, racist treatment.”<sup>29</sup>

Huntington sees immigration and multiculturalism not only as a threat to American national identity but in starkly catastrophic terms:

Rejection of the Creed and of Western civilization means the end of the United States of America as we have known it. It also means effectively the end of Western civilization.<sup>30</sup>

Americans cannot avoid the issue: Are we a Western people or are we something else? The futures of the United States and of the West depend upon Americans reaffirming their commitment to Western civilization. Domestically this means rejecting the divisive siren calls of multiculturalism. . .<sup>31</sup>

Yet, perhaps rather than a rejection of the American Creed and founding principles, these ideals are being reinterpreted and expanded toward more consistency, including an actualization of the principle that “all men [supposedly understood as generically including all humans] are created equal,” along with “freedom” and “democracy” and the non-establishment of religion—striving to eliminate contradictions within them. Perhaps this is not the *replacement* of previous culture but an *evolution* through negotiating and uniting diverse elements, toward a more cosmopolitan identity, as a microcosm of the world.

Huntington’s flaw comes in his reification of the useful analytical category of “civilizations” into fixed entities. The Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman civilizations were multicultural (and dynamic) in their *ascendancy* and peak periods, as was classical Islamic civilization, particularly in medieval Spain. It could be argued that refusal to adapt and

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<sup>29</sup> Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 57.

<sup>30</sup> Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 306-07.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

incorporate new elements brought down the Roman Empire. Western civilization itself is a hybrid, as Huntington himself points out at times but seems to quickly dismiss from consciousness!<sup>32</sup> Perhaps digging in its heels to resist the encroachments of the other is itself the death knoll of a civilization. Huntington insists on the need to preserve Western civilization's integrity in a coexistence with other civilizations, seen as substantially impermeable entities locked in permanent conflict,<sup>33</sup> rather than seeing the possibility (and historical record) of cooperation and even convergence. It is good and useful to employ civilizational analysis to *understand* the realities, divisions, and conflicts of our time but *not* to *entrench* them.

### **America's "Anglo-Protestant" Culture—Static or Dynamic?**

Just as he does with civilizations, so Huntington also demonstrates an essentializing notion that there was one continuous, substantially unchanging American *culture* prior to the alleged disruptions of the 1960s due to immigration and multiculturalism. Huntington asserts that "the central issue will remain the degree to which Hispanics are assimilated into American society as previous immigrant groups have been."<sup>34</sup> Yet, this begs the question: assimilated to what? Huntington answers this question by repeatedly insisting that since the colonial period and prior to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the U.S.A. had one continuous culture that he calls "Anglo-Protestant." He states that the "American Creed" is the product of that culture and is incomprehensible and unsustainable apart from it and that only in recent history has that

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 43, 50.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 308-12.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 206.

culture been threatened by “multiculturalism,” the celebration of diversity, transnational and subnational identities, and the threat of becoming a bilingual and bicultural society due to the pattern of immigration from Mexico since 1965.<sup>35</sup> Huntington harkens back to an original establishment of American culture during the Puritan era before the entrance of the Enlightenment thought of the “Founding Fathers” (with its secularist, Deist, and Lockean principles), insisting that the latter ideals of the American Creed are firmly grounded in the earlier “dissenting Protestant” culture.

In the end, Huntington's hermeneutical lens through which he interprets American history and culture seems to be a commitment to one side of the "culture wars" divide, as he draws a line of continuity from the Puritans through American history down to the "Evangelical Protestantism" of today, whose values and commitments, including a number of culture wars political positions, Huntington identifies with those of America's original cultural core.<sup>36</sup>

The dissidence of American Protestantism, manifested first in Puritanism and congregationalism, reappeared in subsequent centuries in Baptist, Methodist, pietist, fundamentalist, evangelical, Pentecostal, and other types of Protestantism. These movements differed greatly. They were, however, generally committed to an emphasis on the individual's direct relation to God, the supremacy of the Bible as the sole source of God's word, salvation through faith and for many the transforming experience of being 'born again,' personal responsibility to proselytize and bear witness, and democratic and participatory church organization.<sup>37</sup>

The resulting controversies over racial preferences, bilingualism, multiculturalism, immigration, assimilation, national history standards, English as the official language, 'Eurocentrism,' were in effect all battles in a single war over the nature of American national identity.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Huntington, *Who Are We?*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, especially 9, 27-33, 53-58, 62-66, 128-37, 42-43.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

This is consistent with the way James Davison Hunter, in his ground-breaking book *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*,<sup>39</sup> describes the culture wars that dominate public discourse in contemporary American society. Hunter sees a unifying principle in the battles over such issues as “abortion, child care, funding for the arts, affirmative action and quotas, gay rights, values in public education, or multiculturalism.”<sup>40</sup>

Once again, what seems to be a myriad of self-contained cultural disputes actually amounts to a fairly comprehensive and momentous struggle to define the meaning of America—of how and on what terms will Americans live together, of what comprises the good society.<sup>41</sup>

. . . we come to see that the contemporary culture war is ultimately a struggle over national identity—*over the meaning of America*, who we have been in the past, who we are now, and perhaps most important, who we, as a nation, will aspire to become in the new millennium.<sup>42</sup>

In that perspective, what is actually threatened by immigration and multiculturalism is not so much a unified American national identity as a national commitment to one side of the culture wars divide. Immigration is certainly not the cause of this division within our society, which roughly seems to correlate with the “red state”/ “blue state” divide—or the urban/ rural divide, but it comes to be seen through the prism of the culture wars divide. Multiculturalism is more an aspect of that larger cultural dispute than a cause, as Hunter sees the culture wars as

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>39</sup> James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: BasicBooks, 1991).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 50. Emphasis is the author's.

ultimately rooted in the question of a unitary source versus more diffuse sources of moral authority.<sup>43</sup>

Huntington disputes with those who would define American identity mainly in terms of the “American Creed” as set forth in the nation’s founding documents, insisting that the Creed cannot be separated from the Anglo-Protestant culture that undergirds it.

The Creed, however, was the product of the distinct Anglo-Protestant culture of the founding settlers of America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Key elements of that culture include: the English language; Christianity; religious commitment; English concepts of the rule of law, the responsibility of rulers, and the rights of individuals; and dissenting Protestant values of individualism, the work ethic, and the belief that humans have the ability and the duty to try to create a heaven on earth, a ‘city on a hill.’<sup>44</sup>

Of course, it is one thing to say American identity *is* Anglo-Protestant culture and another to acknowledge the profound *impact of* that heritage on shaping American identity. Still, Huntington sees one continuous unadulterated culture as prevailing from the founding of the country until the disruptions of recent years.

Anglo-Protestant culture has been central to American identity for three centuries. . . In the late twentieth century, however, the salience and substance of this culture were challenged by a new wave of immigrants from Latin America and Asia, the popularity in intellectual and political circles of the doctrines of multiculturalism and diversity, the spread of Spanish as the second American language and the Hispanization trends in American society, the assertion of group identities based on race, ethnicity, and gender, the impact of diasporas and their homeland governments, and the growing commitment of elites to cosmopolitan and transnational identities.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>44</sup> Huntington, *Who Are We?*, xv-xvi. See also Chapters 3 (37-58) and 4 (59-80).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., xvi.

Huntington envisions a pure, static culture that resists the incursion of “outside” elements even when coming from those who are now “inside” the social system, just as he envisions civilizations that do not interpenetrate each other, even in a globalized world.

The question that arises here is: Must other identities necessarily conflict with national identity? Are not humans defined by multiple sources of identity, particularly in large, complex societies? At a point, Huntington himself acknowledges this reality, though he gives a certain primacy to cultural identity<sup>46</sup>—again, from an essentialized notion of culture. Of course, the answer to my question may depend on how national identity is defined, whether or not in ways that *do* exclude other identities. Here Huntington sheds significant light, though perhaps inadvertently. He rather nonchalantly acknowledges the ways in which his ideal Puritan culture defined itself in contradistinction from indigenous groups and determined that expulsion and extermination were the only viable course for dealing with them, and how early American identity excluded from “the people” African slaves and Native Americans—and in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Mexicans and Asians, so that “America [as defined by these exclusions] was a highly homogeneous society in terms of race, national origin, and religion.”<sup>47</sup> He also mentions the similar exclusion of Puerto Ricans as “*in but not fully of the American republic,*” though their land was taken over and incorporated into the nation.<sup>48</sup>

America’s core culture has been and, at the moment, is still primarily the culture of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century settlers who founded American society. The central elements of that culture can be defined in a variety of ways but include the Christian religion, Protestant values and moralism, a work ethic, the English language, British traditions of law, justice, and the limits of

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<sup>46</sup> Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 128.

<sup>47</sup> Huntington, *Who Are We?*, 53, 44.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

government power, and a legacy of European art, literature, philosophy, and music. Out of this culture the settlers developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the American Creed with its principles of liberty, equality, individualism, representative government, and private property. Subsequent generations of immigrants were assimilated into the culture of the founding settlers and contributed to and modified it. But they did not change it fundamentally.<sup>49</sup>

“America’s core culture” is assumed to be substantially a static thing. Huntington’s line of demarcation in the disruption of a purportedly static American culture beginning with the 1960s’ advent of “multiculturalism” and large scale Latino immigration may be, in effect, a racially defined dividing line. Remarkably, Huntington again glibly states: “For all practical purposes America was a white society until the mid-twentieth century.”<sup>50</sup> Again: “Historically white Americans have sharply distinguished themselves from Indians, blacks, Asians, and Mexicans, and excluded them from the American community.”<sup>51</sup> And as Huntington himself points out: “The first naturalization statute in 1790 opened citizenship only to ‘free white persons.’”<sup>52</sup> Huntington is rather cavalier in tracing this history of racial exclusions, ethnocentrism, and worse, and he seems to assume that the culture shaped by such a history is not tainted by these exclusions, abuses, and the arrogance associated with them, as if all that can be simply jettisoned from an otherwise perfectly good “culture,” without leaving its mark and entrenched inequities and injustices—and that we can now be a “color blind” society, albeit a society conformed to white cultural parameters.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 40-41.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 54.

Post-1960s challenges to national identity have actually been grounded in the founding ideals of the Creed (equality of all, liberty and justice for all, all endowed by the Creator with “inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” etc.) It would be naïve to assume that the upheavals involved in correcting wrongs like slavery, the displacement/ conquest/ extermination of indigenous peoples, and the exclusion of women from political power and rights of self-determination can take place without substantially changing the society, to say nothing of waves of immigrants. Huntington seems oblivious to—or at least dismissive of—the fact that the original founding by the settlers was built upon at least two fundamental wrongs in need of correction—the enslavement of Africans and displacement/ extermination of Native Americans. To that can be added a third—the confiscation of Mexican lands. American identity must be reconciled with these and other realities, including the exclusion of women from political participation and the exclusion of all but propertied white males from the power structures. So originally and along the way, the exclusion of some persons as non-persons or lesser human beings—the use of peoples without their full inclusion in the society, including the fact that much immigration historically has been encouraged or even forced by business interests—all of this was and is an unsustainable situation and entailed contradictions with the founding documents and principles, needing to be rectified.

Yet, even with these exclusions, American national identity was not nearly as unified and monolithic as Huntington supposes. Huntington claims the original settlers substantially recreated English culture and institutions,<sup>53</sup> but in many ways, the colonists sought to *distinguish* themselves from their British origins (and not all were British—there were also

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<sup>53</sup> Huntington, *Who Are We?*, 40.

Dutch, Germans, Scotch-Irish, etc.). In fact, during Huntington's "settler" historical period there was no "America" as a national identity but only British colonies and subjects. National identity was established: (a) in *distinction* from and through war with Britain as common enemy; and (b) by the founding documents and their ideals, which actually involved a number of compromises to accommodate substantial regional differences between northern and southern colonies. Again, there was both continuity and discontinuity, unity and diversity. In reality, cultural identity is always a dialectic of continuity and discontinuity, as incorporation of new elements and response to new situations cause a society to evolve. Huntington points out that Americans challenged British rule based on perceived English ideals.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, it can be argued that the dispossessed and marginalized today challenge ruling authorities based on American ideals, insisting that we live up to them rather than contradicting them. In both cases, continuity with core principles requires discontinuity with prevalent practices.

Moreover, there were substantial regional differences between the northern and southern colonies—differences that persisted through the division of the nation leading up to the Civil War, and arguably have persisted to this day, as reflected in the blue state-red state political divisions between the northeastern and southeastern states. The Confederacy concept of "states' rights" continues unabated within those same states. (It is a remarkable thing that Huntington makes much of Mexican-Americans waving the Mexican flag during their opposition to California's Proposition 187, as a symbol of *potential* regionalization and national disunity,<sup>55</sup> but says nothing of Southern states such as Alabama and South Carolina flying the Confederate

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>55</sup> Huntington, *Who Are We?*, 242.

Battle Flag—a symbol of *actual* regionalization and division of the nation—atop state capitol buildings.)

Huntington claims that "America was founded as a Protestant society."<sup>56</sup>

Protestant beliefs, values, and assumptions. . . had been the core element, along with the English language of America's settler culture, and that culture continued to pervade and shape American life, society, and thought as the proportion of Protestants declined. Because they are central to American culture, Protestant values deeply influenced Catholicism and other religions in America. They have shaped American attitudes toward private and public morality, economic activity, government, and public policy. Most importantly, they are the primary source of the American Creed, the ostensibly secular political principles that supplement Anglo-Protestant culture as the critical defining element of what it means to be American.<sup>57</sup>

Actually, it is arguable that U.S.A. was founded instead as a *secular* nation, substantially shaped by a group of Deists and based on the philosophy of John Locke. Ideals in the founding documents were drawn almost verbatim from John Locke, rooted not in the religious objectives of the Puritans but in the British struggle against absolute monarchy and then the American struggle against the monarchy and for independence. Huntington reaches back to the pre-Revolutionary/pre-independence period for these cultural roots, especially in the Puritans,<sup>58</sup> whom he sees as having shaped American identity, with continuity through the culture warriors of "Evangelical Christianity," which he endorses as a renewing force.<sup>59</sup> Yet, the United States' founding documents describe God in Deistic terms rather than Calvinistic terms.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 63-65.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 15, 65-66, 341-55.

Huntington does not take adequate account of the extent to which the American Creed, as defined by the founding documents, was articulated *over against* that Protestant and particularly Puritan background, based on Enlightenment principles which were both shaped by and in reaction to Christian faith, even as Western Civilization has been both shaped by and in reaction to religion generally. Over time this vision of America partially displaced the Puritan vision rather than growing out of it. Rather than constituting a country based on a purified and well-defined Christianity to be imposed upon all, the founders specifically incorporated the disestablishment of religion within the First Amendment to the Constitution. These founding principles actually conflict with Puritan ideals—not to impose a purification of religion but religious freedom, which was not a Puritan ideal. Religious freedom was proposed by founders eager to put religious wars and conflicts behind them and instead promote a tolerance of religious diversity, which was not at all a Puritan goal.

Moreover, it is remarkable that while Huntington argues for a grounding of American cultural identity in Christianity, in Protestantism, and in Puritanism continuous through “Evangelical Protestantism” of today, he seems to be arguing for a kind of Protestant Christian culture that involves social rather than theological commitments, as embodied in the wedding of Christianity and national ideology in American civil religion.<sup>60</sup> This social rather than theological vision of the Protestant Christianity at the core of American identity is typified by Huntington’s extraordinary statement: “While the American Creed is Protestantism without God, the American civil religion is Christianity without Christ.”<sup>61</sup> This is an astonishing

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 103-06.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 106.

admission when viewed from a Christian theological standpoint, particularly from the perspective that sees Christian faith as resistant to all forms of idolatry that substitute anything—including nation and political causes—for God.

Huntington's views on the assimilation of immigrants are derived from his assessment of America's cultural core as identified above:

During the nineteenth century and until the late twentieth century, immigrants were in various ways compelled, induced, and persuaded to adhere to the central elements of the Anglo-Protestant culture. . . . If they were thought incapable of assimilation, like the Chinese, they were excluded. . . . Throughout American history, people who were not white Anglo-Saxon Protestants have become Americans by adopting America's Anglo-Protestant culture and political values. This benefited them and the country.<sup>62</sup>

In other words, immigrants must conform to, rather than dissent from, critique, or add to a presumably fixed cultural pattern. The pattern was established by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, and those who are "other" must give up any and all cultural "otherness." They are not to critique and expand the culture as it is defined or add their own unique perspectives but rather are to give up alterity in favor of cultural conformity. The culture does not evolve to take in diverse elements. Diverse elements are to yield up their diversity without changing the social system in any way that might take account of human difference.

This cultural conformity includes language, as speakers of Spanish and other languages are not merely expected to become fluent in English but to entirely give up speaking Spanish. Huntington sees bilingualism as a negative and a loss of any ability to speak Spanish as a positive.<sup>63</sup> Here assimilation is not merely an enhancement (adding to one's cultural and

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 232, 319.

linguistic repertoire) but is simultaneously a diminishment (subtracting from one's cultural identity).

The ultimate criterion of assimilation is the extent to which immigrants identify with the United States as a country, believe in its Creed, espouse its culture, and correspondingly reject loyalty to other countries and their values and cultures.<sup>64</sup>

(An actual analysis of data on Hispanics in relation to Huntington's assertions that the volume and nature of Hispanic immigration "will erode the dominance of English as a nationally unifying language, weaken the country's dominant cultural values, and promote ethnic allegiances over a primary identification as an American" reveals that Hispanics follow a traditional pattern of assimilation, "acquiring English and losing Spanish rapidly beginning with the second generation" and demonstrate similar commitments to religion and to the work ethic to those of native-born whites, and that "a clear majority of Hispanics reject a purely ethnic identification and patriotism grows from one generation to the next."<sup>65</sup>)

I dispute Huntington's claim that assimilation into a new culture requires repudiation of one's previous culture. As he recognizes elsewhere, there are many levels and forms of identity. It is only at a point where identities are in *conflict* that one identity must override another. Huntington cites Mexican American self-identification as Mexican, Mexican American, Hispanic, Latino, or Chicano, etc., rather than as "American" as a failure to assimilate,<sup>66</sup> but the problem here is that such labels as purported indicators of identity are usually *imposed* rather than self-chosen. Mexican Americans are labeled as "other" and therefore tend to take on the

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>65</sup> Jack Citrin et al., "Testing Huntington: Is Hispanic Immigration a Threat to American Identity?," *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Huntington, *Who Are We?*, 241-43.

identity imposed upon them as something negative, while attempting to turn it into a positive identity. As a matter of self-esteem, then, the “other” tends to embrace the imposed label and to seek pride in the differences/ distinctions the dominant group will not let them forget, as differentiation is imposed upon them. This is a human tendency. (Consider how such labels as “Christian” and “Methodist” were originally derogatory labels imposed by others but then were embraced as an identity by these cultural “others” in their context.)

In truth, some of the characteristics of Mexican and Latino/a immigration, especially regionalization (though this is only a partial truth), rapid expansion (not entirely distinct from previous waves of immigration), and *possibly* persistent use of Spanish (though it seems most 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Mexican/Hispanic immigrants are fluent in English) *could* pose challenges to the coherence of national identity, though not necessarily. Nevertheless, rejection and ostracism do not promote unity and assimilation but prevent it, and possibly are substantially responsible for regionalization (as a “safe haven” from discrimination) and a lack of assimilation, to such a degree as these exist. In other words, I would argue that citing the development of ethnic subcultures and ethnic identities as a reason for exclusion of immigrants is a reversal of cause and effect. Rather, the development of enduring ethnic subcultures and identities is substantially the *result* of a prior exclusion of immigrants from the mainstream of American society.

A bilingual population is *not* necessarily a barrier to national unity. Many Europeans are bilingual or even multilingual. The core issue is or should be learning English—*not* forgetting or abandoning the use of Spanish. In any case, Canada, Belgium, and Switzerland are evidence that bilingual/ multilingual societies, while they may have some level of tension, are not

necessarily “Balkanized.” Mexico/ Latin America and the United States share Christianity as the main religion. Huntington himself acknowledges that religion is the most significant marker of culture, and it is religious differences more than language, along with the historical repression of some ethnic groups by others, that are at the root of divisions in the Balkans, particularly the former Yugoslavia.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps also efforts to promote unity in diversity and acceptance rather than rejection of immigrants will be more effective in facilitating assimilation and national cohesion than efforts to turn back the clock or counterproductive efforts to thwart the impact of historical and economic push and pull sources of immigration, economic globalization, and NAFTA, as discussed in Chapter 1.

#### **Similar Ideas about Immigration and Multiculturalism Expressed by Political Leaders:**

Ideas about immigration and multiculturalism such as those of Huntington bear their most powerful influence when they filter into the popular imagination and the political culture of our society. Hence I would like to inject at this point similar notions about the catastrophic threat to America and to Western civilization as expressed by certain political leaders who have been strong voices against immigration and multiculturalism. It is not necessary to presume a direct influence of Huntington upon these leaders, since these ideas about immigration and multiculturalism are not entirely original with Huntington but are part of a broader cultural conversation, though they perhaps find one of their most profound and eloquent expressions in the thought of Huntington.

One of these political leaders is former Colorado Governor Richard (Dick) Lamm. In 2004, Lamm made a speech entitled, “I Have a Plan to Destroy America,” which became famous

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<sup>67</sup> Andrew Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1999), 123-35, 57-64.

as it was circulated widely in a viral forwarded email.<sup>68</sup> In that speech Lamm mentions several things that he would do if he wanted to destroy America, a clever rhetorical device for detailing a list of actions he perceived to be already underway which he believed to be in the process of destroying America.

“First, to destroy America, turn America into a bilingual or multi-lingual and bicultural country. History shows that no nation can survive the tension, conflict, and antagonism of two or more competing languages and cultures.”<sup>69</sup> Then he proceeds to contradict himself by citing the problems faced by Canada, Belgium, Malaysia, Lebanon, and France, while not acknowledging the fact that all of these examples have, in fact, survived the tensions cited. His only examples where division of the nation has occurred are Pakistan and, to some degree, Cyprus. The unity of East and West Pakistan was an artificial creation of the British Empire in granting India its independence, as the two predominantly Muslim areas on its northeast and northwest were carved out of India based solely on their religious affinity, and these territories that now comprise Pakistan and Bangladesh are divided geographically by a hostile India lying between them. Cyprus is divided by religion (Muslim and Christian) and not only by language and ethnicity or culture. In any case, at least five out of seven of his examples do not support his claim.

Lamm’s second point on how to destroy America: “Invent ‘multiculturalism’ and encourage immigrants to maintain their culture. I would make it an article of belief that all

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<sup>68</sup> Dick Lamm, "How to Destroy America," *Safe Haven* (2006), <http://www.safehaven.com/article/4837/how-to-destroy-america>.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

cultures are equal. That there are no cultural differences.”<sup>70</sup> Here Lamm engages in a caricature that seems typical of most diatribes against a multicultural perspective, equating it with an uncritical cultural relativism (in some other cases a perceived reversal of the presumption of Western superiority, toward a presumption of non-Western superiority), while certainly a more intellectually sound approach would be to assume a critical perspective toward *all* cultures, whether our own or that of the cultural other. To recognize weaknesses and imperfections in our own culture and positive characteristics in other cultures is not the same thing as saying that all are equal or that the other cultures are superior, and a multicultural perspective certainly does not deny cultural differences but instead highlights them, while at the same time generally emphasizing the possibility of a harmony of those differences rather than inevitable discord.

“I would make it an article of faith that the Black and Hispanic dropout rates are due solely to prejudice and discrimination by the majority. Every other explanation is out of bounds.”<sup>71</sup> This is another caricature, as the situation is more complex than that. To acknowledge a role played by prejudice and discrimination is not necessarily to reduce causation to those factors alone.

Lamm goes on to state:

The key is to celebrate diversity rather than unity. . . I would encourage all immigrants to keep their own language and culture. I would replace the melting pot metaphor with the salad bowl metaphor. It is important to ensure that we have various cultural subgroups living in America enforcing their differences rather than as Americans, emphasizing their similarities.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

Here Lamm engages in either-or thinking that, like Huntington, sees unity and diversity as incompatible opposites, without seeing or acknowledging the possibility of a unity in diversity. He assumes likewise that the point of immigrants retaining their language and culture is to “enforce” differences and promote division rather than to instead *recognize* differences and acknowledge particularity or individuality. Individual differences do not have to be divisive if enfolded within a larger unity. Individuals, families, religious denominations, rural vs. urban dwellers, localities, states, and regions within the country all maintain their particularity and manifest a multitude of individual differences when compared with one another. Yet, at least some sense of national unity prevails amidst those differences. And arguably even “English” speakers in Slapout, Alabama, and Brooklyn, New York, do not speak the exact same language, without communication difficulties—certainly equal to, if not greater than, those between a bilingual and a monolingual English speaker. The real question regarding subcultures is their compatibility with one another within a broader cultural unity that encompasses them all.

Lamm makes several other points. I will address only a few of them. “I would invest in ethnic identity, and I would establish the cult of ‘Victimology.’ I would get all minorities to think that their lack of success was the fault of the majority. I would start a grievance industry blaming all minority failure on the majority population.”<sup>73</sup> Again, the situation is certainly more complex than this caricature implies. “My sixth plan for America's downfall would include dual citizenship, and promote divided loyalties.”<sup>74</sup> This would certainly be problematic if the dual

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

citizenship were with two inimical nations rather than two nations that are allies and in a process of economic integration.

“Next to last, I would place all subjects off limits; make it taboo to talk about anything against the cult of ‘diversity.’ . . . Words like ‘racist’ or ‘xenophobe’ halt discussion and debate.”<sup>75</sup> Indeed, labels generally do halt discussion and debate, though this is equally true of labels such as “amnesty” (an inaccurate, reductionistic label affixed by immigration restrictionists to any proposal to legalize undocumented immigrants, even with severe penalties and stringent qualifications), “*cult of diversity/multiculturalism*,” and “*cult of Victimology*,” as well as caricatures of a view with which one disagrees. Such labels and caricatures reduce the complexity of ideas and arguments to something that can be summarily dismissed without discussion of the actual details of a view or proposal.

“. . . I would next make it impossible to enforce our immigration laws. I would develop a mantra: That because immigration has been good for America, it must always be good.”<sup>76</sup> This is another caricature, and Lamm does not in any way explain how anyone is making it impossible to enforce immigration laws. In fact, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, drawing upon Douglas Massey’s research, over the last few decades dramatically increased efforts at securing the border, without concomitant reforms in our immigration laws to align them more closely with our nation’s need for immigrant labor, have proven counterproductive. In other words, what “make[s] it impossible to enforce our immigration laws” is the restrictive nature of those

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

laws themselves, in their conflict with economic realities and trade agreements that seek economic integration between the United States and Mexico.

“Lastly, I would censor Victor Davis Hanson's book, *Mexifornia*. His book is dangerous. It exposes the plan to destroy America. If you feel America deserves to be destroyed, don't read that book.”<sup>77</sup> Hanson’s book<sup>78</sup> does not, in fact, propose a “plan to destroy America” or even state that immigration and multiculturalism are destroying America, though Hanson does perceive, describe, and project some very negative consequences flowing out of both current immigration policy and the teaching of multiculturalism in the universities.

Hanson describes the realities of changing communities and the cycle of poverty, particularly in California, though the cycle of poverty cannot necessarily be blamed entirely on immigration or particularly on undocumented immigration, since it manifests itself also in other parts of the country where immigration has certainly not been a major factor, such as the south side of Chicago and certain parts of New York City. Hanson also describes the multiculturalism being taught in the universities as pushing division, conflict, “self-loathing,” and the disparaging of our Western and American heritage and values. Yet, here again I wonder if he is mistaking a critical approach to that heritage and to cultural differences with an uncritical rejection of Western and American values and an equally uncritical embrace of other cultures. In other words, does he hear any criticism of that which is Western and/or American, along with criticism of the notion of Western/ American cultural superiority, as “self-loathing” and

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Victor Davis Hanson, *Mexifornia: A State of Becoming*, 2nd ed. (New York: Encounter Books, 2007).

rejection, and any emphasis upon positive characteristics of other cultures as a statement of their superiority over what is Western/ American?

I certainly believe an ideal posture would be a critical approach to *all* cultures, including our own, analyzing both their strengths and weaknesses, their contributions to justice and to injustice, to humanity and to inhumanity, and allowing each to critique one another in an intercultural dialogue, rather than a unicultural hegemony which assumes that any one culture is the norm by which others are measured. In fact, I believe that the single greatest strength of Western civilization has been its capacity for self-criticism, which generates reforms and improvements and should *not be silenced*, while the voice of the cultural other is vital to that self-criticism, in order to disrupt a naïve and oppressive chauvinism.

Finally, Hanson states the need for immigrants to assimilate in order to thrive in our society rather than failing, though he does not distinguish between assimilation as the capacity to belong and to succeed in a cultural context, while maintaining individuality, and assimilation as a blanket cultural conformity that erases difference. His descriptions tend toward the latter view of assimilation.

The other political leader I would mention here is former Colorado Rep. Tom Tancredo, who has been a member of the U.S. House of Representatives widely known for his views not only against granting any form of legalization to undocumented immigrants but also for *decreasing* the number of *legal* immigrants. Tancredo also made an unsuccessful run for the Republican nomination for President in 2008. It is interesting that Gov. Lamm and Rep. Tancredo have very similar alarmist views about immigration, and both have been political leaders from Colorado, a state which has been in transition not only in terms of its growing

Latino population but also in its shift from a solidly conservative and “red” (Republican) state politically to a more liberal<sup>79</sup> “purple” (swing) or “blue” (Democratic) state. An interesting question is to what extent shifts in political ideology and dynamics underlie these leaders’ reactions to a growing Latino population.

Like Lamm, Tancredo expounds upon the threat posed by immigration and multiculturalism. Tancredo shows a direct influence by Huntington, as he refers to a “clash of civilizations” and even cites Huntington’s book by the same name, calling it “profound and prophetic” in describing “all present global conflict as being between ‘the West and the rest.’”<sup>80</sup> (I believe that is actually an exaggeration of Huntington’s claims, but that is how Tancredo reads and applies Huntington to the present realities.) Tancredo primarily sees the clash of civilizations as between the United States and Western civilization on the one hand and “Islamofascism” (a term presumably referring to extremist, militantly anti-Western Muslims who use terrorist attacks against innocent non-combatants as a tactic for attempting to advance their cause, though Tancredo, like many others, tends to implicate the entire realm of Islam as an enemy of “the West”) on the other.<sup>81</sup>

However, Tancredo also sees “the cult of multiculturalism” as an “all-out war the intolerant (under the guise of toleration) are waging on Western civilization itself.”<sup>82</sup> Likewise, Tancredo sees “the greatest attack on the fabric holding America together” as “the purposeful

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<sup>79</sup> Here I use the word “liberal” in its American political sense, rather than in the European sense.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas G. Tancredo, *In Mortal Danger: The Battle for America's Border and Security* (Nashville, Tenn.: WND Books, 2006), 65.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

avoidance of the enforcement of our laws pertaining to citizenship and immigration”<sup>83</sup>—or in other words, “the dangers of unchecked immigration without assimilation.”<sup>84</sup> Tying these two together, Tancredo states:

THE RADICAL cult of multiculturalism also undermines the issue of immigration and assimilation. As a movement, it is a malignancy that essentially opposes the idea of a common culture, and actually serves to reject assimilation and commonality as necessary components to a successful, enduring society.<sup>85</sup>

Like Hanson, Tancredo reveals an imprecision in his references to “assimilation,” failing to distinguish between assimilation as adherence to the guiding principles and ideals upon which the United States was founded and assimilation as conformity to cultural traits imposed by the predominant white Anglo population within the U.S. Tancredo at times asserts that it is ideas and principles that define our unity as a nation:

And that is important to understand, that this country uniquely was founded on ideas, nothing else. No other country has that distinction. Ideas are the only thing that holds us together here. It is not culture, it is not language, it is not habit, not custom, none of those, not the color of our skin, not our ethnicity, none of those things do we have in common in this Nation. What holds us together is an adherence to principles.<sup>86</sup>

Tancredo does not go on to identify what those ideas and principles are, but earlier in the same speech he identifies “western ideals” as “the ideals of individual freedom, the rule of law, and the ability for men and women to select from whatever they want to select from to follow, the

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>86</sup> Thomas G. Tancredo, "Congressional Record Volume 149, Issue 103 (July 14, 2003): Critical Issues Facing America," ed. Committee on the Judiciary (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2003), H6703.

dictates of their heart when it comes to a religion that they choose to adhere to.”<sup>87</sup> It might be argued that, if this is true, that we are a nation of ideas and principles such as these, rather than a unifying language and culture, then why are immigrants, and the retention of their language and elements of their previous culture, a threat so long as they subscribe to the ideas and principles upon which the nation was founded?

Yet, Tancredo at other times asserts that immigrants must not only “learn our language” and “learn our history” but also “adopt our customs, observe our holidays, [and] respect our traditional religious underpinnings”,<sup>88</sup> as well as “assimilate into *our* culture. . .”<sup>89</sup> I would agree with Tancredo on the importance for national unity of immigrants learning basics of U.S. history and civics, which is indeed a requirement for naturalization as citizens, and these elements are essential to a shared unity of ideas and principles. I would even agree on the importance of immigrants learning English as an element not only of national unity but also of their capacity to survive and thrive in a predominantly English-speaking nation, and given enough time immigrants do learn English (without necessarily forgetting their native language), especially by the second generation, while again, learning basic English is a requirement for naturalization as citizens. But conformity to customs, culture, and religion seem to be less vital to the organic unity of a large, complex, pluralistic, and essentially secular nation such as the United States, and retention of immigrants’ other language(s) alongside English does not seem to form an inherent barrier to national unity. Moreover, Tancredo’s reference to “the rot of

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., H6699.

<sup>88</sup> Tancredo, *In Mortal Danger*, 194.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 195. Emphasis is that of the author.

multiculturalism” as a “raging intolerance of traditional America”<sup>90</sup> points toward the “America” he is defending being, like the Anglo-Protestant culture defended by Huntington, one side of the “culture wars” divide that is far from being a unifying force in the United States, quite apart from the issue of immigration.

For Tancredo, the issue of collective identity is central:

And while there are many problems associated with the general issues of ‘immigration and citizenship’—including loss of American jobs, the displacement of American workers, the negative effect on our economy [all of which are debatable points]—the most important of all of these is the loss of our American identity.<sup>91</sup>

Tancredo’s most cogent point is the division of the nation into “cultural and ethnic subgroups of hyphenated Americans.”<sup>92</sup> Yet, to some extent this division was built into the very fabric of the nation through the longstanding exclusion of Native Americans and African Americans prior to any immigration into the United States once it was constituted as a nation. Moreover, it is arguable that the division into “hyphenated Americans” is the *effect*, rather than the cause, of ethnic exclusions, as ethnic subgroups rally around an identity *imposed* upon them by the predominant white Anglo population, an imposed identity that excluded them a priori from the mainstream of American society.

Like Huntington and Lamm, Tancredo views multiculturalism and immigration in catastrophic terms, as nothing less than the threat of the very destruction of the nation.

“It is the cult of multiculturalism that permeates our society, this desire to destroy everything that is good about America, to say to children, there is nothing unique about America, nothing

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 29.

good about America, that every other society is as good if not better, . . .”<sup>93</sup> Once again, I believe that, like Lamm and Hanson, Tancredo is offering a caricature of at least any mainstream teaching or celebration of being a multicultural society, seeing the same as an uncritical attack on everything American and an uncritical embrace of all other societies as superior to ours.

If the current trends continue, our American heritage will be lost forever. If that happens, our civic culture and political institutions that have guaranteed ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’ to all will be gone as well. Only by uniting against those who seek to divide us will we preserve the Union.<sup>94</sup>

Such is Tancredo’s assessment of the impact of multiculturalism, without establishing just how multiculturalism does or will facilitate the loss of “our American heritage” or the loss of American political institutions. Similar in scope is his assessment of the impact of immigration.

I believe that immigration and citizenship reform is so important that how we resolve this challenge will not only determine what kind of country we will be, but whether or not America will remain a country at all.<sup>95</sup>

Again, Tancredo does not explain how an unreformed immigration and citizenship policy will facilitate the nonexistence of America as a country. He merely asserts it as a self-evident truth.

### **Formation of Collective Identity:**

Every identity, whether personal or collective, is a socially constructed identity, defined or negotiated through interaction between self and other, including communal self, as defined by the self’s various communities of discourse, and communal other, as defined by the exclusion of communal “outsiders.”

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<sup>93</sup> Tancredo, "Congressional Record Volume 149, Issue 103 (July 14, 2003): Critical Issues Facing America," H6703.

<sup>94</sup> Tancredo, *In Mortal Danger: The Battle for America's Border and Security*, 35.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

Andrew Bell-Fialkoff describes how historically, various peoples have forged a collective identity through a series of exclusions of the “other,” defining “us” in terms of how “we” are “not them,” as enacted through population cleansings.<sup>96</sup> “Population cleansing is a planned, deliberate removal from a certain territory of an undesirable population distinguished by one or more characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, race, class, or sexual preference.”<sup>97</sup> “Cleansing is directed against an enemy that is deemed to be a threat to a collectivity and the integrity of its institutions. Often, the enemy is a minority that conspicuously differs from the rest of the population.”<sup>98</sup>

Bell-Fialkoff delineates a historical typology of three phases of population cleansing and collective identity formation: (1) antiquity, characterized by a diffuse identity, in which there may at times have been a religious or ethnic component to cleansing but which primarily involved political and economic motivations, such as to eliminate the threat of rebellion from a newly conquered people through removal of governing and commercial elites in order to disrupt a social identity as a distinct people separate from the conquerors, as practiced by the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman empires on subjugated peoples, as well as to benefit economically from the sale of slaves and their usage in agricultural production on large estates; (2) the Middle Ages, with primary emphasis upon religious identity and the cleansing of religious minorities (in Europe, primarily Jews and Muslims, along with unorthodox forms of Christian faith), particularly in the midst of the major civilizational conflicts between Christendom and the Islamic empires, but after the Reformation shifting substantially to

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<sup>96</sup> Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 57-115.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

conflicting religious identities and purging between Protestants and Catholics (along with similar conflicts between various Protestant groups); and (3) modernity, seeing, with the formation of nation-states and increasing secularization in post-Renaissance Europe, the evolution of a multiplicity of categories for identity formation and cleansing, including religion, race, and ethnicity, among others (class, age, gender, sexual orientation, political/ideological), though the predominant category has been ethnic.<sup>99</sup> During the transitions from one to another focal point for identity formation and cleansing, old identities are not discarded, but new ones are built upon them as layers of identity, like concentric rings in a tree.<sup>100</sup>

This socially constructed identity is inherent neither in biology nor in metaphysics—nor ultimately in history in some objective sense, as all history is an interpretation of the past grounded in the present. Every “people”—particularly in any large, complex, modern society—is a complex compendium of diverse elements. As Immanuel Wallerstein points out, our very inability to determine a fixed set of parameters delineating a given “people” is evidence that “peoplehood is not merely a construct but one which, in each particular instance, has constantly changing boundaries.”<sup>101</sup> One of the primary ways “peoplehood” is constructed is through construction and reconstruction of the “past” in accordance with present social and political commitments.

Pastness is a mode by which persons are persuaded to act in the present in ways they might not otherwise act. Pastness is a tool persons use against each other. Pastness is a central element in the socialization of individuals, in the maintenance of group solidarity, in the establishment of or challenge to social

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 7-49.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>101</sup> Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, and Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 77.

legitimation. . . Since the real world is constantly changing, what is relevant to contemporary politics constantly changes. Since, however, pastness is by definition an assertion of the constant past, no one can ever admit that any particular past has ever changed or could possibly change. The past is normally considered to be inscribed in stone and irreversible. The real past, to be sure, is indeed inscribed in stone. The social past, how we understand this real past, on the other hand, is inscribed at best in soft clay.

This being the case, it makes little difference whether we define pastness in terms of genetically continuous groups (races), historical socio-political groups (nations) or cultural groups (ethnic groups). They are all peoplehood constructs, all inventions of pastness, all contemporary political phenomena.<sup>102</sup>

Huntington, out of his own social and political commitments vis-à-vis the contemporary culture wars, attempts his own reconstruction of "pastness" in American history, in order to essentialize his construction of American national identity. He insists that he is defining that identity culturally and not racially. Yet, as Etienne Balibar points out, the language of "culture" has come to function as a kind of "neo-racism" that gives the same social exclusions a more socially acceptable terminology, as it turns "culture" into a fixed essence like "race" and issues into a new cultural determinism that parallels and arguably continues in another form the previous biological determinism of "race."<sup>103</sup> Balibar adds that "*culture can also function like a nature*, and it can in particular function as a way of locking individuals and groups a priori into a genealogy, into a determination that is immutable and intangible in origin."<sup>104</sup> Balibar specifically mentions how the "category of *immigration*" functions as a "'sociological' signifier" to "replace the 'biological' one as the key representation of hatred and fear of the other" in the discourse of culture.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 78-79.

<sup>103</sup> Balibar and Wallerstein, 17-28.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 22, emphasis the author's.

Huntington insists that a unifying core culture is a necessary component of American national identity because an identity based only on the American Creed (the United States' founding ideals and principles) is historically and psychologically insufficient to sustain a nation for long.<sup>106</sup> Yet, taking a cue from Wallerstein's notion that "peoplehood" is constructed through construction and reconstruction of the past, along with Alasdair MacIntyre's insight into the narrative formation of identity, it occurs to me that the basis for American national identity could be a narrative connection: a people is formed who share a common story and not merely a set of ideals. The shared narrative generates a collective identity, as fundamentally a nation is a people who share a common story, and immigrants become part of the nation as they share in its story, adding distinct lines of their own to that story but seeing themselves as part of the larger narrative. I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter Alasdair MacIntyre's argument that it is narrative that gives unity to the self and is the source of both personal and collective identity, as a narrative framework is necessary to give meaning to any event, occurrence, or piece of data, bringing together isolated fragments into a meaningful whole.<sup>107</sup> Suffice it to say here that the evolving national story becomes the source of unity in diversity as it incorporates the particular stories of immigrants into itself.

### **What is a "Culture"?**

I think Huntington operates from a deficient notion of what a "culture" is. He seems to see it as a relatively fixed, unchanging entity that is agreed upon by all constituents and is in

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>106</sup> Huntington, *Who Are We?*, 19.

<sup>107</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 204-25.

perpetual distinction from and generally conflict with other cultures. In fact, Huntington understands a culture as a collection of ideas, values, institutions, a common language, a common religion, etc., embedded in such “key cultural elements” as blood, language, religion, and customs or way of life.<sup>108</sup> I find more helpful—and more true to human cultures—the semiotic understanding of cultures as set forth by Clifford Geertz, seeing them instead as symbol systems that make sense and meaning out of disparate phenomena.<sup>109</sup> Such symbol systems by nature must evolve to incorporate new elements and new information that does not fit into the existing order, though admittedly, as Mary Douglas points out, the social system will tend toward a conservative bias, in order to maintain confidence in the system’s capacity to bring order out of chaos.<sup>110</sup>

Cultures tend to operate similarly to the way Jean Piaget described cognitive development, the individual’s mode of processing information through assimilation and accommodation. As long as new information and elements can be processed through existing categories of thought (*schemata*), they are incorporated or assimilated into these categories. When new information cannot be fitted into the old system of thought, the latter must be altered to accommodate that which does not fit.<sup>111</sup>

Of course, as Douglas describes in great detail, cultural systems are very resistant to change and for as long as is possible will tend to deal with information that does not fit the

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<sup>108</sup> Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 42.

<sup>109</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York,: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30.

<sup>110</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London,: Routledge & K. Paul, 1966), 35-37.

<sup>111</sup> J. H. Flavell, *The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget* (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1963), 58-77.

conceptual system—that is ambiguous or anomalous and cannot be fitted into existing categories of thought—by excluding the anomalies as abominations, contamination, pollution, or violations of conceptual and systemically defined “order” or “purity.”<sup>112</sup> Social lines and boundaries are maintained by pollution ideas, especially where physical, political, and economic sanctions are absent or weak.<sup>113</sup> This accords with Bell-Fialkoff’s description of how those social lines and boundaries are maintained by population cleansings, removing the impure “other” in order to maintain the purity of a people’s collective identity.<sup>114</sup> “An enemy, real or imagined, is often perceived as unclean, as a contamination or a cancer that must be eliminated or excised.”<sup>115</sup>

Likewise, Alexandra Cuffel describes how categories of filth and ritual pollution functioned during late antiquity and the Middle Ages to define and denigrate the religious “other,” serving as a powerful way to maintain, through horror and disgust when argumentation failed, religious boundaries that were constantly threatened by the increasing proximity and interaction among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Among these three groups, animal categories and names and association with diseases, impurity, filth, excrement, menstrual blood and other bodily fluids, sexual taboos, and gendered expressions of disgust as the religious “other” was associated with women, reduced the religious other to less than human—to the status of animals or inanimate matter, which translated after the Middle Ages

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<sup>112</sup> Douglas, *op. cit.*, especially 2-4, 35-40, 49-57, 160-64.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 138-39, 41-42.

<sup>114</sup> Bell-Fialkoff, *op. cit.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

into similar categories and language for the dehumanization of the racial and ethnic other.<sup>116</sup>

“In short, insinuating that the other was both morally and physically filthy served two functions. First, it fostered a sense of community solidarity based on hatred. Second, it set up barriers against interfaith intimacy on any level. . .”<sup>117</sup> “Polemicists’ choice of diseases, mostly skin ailments and anal discharges, was aimed to mark the religious other not only as disgusting but also as dangerous and contagious.”<sup>118</sup> This use of abusive names, association with disease and pollution, and reduction of the other to a subhuman level ironically coincides with the reality of closer encounters and intermingling with that other.

What is fascinating and, I would argue, especially significant about this polemic is its demonstration of the simultaneous juxtaposition of extreme anger and fear and cultural sharing and understanding between religious communities. The volatile emotions expressed in these texts make it easy to assume that the only story they tell is one of violence and oppression, whether verbal or physical or both. Yet I would assert that such high emotions and evocations of violated bodily borders point precisely to intense cultural and religious integration of communities, for it is when the other becomes so close as to be nearly indistinguishable from oneself that he/she/they become the most threatening to those who wish to maintain the boundaries of separate communal or religious identities.<sup>119</sup>

These social processes explain a history of dehumanization of indigenous peoples in Latin America, Africa, and elsewhere, as such peoples have been constructed by Europeans and Euro-Americans as “savage” or “barbarian,” in contrast with themselves as the “civilized.”<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Alexandra Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 242-43.

<sup>120</sup> See Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 146-67.

(Consider here the very use of the term “alien” as codified in immigration laws, along with images of immigrants as dirty, nasty, “vermin,” and references to shooting undocumented immigrants like feral pigs, etc.) This also explains how both immigrants and multiculturalism can be threats to the existing order, which according to Douglas’ analysis is unable to process ambiguity in its definitions of that which is internal and external to the defined classification system.

Yet, the historical upheavals to the Western belief system which characterized the Renaissance and led to advances in the sciences in close connection with challenges to established religious orthodoxy and the eventual disestablishment of religion in the U.S. Constitution, were precisely correlated with the vast expansion of travel and trade during the “Age of Exploration,” in which Europeans came to have close encounters with very different cultures and belief systems, and the challenge these posed to European categories of thought and cultural systems. In other words, Western encounters with the racial, cultural, and religious other were vitally important to the Western world's capacity for self-criticism and its openness to inquiry and the acquisition of new forms of knowledge.

Huntington’s quest is to maintain a purported cultural purity that is substantially illusory and is certainly incompatible with the rigorous intercultural encounters facilitated by globalization in our time period, even if immigration could be somehow be stopped and the voices of multiculturalism in academic circles somehow be silenced. Huntington actually invokes the notion of maintaining the purity of his essentialized American culture, as he

describes “white nativism” as a “plausible reaction” to the “diminished role in U.S. society” of “male WASPs”.<sup>121</sup>

One very plausible reaction would be the emergence of exclusivist sociopolitical movements composed largely but not only of white males, primarily working-class and middle-class, protesting and attempting to stop or reverse these changes and what they believe, accurately or not, to be the diminution of their social and economic status, their loss of jobs to immigrants and foreign countries, *the perversion of their culture*, the displacement of their language, and *the erosion or even evaporation of the historical identity of their country*. Such movements would be both racially and culturally inspired and could be anti-Hispanic, anti-black, and anti-immigration. They would be *the heir to the many comparable exclusivist racial and anti-foreign movements that helped define American identity in the past*. . . brought together under the label ‘white nativism.’

The term ‘white’ in this label does not mean that people of other races would not be involved in such movements or that these movements are focused exclusively on racial issues. It does mean that their members are likely to be overwhelmingly white and that *the preservation or restoration of what they see as ‘white America’ is a central goal*. The term ‘nativism’ has acquired pejorative connotations among denationalized elites on the assumption that it is wrong vigorously to *defend one’s ‘native’ culture and identity and to maintain their purity against foreign influences*.<sup>122</sup>

Huntington is a bit disingenuous in his consistent use of the conditional “would be” here, since such movements have already been around for decades and are very intimately engaged with the immigration debate.<sup>123</sup> To some extent, Huntington seems to be raising this almost as a threat, as if in order to attempt to use fear as a tool to overcome multiculturalism—fear of a potential reversal of the civil rights movement through a rebellion of white America. In any case, he makes it clear that what is at stake is a notion of (white) cultural purity that is seen to be under siege.

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<sup>121</sup> Huntington, *Who Are We?*, 309-16.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 310, emphasis mine in all instances here.

<sup>123</sup> See my Chapter 3 on John Tanton and his organizations and allies in the anti-immigration movement.

A. R. Radcliffe-Brown makes a good point about social systems—to wit, cultures:

A social system can be conceived and studied as a system of values. . . the first necessary condition of the existence of a society is that the individual members shall agree in some measure in the values that they recognize.

Any particular society is characterized by a certain set of values—moral, aesthetic, economic, etc. . . In a complex modern society we find much more disagreement if we consider the society as a whole, but we may find a closer measure of agreement amongst the members of a group or class within the society.<sup>124</sup>

In other words, the smaller the social system, the more there will tend to be agreement on its system of values. However, in large, complex societies such as Western nations, formed as they all are of many diverse elements brought together into a political unity, there will be much disagreement about specific values within a pluralistic context, though smaller groups within those societies will be characterized by closer agreement on those same values. As I have already mentioned, regionalization was a reality from the beginning of the United States, and a combination of more ethnic diversity since the late nineteenth century and the attempt to include groups that had effectively been excluded from “the people” (e.g., African-Americans, Native Americans, Mexican Americans especially in the Southwest, and Puerto Ricans especially in Puerto Rico and New York City) have rendered the United States a more complex and pluralistic society.

What Huntington seems to want to do is to impose a small group unity on a large, complex society, while trying to undo the impact not only of the incorporation of excluded elements (forcing non-white persons and groups to “assimilate” to White Anglo-Saxon Protestant “culture”) but of globalization, with its accelerated interaction between diverse

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<sup>124</sup> A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, "Taboo," in *Reader in Comparative Religion : An Anthropological Approach*, ed. William Armand Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 50-51.

cultures throughout the modern world. In Huntington's discourse on individual versus group identities and rights, he seems to forget that his WASP culture constitutes a group identity also, so that it is not really a contrast between individual identities and group identities but rather between one superimposed group identity and a diversity of other group identities seeking a voice alongside the one in the shaping of the social system.

Descriptions of the threat of persons in a marginal or liminal state by Mary Douglas, historian of religions Mircea Eliade, and anthropologist Victor Turner are illuminating at this point. Douglas points out that persons who are in marginal and transitional states are also a threat to the social order, not necessarily because they have done anything wrong but because they are "placeless" and "their status is indefinable."<sup>125</sup> Transitions within the society are usually resolved ritually, through separation from the society for a time of transition from the old state to the new state and the control of concomitant dangers through ritual. "Marginal people" are regarded dangerous to the constructed order of a society, and Douglas goes on to indicate that in secular contexts there continue to be persons who are marginal to that order, including ex-prisoners and persons who have been institutionalized for the treatment of mental illness, yet without the benefit of a ritual context for the resolution of their lack of status.<sup>126</sup> I would add immigrants to this category—especially undocumented immigrants who are additionally marginalized because they exist outside the boundaries and categories even of immigration policy and thus have no status in the society. Interestingly enough, the technical term in U.S. immigration policy for any immigrant who has not been "naturalized" as a citizen is

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<sup>125</sup> Douglas, 95.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

“alien,” a term embodying the concept of “not belonging.” They have not been “assimilated” into the social system and are thus in the ambiguous category of being neither outside the system nor integrated into it. Thus they are regarded by many within the social system as a threat to the existing order. As Huntington acknowledges, immigrants are a threat to existing power configurations, though he sees them as more than this—as a threat to the society itself.

Eliade, in his analysis of religious experience, describes the construction of the social and symbolic order in terms of a sacralized cosmos that is perceived by a society to be an imitation of “the paradigmatic work of the gods, the cosmogony. . .”<sup>127</sup> External attacks upon the constructed cosmos threaten a reversion into the primordial chaos that was originally conquered and ordered at the beginning of time.<sup>128</sup> Thus, “profane space,” which lies outside the sacred space of the cosmos represents the threat of nothingness or nonbeing.<sup>129</sup> Such a contrast between the order of the cosmos and the retrogression to chaos that continually surrounds and threatens it have nonreligious conceptions as well.

It is worth observing that the same images are still used in our own day to formulate the dangers that threaten a certain type of civilization; we speak of the chaos, the disorder, the darkness that will overwhelm ‘our world.’ All these terms express the abolition of an order, a cosmos, an organic structure, and reimmersion in the state of fluidity, of formlessness—in short, of chaos. This, in our opinion, shows that the paradigmatic images live on in the language and clichés of nonreligious man. Something of the religious conception of the world still persists in the behavior of profane man, although he is not always conscious of this immemorial heritage.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask, [1st American ed. (New York and London: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1959), 47.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-50.

For religious experience, this drive to recreate or imitate the sacred origins reflects “the desire to live in a pure and holy cosmos, as it was in the beginning, when it came fresh from the Creator’s hands.”<sup>131</sup> Human societies thus reflect a “nostalgia for origins,” a “nostalgia for the *perfection of beginnings*,” or in Christian terms, a “nostalgia for paradise.”<sup>132</sup> Huntington is likewise concerned with a sort of “nostalgia for origins,” in his case a sacrosanct myth of the origins of American culture—a secular myth mostly, though he does invest it with the sacredness of its continuity with Protestant Christianity.

Victor Turner elaborates further upon the marginal status of persons in transitional states, through his description of “liminality.”

The attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* (‘threshold people’) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.<sup>133</sup>

Liminal entities have no status and are outside the social structure. “Their behavior is normally passive or humble. . .,” as they are obedient and “accept arbitrary punishment without complaint.”<sup>134</sup> At the same time, they “tend to develop an intense comradeship and egalitarianism” among themselves,<sup>135</sup> a characteristic Turner calls “*communitas*.”<sup>136</sup> Turner

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>133</sup> Victor Witter Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Symbol, Myth, and Ritual Series (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 95.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

explicitly correlates the convergence of liminality, low social status, and *communitas* among persons in a phase of ritual transition with other socially marginalized persons such as “subjugated autochthones,” among others. (He does not specifically mention immigrants, but they certainly fit his description, and many of them are, in a sense, largely an extension of his category of “subjugated autochthones.”) He states that these categories of persons share “this common characteristic: they are persons or principles that (1) fall in the interstices of social structure, (2) are on its margins, or (3) occupy its lowest rungs.”<sup>137</sup>

Interestingly, Turner describes society as “a dialectical process with successive phases of structure and *communitas*,”<sup>138</sup> in which the liminal phase or persons provide a creative, prophetic, revitalizing voice and presence of anti-structure counterposed as an antithesis to the thesis of structure, which is essential to the adequate functioning of society.<sup>139</sup>

*Communitas* breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority. It... transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency.... Instinctual energies are surely liberated by these processes. . . . Liminality, marginality, and structural inferiority are conditions in which are frequently generated myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art. These cultural forms provide men with a set of templates or models which are, at one level, periodic reclassifications of reality and man’s relationship to society, nature, and culture. But they are more than classifications, since they incite men to action as well as to thought.<sup>140</sup>

In other words, it would seem that injections of the “impure” are necessary to prevent a debilitating stagnation of the “pure,” to afford it adaptability in an environment that confronts

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 126-29.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 128-29.

it with ambiguity and change. (Cf. the genetic stagnation and limitations that result from inbreeding.) “What is certain is that no society can function adequately without this dialectic.”<sup>141</sup> Both the structure of the “pure” and the anti-structure of the “impure” are essential to the survival of the society. This insight derived from Turner's observation of relatively isolated tribal cultures, along with some reflection on Martin Buber's description of community<sup>142</sup> and a generally Hegelian framework, corresponds well with the historical reality that great advances in “civilization,” far from being the fruit of the constant forward march of one biological or cultural entity, have come through the vigorous interaction and mutual interpenetration between diverse cultures and peoples.

In contrast to Turner's description of how liminal persons inject new vitality into a society and prevent stagnation and eventual decline, along with the witness of historical processes within civilizations that correspond with Turner's analysis, as intercultural exchange has historically been a source of new life, creativity, and cultural advances, Huntington asserts cultural stagnation in American society as a given prior to the 1960s and as desirable, seeing disruption in the “purity” of his essentialized American culture as itself a sign of decline. For Huntington, it is not merely a question of social unity and national cohesion within American society but of a cultural unity to be imposed by the dominant group within that society historically.

Contrary to Huntington's vision, a social unity and harmony can be sought that incorporates disparate elements in a critical inclusiveness rather than merely enforcing their

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 126-27.

conformity to a previously existing system. This unity would be grounded in an intercultural dialogue that recognizes the limited vision and blind spots inherent within any one cultural system, allowing various cultures to dialogue with, critique, and mutually transform each other, recognizing that no one culture has a monopoly on, or a perfect grasp of, truth. As Alasdair MacIntyre points out, all traditions of enquiry have “blind spots,” unresolved conflicts, and impasses in their appropriation of truth, such that the various traditions of enquiry (to wit, cultures) can question and critique each other and illuminate each other’s blind spots and thereby collectively arrive toward a larger and more accurate grasp of truth than can any one tradition in isolation from the others.<sup>143</sup>

Theologian Olga Consuelo Vélez Caro describes a similar process of intercultural dialogue:

Intercultural dialogue . . . means accepting that the interpretation of reality is plural, and that such plurality is true.<sup>144</sup>

Intercultural dialogue is possible to the extent that people recognize that no culture *gives* us the truth . . . but that all cultures are ways of seeking truth and of gradually finding it.<sup>145</sup>

This means an openness to mutual exchange and mutual transformation in a process of seeking the truth together.<sup>146</sup> “Intercultural dialogue requires, then, the creation of conditions and

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<sup>143</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, xii-xiii, 276-77.

<sup>144</sup> Olga Consuelo Vélez Caro, "Toward a Feminist Intercultural Theology," in *Feminist Intercultural Theology: Latina Explorations for a Just World*, ed. María Pilar Aquino and María José Rosado Nuñez, Studies in Latino/a Catholicism (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2007), 250.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

spaces wherein all cultures may speak with their own voice. . ."<sup>147</sup> Intercultural dialogue engages both our own cultural interpretation of reality and that of the other in a "mutual interrogation" that perceives each voice in the dialogue "as a possible model of interpretation."<sup>148</sup>

This proposal for intercultural dialogue does not deny the possibility of arriving at consensus, of finding shared meanings and values, or of recognizing valid aspects for the construction of any human reality. What it questions is our resting easy with the notion of classical culture, which is inevitably taken to be Western, rational, white, masculine culture.<sup>149</sup>

Intercultural dialogue and a harmonizing of diverse elements requires a genuine exchange of ideas and accommodation of a social system to embrace a larger perspective that includes rather than either excludes or marginalizes (forces conformity of) disparate elements. It does not presume any one culture to have the "universal" perspective but assumes that each culture sees things the others may not, and each contributes its distinctive vision toward a more truly universal perspective that takes account of all.

Such an evolutionary process within cultures does not, contrary to Huntington's assertions, mean an abandonment of the pre-existing culture, though it does mean change—growth and development through the Piagetian assimilation *and accommodation* process. This is similar to the way MacIntyre describes the growth that occurs within a "tradition," which could be posited in like manner in relation to a culture as, in essence, a meaning-system tradition:

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

For it is central to the conception of a tradition that the past is never something merely to be discarded, but rather that the present is intelligible only as a commentary upon and response to the past in which the past, if necessary and if possible, is corrected and transcended, yet corrected and transcended in a way that leaves the present open to being in turn corrected and transcended by some yet more adequate future point of view. . . . It is scarcely necessary to say that in such a series the later is not necessarily superior to the earlier; a tradition may cease to progress or may degenerate. But when a tradition is in good order, when progress *is* taking place, there is always a certain cumulative element to a tradition.<sup>150</sup>

Similarly, in relation specifically to the Christian tradition, Stanley Hauerwas notes that living traditions require both continuity and change or discontinuity, as it is only through continual development that a tradition remains alive, amidst constantly changing contexts and the encounter with rival traditions that question and critique it. If it simply “digs its heels in” and refuses to change, it will cease to grow and eventually die.<sup>151</sup> Traditions require change and continual interpretation that recognizes the possibility and existence of rival interpretations.

Traditions by their nature require change, since there can be no tradition without interpretation. And interpretation is the constant adjustment that is required if the current community is to stay in continuity with tradition.<sup>152</sup>

. . . society can best be understood as an extended argument, since living traditions presuppose rival interpretations. Good societies enable the argument to continue so that the possibilities and limits of the tradition can be exposed. The great danger, however, is that the success of a tradition will stop its growth and in reaction some may deny the necessity of tradition for their lives. The truthfulness of a tradition is tested in its ability to form people who are ready to put the tradition into question, or at least to recognize when it is being put into question by a rival tradition.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> MacIntyre, 146.

<sup>151</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 61.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

## Conclusion

A kind of summary of these various psychological, sociological/ anthropological, philosophical, and theological thinkers suggests that humans have a need to construct systems of meaning, in order to give coherence to their lives and to the societies in which they live. For a society, “culture,” or “civilization” to exist as a unity, there must be a *unifying* system of meaning. Intercultural encounters, migrations of people, and the blurring of cross-cultural boundaries, in the course of attempts to assimilate people and ideas from diverse cultures, generate threats to the existing meaning system and therefore provoke defensive reactions and resistance. In such a context, the presence of the “other” can be perceived as a threat. However, this presence can instead be seen and experienced as a gift. Rather than threatening the loss or destruction of a unitary system of meaning, the other can *expand* or *enlarge* that meaning system to include new perspectives and an enhanced grasp of truth.

Indeed, “multiculturalism” and “pluralism” can be problematic for a cohesive society if diversity is not enfolded within a larger unity. However, a reduction of diversity to an enforced uniformity is also problematic and arguably unsustainable. Instead, there is need for some kind of “unity in diversity,” a unified system of meaning that incorporates new elements without destroying individuality, particularity, and difference—a *harmony* of diverse elements that is neither discordant nor a reduction to the monotony of sameness. Such a unity in diversity must neither impose one narrowly defined system of meaning arbitrarily as “universal,” nor arbitrarily assume a relativism in which all views are equally valid in their particularity.

Of course, in the United States, the “threats” to a purportedly unitary system of meaning associated with an influx of immigrants occur within the context of the “culture

wars”<sup>154</sup> that are already deeply entrenched, such that in some sense there *is* no unitary system of meaning in America but a binary or plural system, with an ongoing struggle for unity, quite apart from any alleged fragmentation caused by immigrants. (James Davison Hunter constructs the polarity as a binary, conservative-progressive system, but I am not so sure there is a firm unity among the disparate forces aligned in temporary and limited alliance on the “progressive” side of the spectrum. The “conservative” side is perhaps not a complete unity either but more so than the other “side.” There is a certain degree of unity in the desire to preserve the status quo or an idealized past, while alternatives to that unified vision of past and present are many, and critiques of the status quo come from many angles, which do not necessarily and always share a common vision or even a sense of kinship.) This polarity makes the absorption of new elements more problematic, particularly when immigrants themselves have ideological ties to both “sides” of the culture wars divide.

Cultural “purity” as an unchanging essence cannot be maintained in the face of new stimuli, information, or disparate significata that create cognitive dissonance. Only adaptation relieves the cognitive dissonance. As Mary Douglas describes, conservative tendencies resist this and therefore try to exclude the anomalous elements as abominations (or as contaminants, disruptions, unassimilable populations to be “cleansed,” barbarians, invasions, the “other,” etc.) but are ultimately unsuccessful in preventing their incorporation into the system and the accommodations required for that to take place, if the cultural system is to survive and thrive in the face of continual encounters with the other.

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<sup>154</sup> Hunter, *op. cit.*

Indeed, cultural evolution (not to be understood as necessarily and inevitably “progress” but certainly as changing over time, particularly through encounter with other cultures) is always in a dialectical relationship with its past, holding onto some aspects while discarding or modifying others, attempting to retain the best from the past and discard the worst, while simultaneously extracting the best from the new ideas it encounters and leaving aside the worst—certainly a messy and imperfectly accomplished process, though one that is not avoidable. (As Piaget described with human cognition in general, and the same process certainly applies to human social institutions and cultures, it is not only assimilation of new information into existing understandings and ways of organizing the data but also accommodation of the meaning system to information that cannot be absorbed into it without alteration.) This has been true throughout American history, though there have been periods of low immigration and relative national isolation. The influx of persons from Latin America will be no different. Mutual transformation will occur through the encounter. Huntington offers some evidence of biculturalism and bilingualism and even regionalism (the latter of which has been a reality in the American experience from the beginning). He does not offer evidence of fragmentation of the nation or of American national identity.

As cultural critic Edward Said so eloquently describes, personal and collective identity cannot be captured in stagnant depictions or essentialized labels. History, culture, and identity are socially constructed and reconstructed, and the essentializations carried over from imperialism and colonialism cannot be sustained:

No one today is purely *one* thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most

paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities.<sup>155</sup>

Huntington longs for the “good old days” of a “pure” American culture before the contamination of multiculturalism. That purity itself never really existed, but in any case will not be recovered by stemming the tide of Latino immigration. It is highly unlikely that the United States will ever return to the kind of cultural isolation which might halt cultural change, no matter how restrictive an immigration policy we might choose to have, and no matter how marginalized the academic, political, and media voices proclaiming “multiculturalism” might become. Perhaps better goals are unity and harmony rather than assimilation to a fixed culture that never really existed. It would certainly be naïve to think that the intercultural encounters, dialogue, and transformations wrought by increasing globalization (not only an economic reality but also communications, cultural, religious, and civilizational, etc.) can simply be reversed or stopped. Indeed, Western Civilization itself has been shaped, enhanced, transformed, and strengthened through encounters with other peoples. The current era of globalization has intensified intercultural encounter, thus calling the views and values of *all* cultures, religions, and peoples into question—to be examined, critiqued, and even transformed by the “other,” while exerting the same critique and influence *upon* the other. It is certainly a chaotic and often violent process, but the Pandora’s Box of globalization has been opened, its destructive and reconstructive spirits unleashed, and the one remaining spirit in the box is hope—hope for a future in which all voices are heard, all cultures taken into account, and all peoples have a place in shaping the America and the world that are coming into being.

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<sup>155</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 336.

### CHAPTER 3: JOHN TANTON AND THE ORGANIZED MOVEMENT TO RESTRICT IMMIGRATION

*The situation then is that the people who have been the carriers of Western Civilization are well on the way toward resigning their commission to carry the culture into the future.<sup>1</sup>*

--John Tanton

John Tanton is not an academic or someone known primarily for books he has written. Rather, he is a leader, organizer, and networker who has founded, sustained, and supported numerous very influential organizations whose primary or subsidiary purpose is to seek restrictions on immigration—both legal and illegal. He has also founded organizations seeking to make English the official language of the United States and to arrest the trend toward becoming a bilingual society speaking English and Spanish. Although Tanton has co-written a few books and has published books through The Social Contract Press, which he also founded, the primary source for his thought is a collection of his correspondence, memos, and other unpublished documents through the years, as well as newspaper clippings about or of interest to Tanton from various periodicals, which he has allowed to be archived at the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, comprising twenty-five boxes filled with numerous folders each, seventeen boxes of which are available to researchers, with the other eight being restricted and inaccessible to researchers until April 6, 2035.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Tanton's Organizations:**

Among the organizations founded or co-founded by Tanton and seeking restrictions on immigration and/or to confront bilingualism and make English the official U.S. language are:

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<sup>1</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Professor Samuel P. Huntington Dated August 8, 1997," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> John Tanton and Otis L. Graham, "John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007," (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010). Used by permission of the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR, 1979); Center for Immigration Studies (CIS, 1985); NumbersUSA (1996); U.S. Inc. (1983); U.S. English (1983); Pro English (1994); and The Social Contract Press (1990).<sup>3</sup> He raised and provided funds not only for these but for several other related organizations, including the American Immigration Control Foundation (AICF, 1983), American Patrol/ Voice of Citizens Together (1992), California Coalition for Immigration Reform (CCIR, 1994), Californians for Population Stabilization, (1996), and Project USA (1999).<sup>4</sup>

Tanton's correspondence through the years indicates a pattern of establishing and leading new organizations, while turning over direct managerial leadership to someone else and becoming a board member, chairman of the board, or president, and then moving on to form other related organizations, while continuing through the years to coordinate a network of several related organizations through arranging meetings and contacts and giving directions in his letters.<sup>5</sup> His letters also reveal numerous contacts and close relationships with influential political leaders such as former Wyoming Sen. Alan Simpson, who was the primary architect and sponsor of the immigration law that was signed by President Ronald Reagan in 1986; the late California Sen. Samuel I. Hiyakawa, who co-founded U.S. English with Tanton; and former Colorado Gov. Richard (Dick) Lamm, a rigorous advocate for restrictions on both legal and illegal immigration who served on FAIR's board and provided FAIR leaders significant access to Presidents and Cabinet members; among others.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Heidi Beirich, "John Tanton's Network," in *Intelligence Report* (Montgomery, Alabama: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Tanton and Graham, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Tanton came to the immigration issue in a roundabout way. When he was eleven years old, his family had moved from Detroit to an 80-acre farm in a rural part of Michigan, and he considers himself to have been “raised as a farm boy.”<sup>7</sup> Working alongside his parents and siblings on the farm, Tanton “became a lover of the land at that time.”<sup>8</sup> This passion led to his involvement in various environmental or conservationist groups, including the Sierra Club. Then his contemplation of the causes of conservation problems led him to concerns about population growth and to become an advocate for population control, including establishing a Planned Parenthood Clinic in northern Michigan.<sup>9</sup> Being very impressed by Paul Ehrlich’s book, *The Population Bomb*, Tanton joined Zero Population Growth and served as its president from 1975 through 1977, traveling around giving speeches about population growth as part of the conservation problem.<sup>10</sup> This, in turn, led him “to notice the question of immigration as a part of population growth.”<sup>11</sup>

Tanton was frustrated, however, with a perceived unwillingness of such organizations as the Sierra Club and Zero Population growth to make immigration control a central part of their work,<sup>12</sup> so that he “began to realize that if something was going to be done on this problem, we’d probably have to start a new national organization that would focus on the immigration

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<sup>7</sup> Otis Graham and John Tanton, "A Skirmish in a Wider War: An Oral History of John H. Tanton," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010), 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-12.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-16.

question and try to become expert on all of the aspects of immigration that might come up.”<sup>13</sup> Tanton’s own leadership, fund-raising, and organizational skills had been honed through many leadership positions in high school, college, and medical school, as well as his subsequent leadership positions in some of the environmental and population groups mentioned above, while simultaneously maintaining his medical practice in Petoskey, Michigan, as an ophthalmologist. Tanton learned in these endeavors how to network, develop leaders and delegate responsibility, raise money, engage in direct mail campaigns, work the legislative process, and make use of the courts through lawsuits, experiencing many instances of success in achieving his goals at local, state, and national levels.<sup>14</sup>

So in order to meet the perceived need for a new organization whose focus was on immigration, Tanton started establishing organizations to address immigration and language issues, beginning with his founding of FAIR in 1979, selecting Roger Conner to be its director and his primary partner in the enterprise.<sup>15</sup> Tanton gathered together a Board of experienced organizational leaders, including historian Otis Graham, and in its first year FAIR raised \$174,000, published its first position papers, initiated its direct mail campaign, and began to lobby Congress on immigration issues.<sup>16</sup> FAIR’s stated goals were: “to end illegal immigration into the United States, and to set a limit for total legal immigration consistent with the realities

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 2-19, 29.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 22-23, 28-31.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 30-32.

of the 1980's."<sup>17</sup> This was to be accomplished "by lobbying for new legislation and presidential action, by litigation, by mobilizing concerned citizens, by research, and by presenting our case to the public and to the national press."<sup>18</sup>

As Tanton and the FAIR Board identified related issues that were difficult for FAIR to take on without losing its focus on immigration policy, Tanton created additional organizations that were connected to, but independent of, FAIR, sharing its donor base and sometimes office space, and most integrally connected through the leadership of Tanton himself.<sup>19</sup> The "question of bilingualism and assimilation" led to "the development of U.S. English."<sup>20</sup> "Then [in 1985] for reasons of independence from the lobbying organization, the academic effort was split off in the form of the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS)."<sup>21</sup> (Basically, Tanton and FAIR formed CIS in order to generate their own data in support of their stance on immigration. Thus it must be kept in mind that when FAIR or other Tanton-shaped organizations cite data from CIS in defense of its policy proposals, they are *not* working with research from an independent source.) Another organization was formed to specifically assume responsibility for litigation in the courts, the Immigration Reform Law Institute (IRLI), "in part because some donors did not wish to contribute to FAIR as long as it was active in the courts."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> John Tanton and Otis L. Graham, "The FAIR Way," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007*, ed. Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Graham and Tanton, "A Skirmish in a Wider War," 57-64.

<sup>20</sup> John Tanton, "Does the Population/ Immigration/ Assimilation Movement Need a Journal?," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Tanton also set up an umbrella foundation called “U.S.” for the funding and coordination of several of these organizations, some of which, like U.S. English, contained “U.S.” as part of their name.<sup>23</sup> He established a forum that would periodically meet to toss around ideas related to all of these issues and organizations, which he called by the name “WITAN, which is an old English term for the councils that used to advise the 15<sup>th</sup> century English kings on matters of the state. (The full word is ‘witenagemot’.)”<sup>24</sup> He envisioned and initiated the formation of another organization as a counterpoint to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which he would call the American Alliance for Rights and Responsibilities (AARR),<sup>25</sup> though it is unclear whether the latter organization was ever fully established. Then in 1988, he began the process of creating a journal that would be a forum for “the development and refinement of ideas” related to immigration, cultural, and population issues,<sup>26</sup> which would later come to fruition in Tanton’s creation of *The Social Contract*,<sup>27</sup> along with The Social Contract Press as a publisher of books with the same thematic content. Several years later, Tanton would co-found, together with Roy Beck, who had served as editor of *The Social Contract* for several years, Numbers USA as an organization to mobilize grassroots support to bombard Congressional offices with internet faxes advocating for immigration restrictions and

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Graham and Tanton, “A Skirmish in a Wider War,” 59.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 63-64.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 64; Tanton, “Does the Population/ Immigration/ Assimilation Movement Need a Journal?”

<sup>26</sup> Tanton, “Does the Population/ Immigration/ Assimilation Movement Need a Journal?”

<sup>27</sup> John Tanton, “Letter to Rev. Robert Kyser Dated September 22, 1989,” in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

opposing bills to liberalize immigration policy.<sup>28</sup> Tanton provided office space and funding for Numbers USA for several years “under his umbrella organization, U.S. Inc.”<sup>29</sup>, but Beck states that “Numbers USA had been independent of Dr. Tanton since 2002.”<sup>30</sup>

So extensive has been Tanton’s involvement and leadership in numerous groups advocating restrictions on immigration that the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has “described Dr. Tanton as a father of the anti-immigration movement.”<sup>31</sup> On its website, the SPLC states, “The organized anti-immigration ‘movement’ is almost entirely the handiwork of one man, Michigan activist John H. Tanton.”<sup>32</sup> Rick Swartz of the National Immigration Forum adds, “Tanton is the puppeteer behind this entire movement.... He is the organizer of a significant amount of its financing, and is both the major recruiter of key personnel and the intellectual leader of the whole network of groups.”<sup>33</sup> An article by Jason DeParle in *The New York Times* declares, “From the resort town of Petoskey, Mich., Dr. Tanton helped start all three major national groups [FAIR, CIS, and Numbers USA] fighting to reduce immigration, legal and illegal, and molded one of the most powerful grass-roots forces in politics.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Jason DeParle, "The Anti-Immigration Crusader," *The New York Times* (April 17, 2011), <[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/17/us/17immig.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/17/us/17immig.html?_r=1)>; Robert Pear, "Little-Known Group Claims a Win on Immigration," *ibid.* (July 15, 2007), <[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/15/us/politics/15immig.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/15/us/politics/15immig.html?_r=0)>.

<sup>29</sup> DeParle, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> Pear, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Beirich, *op. cit.* [Underlining Beirich’s].

<sup>33</sup> Heidi Beirich, "John Tanton Is the Mastermind Behind the Organized Anti-Immigration Movement," in *Intelligence Report* (Montgomery, Alabama: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> DeParle, *op. cit.*

These organizations substantially shaped by Tanton have played a major role in crafting more restrictive immigration and language policies at local, state, and federal levels and in defeating legislation that would liberalize U.S. immigration policy or promote bilingualism. U.S. English helped pass initiatives making English the official language in California in 1986 and in Arizona, Colorado, and Florida in 1988.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, throughout much of the 1980s, Tanton and FAIR were in constant communication with Sen. Alan Simpson<sup>36</sup> (R-Wyoming) as he crafted and co-sponsored in 1981, with Rep. Romano Mazzoli (D-KY), the immigration legislation that would eventually be signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1986 as the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA).<sup>37</sup> FAIR was a significant player in advocating the provisions of the bill that sought to intensify border security and implement employer sanctions for hiring immigrants not legally authorized to work in the United States, as well as a provision calling for “a periodic study, every three years, of the impacts of immigration on the population, resources, and social structure of the country”, while reluctantly accepting as inevitable such compromises as the legalization of many of the undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. at the time, as FAIR spent about eight years and eight million dollars on its lobbying effort to help shape and to pass this legislation.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Graham and Tanton, “A Skirmish in a Wider War,” 76.

<sup>36</sup> John Tanton and Otis L. Graham, “Simpson Files,” in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Romano L. Mazzoli and Alan K. Simpson, “Enacting Immigration Reform, Again,” *The Washington Post* (September 15, 2006), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/14/AR2006091401179.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Graham and Tanton, “A Skirmish in a Wider War,” 77-84.

As a follow-up to Simpson-Mazzoli, in the 100<sup>th</sup> Congress, FAIR “succeeded in killing seven” out of eight pro-immigration bills and in passing two bills to give large appropriations of funds for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and for border security measures.<sup>39</sup> FAIR also helped draft Arizona’s controversial 2010 law, SB 1070, which gave local police the mandate to try to identify and detain immigrants unlawfully present in the U.S.,<sup>40</sup> and which became the model for a similar bill passed by the state of Alabama soon afterward. FAIR’s claims regarding its own influence include:

FAIR’s publications and research are used by academics and government officials in preparing new legislation. National and international media regularly turn to us to understand the latest immigration developments and to shed light on this complex subject. FAIR has been called to testify on immigration bills before Congress more than any organization in America. . .

Since it was founded in 1979, FAIR has been leading the call for immigration reform. . .

Along with a satellite office in Seattle and field representatives across the nation, FAIR activities include research, public education, media outreach, grassroots organizing, government relations, litigation and advocacy at the national, state and local levels.<sup>41</sup>

James G. Gimpel and James R. Edwards, Jr., in *The Congressional Politics of Immigration Reform*, document the influence and impact of Tanton and FAIR in Congress and on state legislation:

FAIR was founded in 1979 by Dr. John Tanton, a Michigan physician concerned about population’s impact on the environment. . . FAIR’s influence on Capitol Hill is based partly on a grassroots membership that had reached 70,000 by the mid-1990s. FAIR is also a diligent producer of studies and reports designed to

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<sup>39</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Harry Weyher on November 9, 1988," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>40</sup> DeParle, *op. cit.*

<sup>41</sup> "About FAIR," Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), <http://www.fairus.org/about>.

justify reduced immigration levels. FAIR was often a presence at hearings on the immigration issue in the 1980s and 1990s, offering expert testimony on behalf of restrictionist forces. The organization has built an extensive grassroots membership in California and Florida and maintains field offices in both states. FAIR activists circulated petitions to put Proposition 187 on the ballot in California as well as similar measures in Arizona and Florida, where their efforts were less successful.<sup>42</sup>

Numbers USA likewise proved itself a very powerful grassroots organization capable of influencing the immigration debate, defeating 2007 legislative proposals for a legalization of undocumented immigrants “by overwhelming Congress with protest calls.”<sup>43</sup> Numbers USA implemented cutting-edge technology through the use of the internet fax to mobilize huge numbers of supporters to inundate Congressional offices with a barrage of such protests. “Prompted by a well-timed alert, his followers could register outrage with a few mouse clicks — or call. They did, in attention-grabbing numbers.”<sup>44</sup>

Numbers USA showed its force in 2002 when Republican leaders of the House backed a bill that would have allowed some illegal immigrants to remain in the United States while seeking legal status. Numbers USA set the phones on fire, and a majority of Republicans opposed it.

'I had people come up to me on the floor of the House saying, "O.K., O.K., call off the dogs" —meaning Numbers USA,' said former Representative Tom Tancredo, a Colorado Republican who fought the bill.

The big war broke out in 2007, after Mr. Bush proposed a systemic overhaul including a path to citizenship for most illegal immigrants. Supporters said it would free millions of people from fear and exploitation; opponents argued that it would reward lawbreakers and encourage more illegal immigration.

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<sup>42</sup> James G. Gimpel and James R. Edwards, Jr., *The Congressional Politics of Immigration Reform* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999), 50.

<sup>43</sup> DeParle, *op. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

FAIR rallied talk show hosts. The Center for Immigration Studies churned out studies of the bill's perceived flaws. Numbers USA jammed the Capitol's phones.<sup>45</sup>

In defeating the 2007 comprehensive immigration bill, Numbers USA director Roy Beck declares, "The bill had support from the opinion elite in this country. . . But we built a grass-roots army, consumed with passion for a cause, and used the power of the Internet to go around the elites and defeat a disastrous amnesty bill."<sup>46</sup>

These three major immigration restrictionist groups—FAIR, CIS, and Numbers USA—are still active in attempting to shape immigration policy, currently working to defeat 2013 legislative proposals for comprehensive immigration reform that would include a legalization of undocumented immigrants.<sup>47</sup> Numbers USA "members have inundated the office of Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) with 100,000 faxes [in 2013] warning him that his central role in pursuing changes in immigration laws could damage his future political prospects."<sup>48</sup> A CIS official has recently testified before a key Senate committee and sent its research to members of Congress, and all three groups "have established close relationships with some of Congress's most vocal critics of more liberal immigration laws."<sup>49</sup> In April, 2014, FAIR initiated a questionnaire to congressional leaders and candidates urging them to make a pledge to oppose "legislation that would grant any form of work authorization to illegal aliens", "legislation that would increase

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Pear, *op. cit.*

<sup>47</sup> Peter Wallsten, "Effort to Change Immigration Law Sparks Internal Battle within GOP," *The Washington Post* (February 13, 2013), [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/effort-to-change-immigration-law-sparks-internal-battle-within-gop/2013/02/13/2916d164-740a-11e2-aa12-e6cf1d31106b\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/effort-to-change-immigration-law-sparks-internal-battle-within-gop/2013/02/13/2916d164-740a-11e2-aa12-e6cf1d31106b_story.html).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

the overall number of [legal] immigrants . . . admitted each year to the U.S.”, and “legislation that would increase the overall number of guest workers admitted each year to the U.S.”<sup>50</sup> Several congressional candidates have already signed the pledge,<sup>51</sup> and in some 2014 congressional races signing this pledge has become a significant campaign issue.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform, who is famous for the pledge he has extracted from many Republican legislators never to vote to raise taxes, rejects a comparison of FAIR’s pledge with his anti-tax pledge, worrying that the former will divide the GOP, while the latter unites them.<sup>53</sup>

As several Republican congressional leaders are now seeking to make immigration reform a priority, a number of conservative leaders, including Grover Norquist, are attempting to neutralize the impact of these three groups by questioning their conservative credentials on the basis of their roots in the movement against population growth due to its environmental impact.<sup>54</sup> “If these groups can be unmasked, then the bulk of the opposition to immigration

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<sup>50</sup> "Will You Promise to Protect American Workers? Candidate Questionnaire," FAIR Congressional Task Force, <http://fairtaskforce.com/>.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Team Birman, "Birman Signs FAIR Immigration Pledge," Igor Birman for Congress, <http://www.igorbirman.com/posts/birman-signs-fair-immigration-reform-pledge>; Matt K. Lewis to The Daily Caller, May 12, 2014, 2014, <http://dailycaller.com/2014/05/12/going-down-in-flames-shane-osborn-decides-to-lose-ugly-in-nebraska/>; Jonathan Strong, "Sasse, Osborn Debate Immigration," <http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Government/2014/05/11/Sasse-Osborn-Debate-Immigration>; Courtney Coren, "Mississippi's McDaniel First to Sign Anti-Amnesty Pledge," *Newsmax* (2014), <http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/Chris-McDaniel-immigration-Mississippi-amnesty/2014/04/29/id/568327/>.

<sup>53</sup> Courtney Coren, "Grover Norquist: FAIR Immigration Pledge Will Divide GOP," *Newsmax* (2014), <http://www.newsmax.com/NewsmaxTv/Grover-Norquist-immigration-FAIR-pledge/2014/05/05/id/569604/>.

<sup>54</sup> Wallsten, *op. cit.*

reform on the conservative side will wither away,' said Alfonso Aguilar, executive director of the Latino Partnership for Conservative Principles and a leading organizer of the effort."<sup>55</sup>

So these organizations, substantially created and shaped by John Tanton, who founded or co-founded them, hand-picked their leaders from among like-minded people, and has continued through the years to guide and direct them through correspondence, meetings, and serving on their boards, while networking and coordinating their efforts into one cohesive immigration restrictionist movement that simultaneously resists the perceived encroachments of the Spanish language and Latin American culture, have exerted a very powerful influence on the shaping of U.S. immigration policy since the 1980s. Therefore, it is important to give an account of the ideological underpinnings of this movement, as recorded in documents detailing the ideas and vision of its architect, Tanton himself.

### **Tanton's Thoughts on Immigration:**

As I have already described, John Tanton began his journey toward engagement with immigration as someone concerned with preserving the land, a "conservationist," which led him to involve himself in organizations seeking to reduce population growth, as this growth was perceived as a threat to the purity and integrity of rural lands, with urban sprawl and its concomitant development and pollution encroaching upon these territories. He then came to see immigration as a primary driving force behind population growth.

In an essay published in 1996, declaring that the "Migration Epoch" may now be coming to an end, Tanton describes how population pressures result in migration, and in turn migration, by offering relief to those pressures, enables overpopulation to continue unabated.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Tanton makes a Malthusian argument (and cites Malthus) about the inevitability of human population outgrowing global resources. He asserts that on a local and regional level, this population growth beyond available resources is what has historically stimulated migration, particularly from less economically developed and more densely populated regions to more developed and less densely populated nations, such as especially the United States and the countries of Europe. He then argues that at the close of the twentieth century, this migration is no longer sustainable, as there are no unfilled spaces in the world to receive migration, and as developed nations have a responsibility to sustain their own populations and to avoid being “overrun” by Third World peoples. Therefore, he proclaims, the “Migration Epoch” is over, and Third World nations must find alternative ways to solve their population problems and the resultant misery than through the migration of “surplus people.”<sup>56</sup>

If the developed countries cannot or will not control their borders, they will quickly be swamped in the remaining years of this century or the opening ones of the next.<sup>57</sup>

Tanton declares the “new understanding” about immigration to be:

Resources and livable conditions are scarce. Manna does not fall from heaven. Scarcity is the rule, and requires a degree of self interest. . . . Population problems are beyond solution by immigration. . . . The large scale migration of the last 200 years is an aberration enabled by conditions that cannot be replicated. In a limited world, it must necessarily come to an end.<sup>58</sup>

Welcome inter-national migration—legal, and especially illegal—is no longer a practical option for almost all of the world’s people. Rather, they will have to bloom where they are planted if they are to bloom at all. They will have to work

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<sup>56</sup> John Tanton, “End of the Migration Epoch? Time for a New Paradigm,” in *Immigration and the Social Contract: The Implosion of Western Societies*, ed. John Tanton, Denis McCormack, and Joseph Wayne Smith (Aldershot, UK: Avebury, 1996).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

to change conditions they don't like rather than just move away from them. Helping make it possible for them to stay rather than leave is the proper focus of our efforts.<sup>59</sup>

In all of this, Tanton takes little account of the impact of globalization—and, in particular, the ways the economic expansion of developed countries actually restructures the economies of Third World countries and displaces their workers, as discussed in Chapter 1. He seems to reduce the misery and migration pressures in the Third World to excessive population growth. He also takes little account of the “pull” factors of developed nations actively seeking the labor of immigrants, other than to suggest that by raising wages all jobs can be filled without the need of immigrant labor.

Once Tanton set himself to the task of controlling and reducing immigration, he also perceived bilingualism as a threat and sought to preserve English as the sole official language of the United States. This, in turn, resulted in his contemplation of cultural issues and differences—particularly the cultural differences between Latin America and the United States. My interest here is primarily in Tanton's views about immigrants as a threat to American culture and its cohesion as a nation-state, rather than the population growth issues, which would take my inquiry far afield in terms of deliberation over the relative goods versus drawbacks of population growth itself, and the question of what might constitute a manageable and optimal rate of such growth. The latter would be a research project unto itself.

When Tanton is aware that he is writing for a widespread audience, his arguments tend to be more moderate and measured. In his correspondence and political activism among the initiated, on the other hand, he often falls into catastrophizing rhetoric decrying the possible

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 19.

demise of the American way of life and of Western civilization. In a letter to a foundation official in 1985, he uses more cautious language in describing how he “co-founded U.S. English with Senator S. I. Hayakawa from California in an effort to maintain our national bond of a common language.”<sup>60</sup> Yet, in another letter to insider Thad Rowland in the same year, Tanton writes:

You know what needs to be done to save the American Way—Western Civilization. . . I think it would be a great loss to the human race if Dick [an apparent reference to former Colorado Gov. Richard Lamm] does not devote himself full-time to trying to stop the decline and fall of the U.S.<sup>61</sup>

In a 1996 letter to Glen Spencer, Tanton cites in relation to immigration a provision of Article IV, Section 4 of the U.S. Constitution: “The United States shall guarantee to every State in the Union a Republican Form of Government and **shall protect each of them from Invasion.** . . .”<sup>62</sup>

The description of immigration as such an invasion requiring government protection of the states is taken up by Tanton and co-author Wayne Lutton in their book, *The Immigration Invasion*.<sup>63</sup> The rhetoric of impending doom is evident from the beginning:

The year 1965 was a fateful date in American history. Legislation passed by Congress that year set trends in motion which could seal America’s fate as a united, free, and prosperous country. . . In 1964 The American Committee on Immigration Policies predicted that passage of the bill would sharply increase immigration from Third World countries, thereby undercutting ‘the cultural pattern on which our free institutions and our free society rest.’ . . . Time, however, has vindicated the critics.<sup>64</sup> [The 1965 legislation reversed a

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<sup>60</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Valteau Wilkie, Jr., Dated May 16, 1985," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>61</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Thad Rowland on 27 February 1985," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>62</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Glen Spencer Dated January 26, 1996," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010). Bold highlighting is Tanton’s.

<sup>63</sup> Wayne Lutton and John Tanton, *The Immigration Invasion* (Petoskey, Michigan: The Social Contract Press, 1994).

preference for northern European immigrants in the immigration quota system, setting per country quotas on those immigrants while removing per country quotas from countries of the Western hemisphere, subject to a hemispheric limit of 120,000.<sup>65]</sup>

Tanton offers a somewhat more reasoned outline of his beliefs in a four-page document called “Fundamentals,” appended to a letter to “Defense Committee Members” dated January 16, 1989.<sup>66</sup> There he delineates nine principles undergirding his beliefs about immigration, principles he believes not to be shared by “the intellectual opposition” and which therefore form the dividing lines on immigration. The first is his belief in “a world of limits and boundaries,” resulting in his emphasis upon immigration restriction as a means of population control. (He does not take account here of the possibility and historical evidence that economically, at least, those limits can be expanded to some degree through economic growth.) His second principle is a belief “that the nation state has a continuing valid role in the world” alongside state and local government and “some form of worldwide quasi-governmental mechanism.” (He probably has no argument with anyone here, though the questions would be how to define the nation-state, and whether or not the nation-state takes precedence over all other governmental configurations.) He expands this in terms of a belief “that the concepts of national borders and national sovereignty are both legitimate and essential. . .”<sup>67</sup> (Again, few would argue this point, though many would debate the rigidity of national borders, assuming an

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>65</sup> Massey, Durand, and Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*, 40.

<sup>66</sup> John Tanton, “Fundamentals,” in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

isolationist stance, and the primacy of national sovereignty over other levels of human community and authority.)

His third principle is adherence to “the metaphor of the melting pot,” presumably in opposition to the “salad bowl” contrasting image. Here the question is to what extent individual and cultural diversity should be reduced to sameness, a point related to his fourth, fifth, and sixth principles. His fourth is that “[t]he proper role of government is to foster integration, assimilation, acculturation, and cooperation, not separatism and division.” (This seems to be a restating of his third principle.) His fifth is to affirm both diversity and commonality as legitimate, while arguing for “some level of agreement on basic values, goals, and acceptable tools for social management and change.” He further states, “Both diversity and commonality have their benefits and limitations. An intelligent balance between the two is needed.” (Again, this would likely not be a point of contention. The debate would instead be on what constitutes that “intelligent balance.”) He gives further definition here by including the necessity of a common language, in order to avoid confusion. Yet, he does not explain why other languages should not be allowed to continue at the sub-cultural level.

Then his sixth principle is his belief “the Americans, as well as immigrants, have their own distinctive culture, however difficult of definition it may be.”<sup>68</sup> (Here he seems to agree with Huntington, but he rightly concedes that defining that “distinctive culture” is not easy or self-evident, as Huntington seems to assert. What constitutes a distinctive American culture? For many it would be a set of ideals which explicitly includes making room for diversity, as for example, the “non-establishment” clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution,

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

guaranteeing religious freedom in the midst of religious diversity. In any case, all such references to a “distinctive culture” are subject to the critique of cultural essentialism, reifying “culture” as if it were a fixed entity with clearly defined, universal and unchanging traits and boundaries.) Tanton’s third through sixth “principles” or “beliefs” are problematic in that they assume an easy and self-evident resolution to the question of balancing individuality, diversity, and participation in a common culture.

Tanton’s seventh principle is the deleterious effect of “irredentism” manifested as the desire of “persons of Mexican origin” to return to Mexico the land taken from it by the United States in 1836 [Texas] and 1848 [the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo]. (This is a seeming reference to the largely mythical conspiracy of Aztlan, about which there is little evidence that it is more than the rhetoric of a marginal group rather than a widespread belief among Mexicans and Mexican-Americans.) His eighth principle is that “[n]ame calling, while politically effective, is not a substitute for reasoned discussion of difficult issues.” (This seems to be an accusation for rhetorical effect, which implies that name-calling is the practice of one side of immigration arguments and reasoned discussion the practice of the other side, a claim which would be inaccurate for any side to make, given the existence of both name-calling and reasoned arguments on all sides of this and other controversial issues.) Then his ninth and last principle is that “[i]mmigration and language policy issues are inextricably intertwined. . .”<sup>69</sup> (Here I doubt there is a legitimate dividing line, as both immigration advocates and immigration restrictionists tend to relate these two issues. Here again there is the question of balancing cultural diversity with national cohesion, which encompasses both immigration and language

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

issues, while both also have practical dimensions that may or may not interrelate, depending upon the specific circumstance to be considered.)

Tanton expands his principle about the ongoing validity of the nation-state in a November 30, 1990 letter to the FAIR Board on the subject of “National Boundaries and the Nation State.”<sup>70</sup> There he describes five levels of government: individual, local, state, national, and transnational. “That we might drop the national level out of this orderly progression seems absurd.”<sup>71</sup> The idea of dropping the national level of government seems to be a bit of a proverbial “straw man,” since such a proposal is nowhere evident among the arguments of immigration advocates. Rather, the question is not one “dropping” it but of *relativizing* it—of rendering it one level alongside, rather than towering over, the other levels, which indeed does not deny its legitimacy or its importance but does deny its *ultimacy*.

This last statement is a point of theological critique, in that Christian theology denies ultimacy to anything other than God, and therefore to any human project or cause, including the nation-state. Tanton seems to recognize the threat to his views embodied within the church’s theological claims, as he acknowledges many churches to be among “our [immigration] opponents,” naming particularly the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church, though not limited to these.<sup>72</sup> “One of the problems with churches is they see themselves as universal, and as transcending national boundaries, which are hence

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<sup>70</sup> John Tanton, “National Boundaries and the Nation State: Letter to FAIR Board and to Dan Stein,” in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> John Tanton, “Letter to FAIR Board of Directors, Dan Stein, and K. C. Mcalpin Dated December 28, 1998,” in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

illegitimate.”<sup>73</sup> He likewise acknowledges the tainting of the concept of “nationalism” by “the experience with National Socialism in Germany, which helped give the word ‘nationalism’ a bad reputation.”<sup>74</sup> Yet, he does not seem to have extracted the lessons from that experience about the dangers associated with elevating the nation-state to ultimacy. Rather, he describes the Nazi experience as an unfortunate smear on the name of nationalism rather than a historical embodiment calling into question the very concept of nationalism, particularly when the nation is conceptualized in racial and ethnic terms, as Hitler did and as Tanton does. (Tanton’s racial/ethnic view of the nation will be discussed shortly.)

While Tanton’s engagement with immigration issues began with a concern about overpopulation, limited resources, and national cohesion, over time he gravitated progressively toward a more racialized approach to immigration and immigrants. In a *The New York Times* article on Tanton as “The Anti-Immigration Crusader,” Jason DeParle describes Tanton’s “evolution...from apostle of centrist restraint to ally of angry populists and a man who increasingly saw immigration through a racial lens.”<sup>75</sup> DeParle states that Tanton “increasingly made his case against immigration in racial terms,” acknowledging “the shift from his earlier, colorblind arguments, but the ‘uncomfortable truth,’ he wrote, was that those arguments had failed.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> John Tanton, “The Role of the Churches in Immigration Matters,” in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>74</sup> Tanton, “National Boundaries and the Nation State.”

<sup>75</sup> DeParle, *op. cit.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

DeParle notes that despite the anti-immigration movement's legislative successes, as there continued to be an increase in illegal immigration, along with some legislative setbacks eroding the implementation of immigration enforcement provisions in the IRCA, Tanton became "especially open to provocative allies and ideas"—as well as funding, as FAIR received money from the Pioneer Fund, "a foundation that promoted theories of the genetic superiority of whites."<sup>77</sup> In fact, in a letter written on December 30, 1994, Tanton himself states that Pioneer Fund grants comprised about five percent of the annual budget of FAIR.<sup>78</sup> DeParle notes, as is well documented in the Tanton Papers,<sup>79</sup> that through the years, Tanton frequently corresponded with and had close associations not only with Harry Weyher, head of the Pioneer Fund, but also with Sam G. Dickson, "a Georgia lawyer for the Ku Klux Klan, who sits on the board of *The Barnes Review*, a magazine that, among other things, questions 'the so-called Holocaust'"; and with Jared Taylor, whose work he promoted extensively, and "whose magazine, *American Renaissance*, warned: 'America is an increasingly dangerous and disagreeable place because of growing numbers of blacks and Hispanics.'"<sup>80</sup> Heidi Beirich of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) also describes Taylor's *American Renaissance* as "a pseudo-scientific magazine devoted to racial breeding and the idea that blacks are less intelligent."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Messrs. Wolfgang Bosswick, Viktor Foerster and Frederick Heckmann of the European Forum for Migration Studies, Dated December 30, 1994," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>79</sup> Tanton and Graham, "John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007."

<sup>80</sup> DeParle, *op. cit.*

<sup>81</sup> Beirich, "John Tanton Is the Mastermind Behind the Organized Anti-Immigration Movement."

Beirich expands the list of Tanton's correspondence and networking with a number of leaders in white nationalist and anti-Semitic organizations, as well as cross-pollination of leadership between these entities and the organizations founded by Tanton, including Sam Francis, who "until his death in 2005 . . . edited the . . . *Citizens Informer*, the tabloid published by the white supremacist Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC), an organization that says it 'oppose[s] all efforts to mix the races of mankind," and Kevin MacDonald, "a California State University, Long Beach, professor" who wrote "a trilogy of books that purported to show that Jews collectively work to undermine the dominant majorities in the host countries in which they live, including the United States . . . including promoting non-white immigration into white-dominated nations—in order to weaken the majority culture in a bid to enhance their own standing," among others.<sup>82</sup> Tanton also wrote several letters to Peter Brimelow and other letters promoting Brimelow and his book *Alien Nation*, in which Brimelow argues for a need to reverse an ongoing shift in the U.S. racial balance due to immigration.<sup>83</sup> Roy Beck, director of Numbers USA, defends Tanton and his efforts to stem the tide of immigration, saying, "Even if there were some mild strain of white nationalism in John, the fact is that the results of everything he is pushing in immigration policy would disproportionately help black and Hispanic Americans."<sup>84</sup>

Here the question might arise as to whether John Tanton and the organizations he has founded, funded, and coordinated have actually embraced racial ideologies in relation to

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<sup>82</sup> Heidi Beirich, "John Tanton's Private Papers Expose More Than 20 Years of Hate: Nativis Leader's Racist Past Exposed," in *Intelligence Report* (Montgomery, Alabama: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2008).

<sup>83</sup> Brimelow, *Alien Nation: Common Sense About America's Immigration Disaster*.

<sup>84</sup> DeParle, *op. cit.*

immigrants and immigration or merely allied themselves with such organizations and utilized some of their arguments to further their own cause. Ultimately this seems to be a moot question, since such alliances cannot help but taint and, to some degree, shape a movement that makes use of them. Still, it would be instructive to examine Tanton's own line of thinking and visioning for his movement, as expressed in his own words.

### **Tanton's Racialized Thinking on Immigration:**

Some of Tanton's arguments against immigration and against bilingualism are couched in the language of culture, like those of Huntington, rather than race as such. However, Etienne Balibar points out that culture has come to function as a substitute for race, in a kind of "neo-racism," as the previous language of racial differences is translated into the language of cultural differences, following the discrediting of ideas about biological race and genetic determinism.<sup>85</sup>

Ideologically, current racism, which in France centers upon the immigration complex, fits into a framework of 'racism without races' which is already widely developed in other countries, particularly the Anglo-Saxon ones. It is a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, a racism which, at first sight, does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but 'only' the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions. . .<sup>86</sup>

. . . *culture can also function like a nature*, and it can in particular function as a way of locking individuals and groups a priori into a genealogy, into a determination that is immutable and intangible in origin.<sup>87</sup>

So in other words, distinguishing stereotypical characteristics of particular peoples' culture as a demonstration of cultural inferiority and as limiting their capacity to participate in a

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<sup>85</sup> Balibar and Wallerstein, 17-27.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 22. Emphasis is that of the authors.

purportedly superior culture remains a kind of dehumanizing social determinism, substituted for the old dehumanizing biological determinism. As Jaques Barzun, in his *Race: A Study in Modern Superstition*, points out, race-thinking is not limited to the attribution of traits in accordance with biological race. Rather: “What must be extinguished is the passion for labeling and classifying large groups of people on insufficient evidence. That remarkable urge to lump together the attributes of vast masses with which we can have no acquaintance is common to everyone.”<sup>88</sup> He goes on to state, “At this point it is only needful to note the type of thinking which produces them to realize that if one theory or generalization is destroyed by facts, the mind that entertained it is not proof against falling into another.”<sup>89</sup>

One of Tanton’s closest colleagues and partners in his anti-immigration projects, and a long-time Board member of FAIR, Otis Graham, in his book *Unguarded Gates: A History of America’s Immigration Crisis*, expresses regretfully the idea that in the late twentieth century Americans are purportedly less open to discussing the characteristics of particular nationalities, unless it be to praise them.<sup>90</sup> In a description of the resistance within the “mostly Protestant, white population”<sup>91</sup> of the United States to the 1840s and 1850s wave of immigrants from Germany and Ireland and the 1880s through early 1920s wave of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, Graham contextualizes this resistance as a cultural rather than racial confrontation, hinging upon varying assessments of, first largely Catholic, and later substantially

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<sup>88</sup> Jacques Barzun, *Race: A Study in Modern Superstition* (New York,: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937), 18.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>90</sup> Otis L. Graham, Jr., *Unguarded Gates: A History of America’s Immigration Crisis* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 126-29.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

poor and “backward” immigrants’ assimilability into American society. Advocates for restrictions upon the immigration of these groups often used the term “race” when what was meant was “nationality” or “culture.”<sup>92</sup> This confused imprecision helps substantiate Balibar’s point about how “culture” is now substituted for “race” in the discourse of limiting a people’s possibilities. (Is it not ironic that social thinkers who claim to prize individualism can be so eager to lump individuals into rigid cultural boxes?) Yet, Graham believes that by translating the old discourse on immigration from “race” into “nationality” or “culture,” it can be made more palatable to Americans today.<sup>93</sup> He laments the supposed lack of openness in discussing the characteristics of Mexicans, as contrasted with these earlier discussions of the characteristics of other immigrant groups.

Late twentieth century Americans did not, at least in public, have the sort of conversations about the characteristics of this nationality that their great-grandparents had about the Chinese, Japanese, southern Italians, Poles, Jews—and Mexicans—of the Great Wave.<sup>94</sup>

Graham asserts that at the beginning of the twentieth century, with its immigration from Central and Eastern Europe, intellectuals openly discussed “the characteristics of the new groups”—positive and negative traits, but there has been no similar debate at the end of the twentieth century about the large group of Mexican immigrants.<sup>95</sup>

. . . the most politically incorrect language in America (as in Europe and Australia) is ethnic-group categorizing—unless it is favorably flattering or a part of some compensatory benefit. . . Thus the Mexican component of the Second Great

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 21-25.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 126-27.

Wave generated almost no candid and critical public discussion of the group's norms and characteristics, in contrast to a century earlier.<sup>96</sup>

He cites Samuel Huntington and Lawrence Harrison as breaking the alleged “taboo” about discussing characteristics of Hispanic immigrants and the impact of cultural values upon “Asian success and Latin American backwardness”<sup>97</sup> (Huntington’s views have already been discussed. Harrison’s will be discussed below.) He seems oblivious to the problematic nature of stereotypes about the “norms and characteristics” of ethnic groups—how they over-generalize and ignore individual differences. He also seems to be in denial about the extensive conversations in public forums about these alleged cultural characteristics of Latino immigrants.

Tanton himself does indeed refer to the differences between Latin American and Euro-American culture in essentializing ways and to at least suggest an inability of Latin American immigrants to maintain the ideals of an advanced society, particularly if they come in large numbers rather than as isolated individuals ripe for assimilation into Euro-American culture. As mentioned earlier, at times Tanton raises the specter of the demise of “Western civilization” through a large influx of immigrants from Latin America coupled with a decline in the fertility rate among Europeans and Americans of European descent. In a letter to Samuel Huntington in 1997, Tanton writes:

The situation then is that the people who have been the carriers of Western Civilization are well on the way toward resigning their commission to carry the culture into the future. When this decline in numbers is coupled with an aging of the core population, which means fewer bellicose young males willing to defend the home territory, and with an ideology that such defense is somehow morally illegitimate, it begins to look as if the chances of Western Civilization passing into the history books are very good indeed. . . . It does make a difference to me who

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 128-29.

lives here, both because I agree with what I take to be your point that it takes representatives of a culture to carry it on. . . , and because of the Founders' concept expressed in the Preamble to our Constitution of 'securing the blessings of liberty to ourselves and **our** posterity. . .' I want **my** posterity to be on the scene. . .<sup>98</sup>

Like Huntington, Tanton decries the influence of multiculturalism, wondering if exposing children to many different cultures will render them unable to know with which one to identify,<sup>99</sup> seemingly unable to envision the possibility of shaping a hybrid culture that incorporates the best of many cultures, or to admit that all cultures are hybrid cultures. He describes the "curriculum of inclusion" at Stanford, Berkeley, and New York State, as "the current move to denigrate Western Civilization."<sup>100</sup> (Is it really to "denigrate" Western Civilization or to relativize it, critically appropriating what is best from it and from other cultures while seeking to overcome what is worst in all cultures?) He sees changes in our society that undermine its previously demonstrated capacity to assimilate newcomers:

Today our society is no longer sure of its cultural roots; its 'reformers' push for the antithesis of assimilation; there is no break in sight in the immigrant stream that might give our society some breathing space and allow the assimilation process to work; and we certainly all hope that no war will come along to provide a unifying force. . . Calls for multi-culturalism and diversity are signs that the system is being overloaded.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Tanton, "Letter to Professor Samuel P. Huntington Dated August 8, 1997." Bold print and underlining are Tanton's.

<sup>99</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Gerda Bikales Dated January 2, 1991," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>100</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Mr. Richard A. Caldwell at the Center for Public Policy and Contemporary Issues, Dated May 16, 1990," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>101</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to the Editor of *the Wall Street Journal* Dated December 18, 1990," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

In a letter to Roy Beck, director of Numbers USA, he even uses the old colonialist language of “civilizing,” rather than socialization and acculturation, to refer to the education of children in the “language, culture, and value system” of our society: “The process of providing and instilling these things we call civilizing them. Many kids end up only partially civilized these days, with observable results.”<sup>102</sup>

In a letter to Colorado Governor Richard Lamm in 1986, Tanton suggests an approach to “the Hispanic topic” that includes drawing cultural comparisons, specifically suggesting a comparison between “American, Japanese, Hispanic, and, for contrast, Islamic” cultures.<sup>103</sup>

So what you might do is take four cultures and characterize each of them, pointing out less tasteful aspects of each (and thereby offending everyone), then turn to the complimentary aspects and pass around the kudos. This is a fascinating idea, since it requires us to think about what are the actual characteristics of these cultures.<sup>104</sup>

While this might sound like a balanced approach to different cultures, Tanton’s own characterization of “Hispanic” culture (as if there were one monolithic “Hispanic culture”) is not so evenhanded. (And who is the locus of enunciation for defining the characteristics of each culture? Certainly it is not an objective observer outside of any of them.) In a 1988 letter to Lamm, Tanton asserts, “It seems to me in the case of Spanish culture in Latin America, pretty much the same pattern of class, politics, land distribution, ideology, etc. developed wherever the Latin culture was implanted. So I think in this case, the culture was the carrier of these and

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<sup>102</sup> John Tanton, “Letter to Roy Beck Dated January 2, 1991,” in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>103</sup> John Tanton, “Letter to Colorado Governor Richard Lamm Dated December 8, 1986,” in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

other items.”<sup>105</sup> In a letter to Russell G. Mawby of the Kellogg Foundation, Tanton cites a book by Larry Harrison entitled *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind: The Latin American Case*,<sup>106</sup> endorsing its conclusion that “culture plays a big role in the economic success of various societies” and enclosing an article by Harrison from *The Washington Post*,<sup>107</sup> the same article being one of several newspaper clippings preserved by Tanton among his own archived papers.<sup>108</sup>

The title of Harrison’s article is, “We Don’t Cause Latin America’s Troubles—Latin Culture Does.”<sup>109</sup> It begins, “THE BIGGEST obstacle to progress in Latin America is not Yankee imperialism but Latin culture.”<sup>110</sup> Rejecting “dependency theory,” which “asserts that the United States has gotten rich buying Latin America’s raw materials cheap, selling manufactured goods dear and milking its investments in Latin America,” Harrison instead maintains that: “The North American and the Latin American have differing concepts of the individual, society, and the relationship between the two; of justice and law; of life and death; of government; of the family; of relations between the sexes; of organization; of time; of enterprise; of religion; of

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<sup>105</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to the Honorable Richard D. Lamm Dated March 25, 1988," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>106</sup> Lawrence E. Harrison, *Underdevelopment Is a State of Mind: The Latin American Case* (Lanham, MD: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University and University Press of America, 1985).

<sup>107</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Dr. Russell G. Mawby Dated June 6, 1996," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>108</sup> Tanton and Graham, *John Tanton Papers*, Box 1, Folder 5.

<sup>109</sup> Lawrence E. Harrison, "We Don't Cause Latin America's Troubles--Latin Culture Does," *The Washington Post* (June 29, 1986).

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

morality.”<sup>111</sup> He goes on: “You don’t have to live in Latin America very long to appreciate how badly most human beings are treated in comparison with the Western democracies—and how much nonsense cultural relativism is. I speak now not just of economic opportunity, but also of justice, social responsibility and political participation, rare commodities in most Latin American countries.”<sup>112</sup>

More specifically, he generalizes a list of “cultural obstacles” that are presumably universal across Latin American cultures and prevent economic, political, and social development: “an authoritarian view of human relationships” manifested at all levels of society; “a reluctance to think independently, to take initiatives, to run risks and to tolerate dissent”; an attitude “that work is bad”; “an excessive individualism that breeds anti-social attitudes and actions” (an ironic accusation given the hyper-individualism of Western societies generally and Huntington’s and others’ characterization of Latin American culture as “corporatist”<sup>113</sup>); “[a] radius of trust and identification that seldom extends beyond the family”; “difficulties in organizing and cooperating to achieve a common goal”; and “abuse of power, the absence of fair play and its judicial counterpart due process, and corruption so deeply ingrained in the society that acts of justice and honesty are often viewed with incredulity.”<sup>114</sup>

These claims defining that which is purportedly characteristic of Latin American cultures and uncharacteristic of Western cultures are questionable at best. They certainly do not accord with my experiences in extended visits to Mexico and Costa Rica and years of working in

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 46.

<sup>114</sup> Harrison, "We Don't Cause Latin America's Troubles--Latin Culture Does."

ministry with Latino/a immigrants to the United States, whereas Harrison's stereotyped generalizations are substantially derived from his own anecdotal experiences in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Nicaragua and not from documented studies of Latin American countries and cultures. To such extent as his generalizations may have any truth in them, it is arguable that he has inverted cause and effect in several instances, citing political realities as the result of cultural traits, when what he describes as cultural traits may instead be both the demonstration and the outcome of existing political systems in the countries he observed.

Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, describes the process by which colonization and political exploitation of Third World peoples results in violent reaction from those subjugated populations, initially vented against their own nationals because they have not yet acquired or realized the power to direct their anger and frustration toward the powerful colonizer or exploitative government. This, in turn, is used as a justification by the colonial or postcolonial government for its ongoing violent and repressive subjugation of the conquered people.<sup>115</sup> The political, military, and economic intervention of the United States throughout much of Latin America and its direct relation to existing political and economic conditions in many of its countries has been well-documented by Juan Gonzalez in his *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*.<sup>116</sup>

Yet the point to be addressed here is the sweeping generalizations Harrison makes about the entire breadth and depth of many diverse Latin American cultures, and Tanton's use of Harrison's conclusions to suggest that Latin Americans cannot immigrate en masse into the

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<sup>115</sup> Frantz Fanon and Richard Philcox, *The Wretched of the Earth / Frantz Fanon; Translated from the French by Richard Philcox; Introductions by Jean-Paul Sartre and Homi K. Bhabha* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 1-62.

<sup>116</sup> Juan González, *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000).

United States without replicating these presumed cultural attributes here. In a letter to Roy Beck and Jim Robb in 1996, Tanton raises “the question of whether the minorities who are going to inherit California (85% of the lower-grade school children are now ‘minorities’— demography is destiny) can run an advanced society?”<sup>117</sup>

I have no doubt that individual minority persons can assimilate to the culture necessary to run an advanced society, but if through mass migration, the culture of the homeland is transplanted from Latin America to California, then my guess is that we will see the same degree of success with governmental and social institutions that we see in Latin America. Also: there is hardly any group more chauvinistic than the Orientals, who we know have disdain for both blacks and Hispanics, based on their public statements. How will this work out?<sup>118</sup>

Tanton does indeed believe that “demography is destiny,” and he expresses concerns about the impact of demographic shifts due to immigration upon Congressional reapportionment<sup>119</sup> and the implementation of affirmative action measures, the latter of which for Tanton declares a form of racism.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, Tanton perceives a threat in “the West’s (however that’s defined) declining share of the world population,” such that “my social unit is going progressively into minority status.”<sup>121</sup>

I do not think we should contend there are no problems. We should try to identify them, recognizing the inevitability of our progressive minority status,

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<sup>117</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Roy Beck and Jim Robb Dated January 26, 1996," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Otis Graham and David Simcox Dated May 24, 1988," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>120</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Mr. Dennis Bartel Dated April 4, 1990," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010). "Letter to Michigan Governor James Blanchard Dated December 27, 1990," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>121</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Michael Teitelbaum Dated February 16, 1987," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

thanks to the momentum built into both the expanding populations of the third world, and the low fertility rates in the first world. I think we should agree that that is a prediction over the next two or three decades, not a projection, and clearly state that two of the imperatives that the situation imposes on us are a strong national defense and continent borders. Nations that cannot defend their populations will be overrun, and in the short term, not the long.<sup>122</sup>

But in addition to such an external threat, Tanton perceives an internal threat to be addressed:

Minority groups are very much interested in civil liberties—in receiving them. . . . When we reach that new world of ‘a majority of minorities,’ who will be giving out or guaranteeing of civil liberties? Will it be the people who are currently the recipients of minority rights? . . . By the year 2020, when everyone has become a minority, presumably the formation of a White political caucus, along with all the others, will be reasonable and justified.<sup>123</sup>

Tanton takes issue with an article’s conclusion that the shrinking number of “WASPs” in America is an insignificant development. In contrast, Tanton states, “I have come to the point of view that for European-American society and culture to persist, requires an European-American majority, and a clear one at that. I doubt very much that our traditions will be carried on my [sic] other peoples—they have their own.”<sup>124</sup> He even implies that “blacks, Jews, and other minorities,” including Native Americans (whom he parenthetically refers to as “Siberian-Americans,” though to track a population back that far would essentially render all national and ethnic nomenclature meaningless, considering that Native Americans are known to have inhabited the Americas for around 10,000 to 20,000 years) would be “worse off” “if the white

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Leon F. Bouvier at Tulane University Dated May 2, 1988," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>124</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Garrett Hardin Dated December 10, 1993," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

majority in the United States fell below 50%.”<sup>125</sup> Moreover, he insists that the U.S. Declaration of Independence defines nationhood based on “consanguinity.” “It nicely expresses the bond of blood and ethnicity—of nationhood.”<sup>126</sup> This is reminiscent of the proto-Nazi and Nazi adherents in Germany maintaining that German nationality is defined by “blood and soil.”<sup>127</sup>

In a 1991 letter to Harry Weyher, head of the Pioneer Foundation, which is devoted to promoting eugenics, Tanton offers his opinion of Jared Taylor’s *American Renaissance*, mentioned above as a magazine also devoted to eugenics and to affirming that blacks are less intelligent, saying of it, “All I can say at this juncture is that I hope it will be a useful addition to the developing debate on race, heredity, affirmative action and so on.”<sup>128</sup> In the same letter, Tanton offers to lend Weyher an unpublished book written by Taylor entitled “Black Failure—White Guilt,” for which Tanton indicates Taylor had been “unable to find a publisher.”<sup>129</sup> In a letter to FAIR’s Board of Advisors and to Dan Stein in 1995, rather than seeking to distance his movement from prior “nativist” reactions resulting in the Chinese Exclusion Act, he instead re-

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<sup>125</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Mr. Peter Brimelow Dated December 13, 1995," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>126</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Mr. Lawrence Auster Dated November 13, 1994," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>127</sup> Pierre Ayçoberry, *The Nazi Question: An Essay on the Interpretations of National Socialism (1922-1975)*, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 8. Robert Cecil, *The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology* (New York: Dodd, 1972), 165.

<sup>128</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Mr. Harry Weyher Dated January 24, 1991," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

evaluates that act as a labor protection rather than an instance of racism, a reassessment he likewise extends to the former “White Australia” policy in that nation.<sup>130</sup>

Tanton expresses great interest in eugenics and in the genetic differentiation of racial and ethnic groups, even though renowned geneticist Richard Lewontin conclusively demonstrated in the 1970s that 85 percent of human genetic variation occurs *within*, rather than *between*, different population groups.<sup>131</sup> In a letter offering up topics for discussion at a U.S. population movement meeting in 1988, Tanton states:

Ever since my ZPG [Zero Population Growth] days, I have been of the opinion that once the question of quantity in human numbers was addressed, that the question of quality would follow in train. . . Concerning the improvement of our ‘nature,’ i.e., our genetic backgrounds, few would object to getting rid of genes that produce physical diseases, though the means of doing so would provoke discussion. But we live here within the legacy of the Nazi era. Any efforts towards improving the human genetic stock, particularly as it applies to mental ability, are automatically seen as ‘racist,’ that catchall phrase for anything one doesn’t like.<sup>132</sup>

In a letter to Denis McCormick in 1998, Tanton expresses an interest in, and a desire for copies of, some “League of Nations material on the benefits of eugenics” McCormick had mentioned in an article.<sup>133</sup> In a letter to Harry Weyher of the Pioneer Fund in 1991, Tanton writes: “There certainly are a lot of good things coming out on the genetics front these days. It must be getting harder for the opposition to deny that there is some connection between our genes and

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<sup>130</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to FAIR Board of Advisors and Dan Stein Dated November 3, 1995," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>131</sup> Spencer Wells, *Deep Ancestry: Inside the Genographic Project* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2006), 19-22.

<sup>132</sup> John Tanton, "Memo to PEB Board of Directors, PEB Governing Board, Greg Curtis, and Robert Gray, Dated April 14, 1988," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>133</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Denis McCormick Dated April 28, 1998," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

ourselves, both mental and physical.”<sup>134</sup> Of course, Tanton dismisses critics of his views on genetics and on immigration as being Marxist: “Both of these topics—human genetics and immigration—are anathema to the hard (Marxist) left in the United States—which provides the core of the opposition to immigration reform.”<sup>135</sup> In a 1996 letter to Robert Graham of the Foundation for the Advancement of Man, Tanton describes “setting up the SAGE [Society for Genetic Education] page on the Internet,” noting that on the SAGE website:

. . . we . . . have emphasized mankind’s use of eugenic principles on plants and the lower animals as a way to condition the public to the idea of genetic manipulation, and raise the question of its application to the human race. In fact, we report on ways it is currently being done, but under the term genetics rather than eugenics.<sup>136</sup>

In that same letter, he makes a stunning statement implying a selective breeding policy:

First, do we leave it to individuals to decide that they are the intelligent ones who should have more kids? And more troublesome, what about the less intelligent, who logically should have less? Who is going to break the bad news to them, and how will it be implemented? Without this step, the more intelligent are simply in a breeding race with those less well endowed, and we can guess how that will turn out! This qualitative shift has to be worked out within the context of the quantitative aspect of the population problem, and should not worsen it. The less intelligent, of course, won’t understand the need for the limitation on their own.<sup>137</sup>

Breeding and its demographic implications loom large for Tanton, as he characterizes Latin American culture as spawning a mass of overactive breeders threatening the white

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<sup>134</sup>John Tanton, "Letter to Mr. Harry F. Weyher of the Pioneer Fund, Dated February 28, 1991," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>135</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Messrs. Wolfgang Bosswick, Viktor Foerster and Frederick Heckmann of the European Forum for Migration Studies, Dated December 30, 1994."

<sup>136</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Dr. Robert K. Graham of the Foundation for the Advancement of Man, Dated September 18, 1996," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

majority in the United States as these “high-fertility people” migrate here. In a memo Tanton wrote in 1986, setting the agenda for the fourth in his series of “WITAN” meetings, as mentioned above, Tanton makes several references to that effect.<sup>138</sup> Referring to the immigration of Latin Americans as “the Latin onslaught,”<sup>139</sup> he asks, “Will the present majority peaceably hand over its political power to a group that is simply more fertile?”<sup>140</sup> He also asks, “Can homo contraceptives compete with homo progenitiva if borders aren’t controlled? Or is advice to limit one’s family simply advice to move over and let someone else with greater reproductive powers occupy the space?”<sup>141</sup> Moreover, he makes the statement: “On the demographic point: perhaps this is the first instance in which those with their pants up are going to get caught by those with their pants down!”<sup>142</sup> He quotes from one of his close associates Michael Teitelbaum the following: “A region of low-native fertility combined with high immigration of high-fertility people does not make for compatible trend lines!”<sup>143</sup>

Tanton is clear about what he sees to be at stake in all this concern about breeding: “As Whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night? Or will there be an explosion? Why don’t non-Hispanic Whites have a group identity, as

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<sup>138</sup> John Tanton, “Commentary on the WITAN IV Memo Dated October 10, 1986,” in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010). I was only able to locate this memo as retyped along with Tanton’s commentary on it in 1988, rather than in its original form in 1986. Tanton issued this commentary on November 18, 1988, in response to the firestorm set off by the leaking of the original memo to the media in Arizona earlier that year.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 10. Underlining is Tanton’s.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

do Blacks, Jews, Hispanics?”<sup>144</sup> Tanton also asks about “the differences in educability between Hispanics (with their 50% dropout rate) and Asiatics (with their excellent school records and long tradition of scholarship)?”<sup>145</sup> In relation to Balibar’s point about how the language of race morphs into the language of culture and ethnicity, Tanton here states that “ethnicity is a more acceptable term than race,” and after expressing concern over the confusion created by the fact that “50% of all Hispanic surname people on the census forms designate themselves as White,” he suggests a differentiation that has indeed become widespread, between “Hispanic Whites” and “non-Hispanic Whites” and then asks, “Is Anglo a better term than White?”<sup>146</sup>

#### **Part of a Larger Narrative on Race:**

While offering justifications for his concern over Whites being out-bred by Latin Americans, Tanton agrees that some of the language he used in the memo was unfortunate and states that it was not intended to be racially charged. However, his apologies notwithstanding, his language and his arguments betray a larger narrative that has shaped Tanton’s thinking on immigration, the stances and actions of the organizations he has founded, and in turn the immigration debate as it exists in the United States. Moreover, there is a specific document that embodies that larger narrative in a sort of modern myth—a book that according to Tanton’s own admission influenced his thinking on immigration profoundly—a novel entitled *The Camp of the Saints*, written and published in French in 1975 by Jean Raspail, and subsequently issued in English translation and then reissued in English by Tanton’s own The

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

Social Contract Press in 1995.<sup>147</sup> The basic premise of the novel is that a group of dark-skinned people from the Third World come as refugees to France and are naively welcomed by the majority of the people of that country, which turns out to be the beginning of France being overrun by Third World peoples and the eventual demise of Western civilization. Tanton and others see this fictional narrative as a prophecy of the impact of immigration both on Europe and the United States. Of the book's impact on Tanton, Heidi Beirich of the SPLC states that Tanton has admitted that *The Camp of the Saints* was "one of his main inspirations for taking on immigration"<sup>148</sup> and that "Tanton had something akin to a conversion when he came across *The Camp of the Saints*," considering it a "prophetic argument."<sup>149</sup>

Tanton not only published this book but promoted it extensively in several of his letters, in the most glowing of terms, including this, in a 1994 letter to Dr. Garrett Hardin: "Now we have this rehabilitation of Raspail's highly controversial, *The Camp of the Saints*. I believe we'll look back on this as a turning point, as we explain in our 'Publisher's Note' to our forthcoming edition of *The Camp*—copy also enclosed."<sup>150</sup> He even tried to get a larger publishing company, the Ingram Book Company, to publish the book, in order to increase its readership.<sup>151</sup> One reason he saw this publication as a "turning point" was because he saw the value of a *narrative*

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<sup>147</sup> Raspail, *The Camp of the Saints*.

<sup>148</sup> Heidi Beirich, "Essay: The Anti-Immigrant Movement," Southern Poverty Law Center, <<http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-files/ideology/anti-immigrant/the-anti-immigrant-movement>>.

<sup>149</sup> Heidi Beirich, "John Tanton Is the Mastermind Behind the Organized Anti-Immigration Movement."

<sup>150</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Dr. Garrett Hardin Dated November 23, 1994," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>151</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Mr. Keith Owens of the Ingram Book Company, Dated December 22, 1994," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

depiction of the threat he perceived in current immigration policy and realities: “I have convinced myself that one of the things we really need is a novel presenting our side.... *Camp of the Saints* by Raspail is an example of how a novelist can bring up things that strictly factual arguments cannot touch on.”<sup>152</sup> His “Publisher’s Note” in the edition of the book published by The Social Contract Press states:

We are honored to bring back into print Jean Raspail’s *The Camp of the Saints* and to do so just as the immigration policy debate has risen to new heights in the United States—indeed, across the world. . . . The novel alternatively has been praised as a clear minded view of the future or, contrarily, vilified as ‘racist.’ . . . A word is warranted about the role of a novel in the immigration debate. We humans do not seem to like our truths unvarnished. Rather than ‘just the facts,’ we commonly prefer to have them dressed up in the memorable forms of plays, poems, allegories, metaphors, fables, parables, proverbs, tragedies and satires. The poet, the playwright, the novelist, the filmmaker can present truths and open our eyes in ways that demographic analyses, comparative income studies, or social welfare statistics never can. The storytellers can advance notions prohibited to others.

Over the years the American public has absorbed a great number of books, articles, poems and films which exalt the immigrant experience. . . . Raspail evokes different feelings and that may help to pave the way for policy changes. *The Camp of the Saints* takes the immigration debate in a new direction. Indeed, it may become the *1984* of the twenty-first century.

We are indebted to Jean Raspail for his insights into the human condition, and for being 20 years ahead of his time. History will judge him more kindly than have some of his contemporaries.<sup>153</sup>

Of course, one reason a novelist can present “truths” in a way data cannot is because the novelist has no accountability for the truth of her or his assertions. The storyteller does not need to prove or document claims made—only to assert them. Yet, as Tanton points out, such

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<sup>152</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to the Honorable Richard D. Lamm Dated February 16, 1996," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>153</sup> Raspail, *The Camp of the Saints*, viii-ix.

narrative accounts often seem to have a greater impact on what people believe than do a collection of facts.

*Narrative Formation of People and Ideas:*

The publisher's comments on the capacity of a novel to move people in ways unavailable to purely discursive thought is an astute recognition of the power of narrative to form people and ideas. In fact, Alasdair MacIntyre describes how ethics, communities of social formation and moral discourse, and even the self have a narrative shape that brings unity and meaning to an otherwise disjointed and meaningless collection of disparate data.<sup>154</sup>

MacIntyre takes issue with the modern notion of the self as an autonomous individual making its own decisions and shaping its own destiny, detached from communal context and particularity, social roles and practices. MacIntyre sees this self as an illusory concept, since no self exists outside of a social context, and the self is socially defined and constituted within various communities and social roles. Moreover, the self's identity is defined within a narrative framework delineating social roles, expectations, and interactions. Otherwise, the notion of "self" is a mere abstraction that lacks context and content.<sup>155</sup>

Human thought and human communities, as well as the individuals within them, have always been shaped by a narrative framework. Greek philosophy and moral discourse, including that of Plato, Aristotle, the Sophists, and the Stoics, occurred within the context of a view of life shaped substantially by the epic stories of Homer, which in turn were challenged and questioned by, or placed in dialogue with, some contrasting views as expressed in the

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<sup>154</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, especially 204-25.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-34, 61, 172-73, 216-21.

tragic plays as typified by Sophocles.<sup>156</sup> These stories were more than entertainment. They were normative descriptions of what human life is like, offering perspectives “on the narrative character of human life.”<sup>157</sup> Likewise, as Stanley Hauerwas points out, Christians are essentially a community formed by a story, especially the story of Jesus, but with that story occurring within a larger narrative of God’s dealings with humankind and forming communities—first the nation of Israel and then the church, a story that frames the entirety of the Christian Bible and gives it authority in the lives of Christians.<sup>158</sup> Each narrative account of human life assumes there is a moral order that gives life certain ends. That moral order is shaped by social roles, expectations, and practices as defined by the communal context. Thus narrative, community, and moral order are all intertwined, and rather than an “autonomous individual,” the narrative of an individual life is formed within a larger narrative of the communal context in which that individual life is rooted.

The unity of a moral life “is intelligible only as a characteristic of a unitary life, a life that can be conceived and evaluated as a whole.”<sup>159</sup> This requires “a concept of a self whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end.”<sup>160</sup> The relation of human actions to intentions are only intelligible within a narrative framework of the unity of a human life as a whole and coherent story. Yet, that story has a setting, whose coherence is also dependent upon a larger narrative, the social and

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 121-45.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>158</sup> Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*.

<sup>159</sup> MacIntyre, 205.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

historical.<sup>161</sup> Conversation, human speech, and human actions are only intelligible as enacted narratives.<sup>162</sup> A narrative framework is necessary to give meaning to any event, occurrence, or piece of data. Narrative is that which connects them into a framework of meaning, rather than their remaining disconnected, unrelated, and meaningless fragments. To give no unifying meaning to these would be to cease to live, though what meaning is given to them is open to debate but is framed by a narrative context of meaning.<sup>163</sup>

*The Narrative Context of the Immigration Debate:*

Narrative creates, generates, and shapes the interpretive framework for the selection, appropriation, organization, interpretation, and application of “facts.” Narratives can and do shape thinking and the interpretation of data. The immigration debate itself occurs within a narrative context, and for some, including John Tanton and the politically powerful immigration restrictionist movement he has created, the primary narrative that frames their appropriation, organization, and use of the various data available about immigrants and immigration is a narrative that closely parallels, and is often directly impacted by, that offered by Raspail's *The Camp of the Saints*.

Beneath and beyond the literal details of the purely fictional characters and plot in the novel, Raspail intends to convey an unfolding narrative that he and many others believe to be the truth behind the fiction. Its central plot is as follows: White Europeans are the builders of civilization and should take pride in their race and its accomplishments rather than believing

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 206-10.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 210-11.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 212.

the races to be equal and feeling pity or guilt in relation to the subjugation of other, inferior races that are incapable of, and destructive of, civilization. Millions of dark-skinned Third World immigrants are pouring into Europe and the United States, with either the primary or secondary intention of taking over and destroying white Western civilization. It is only a question of time and reaching a critical mass before this intention is fulfilled. Leftist thinkers among the white Westerners themselves are co-conspirators in this work of trying to destroy Western civilization, as they spread notions of egalitarianism, the brotherhood of all humanity, pity for the plight of Third World peoples and of the lower classes (and races) domestically, and a desire to promote material equality as a corollary to ontological equality, and as they stoke a guilty Western conscience that will prevent the West from defending itself against the unfolding invasion. These naïve elites, blinded by utopian visions of racial harmony and a classless society and the like, have substantially gained control over the mass media and the governments of the Western world, and are controlling popular thought in order to support the impending conquest of the West by the Third World Other. If it is still possible at all to avert this catastrophe, someone is going to have to stand up and say, “No more” to this flood of immigrants—to stop it and reverse it before it is too late, if it is not too late already.

Raspail’s racialized narrative is rooted in a larger, deeply entrenched European and Euro-American narrative embodied in Nordic-Teutonic,<sup>164</sup> Aryan,<sup>165</sup> and Anglo-Saxon<sup>166</sup> myths about an inherently superior white European “race” building “civilization” and expanding

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<sup>164</sup> See Barzun, *Race: A Study in Modern Superstition*.

<sup>165</sup> Léon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe*, trans. Edmund Howard (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1996).

<sup>166</sup> Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

westward in fulfillment of its “manifest destiny” to spread civilization by conquering, subduing, enslaving, expelling and/or exterminating inherently inferior (sometimes considered less than fully human) peoples of other races, such as Africans who were enslaved, Native Americans who were expelled or exterminated, and other indigenous peoples who were conquered and subdued under the project of colonialism in Africa, East Asia, Latin America, and other parts of the globe. The construction of a polarity of superior “White” vs. inferior non-white “Other” was essential to the project of conquest and colonialism, in order to justify the expropriation of the land, natural resources, labor, and lives of indigenous peoples. Then all that is needed to complete the narrative is to envision a large migration of the inferior non-white Other into White lands as a threat to unravel the White race's project of civilization-building.

This overarching narrative, along with to a substantial degree Raspail’s specific narrative, has been taken up by many of the social and political organizations in the United States (mostly founded by John Tanton) working to restrict or even eliminate immigration, particularly from Latin America. Of course, it is difficult, if not impossible, to either prove or disprove a hypothetical narrative that is still purportedly unfolding. There are even conflicting narratives about the past, to say nothing of the future. Yet, what one can do is to question the narrative’s plausibility, point out and critique its assumptions, and suggest alternative narratives as a contrasting interpretive framework. In my discussion of Huntington and Tanton, along with the next chapter deconstructing race as a determinant of collective identity, I have attempted to do all but the last of these tasks—suggest alternative narratives. In Part 3, I will offer alternative narratives and interpretive frameworks from Christian faith and theology, particularly for understanding human nature and responding to the immigrant other.

## Conclusion:

Within this ideological framework of racialized thinking about immigration, including his embrace of the racially charged narrative embodied in *The Camp of the Saints* as a prophetic account of the impact of Latin American immigration into the United States, John Tanton built a movement of several organizations whose focus was to curb the tide of immigration and to dampen the impact of Latin American language and culture. In the process he demonstrated himself quite politically savvy and willing to make the most of whatever political advantages and strategies were at his disposal. He learned from experience in working the legislative process how much easier it is to stop a legislative proposal in Congress than to pass one, given the necessity of about eleven successful votes at the subcommittee, committee, Senate, House, Conference Committee, and Presidential signature levels in order to pass legislation versus success in defeating it in any one of these actions in order to kill it.<sup>167</sup>

In preparation for the first WITAN meeting in 1986, Tanton wrote a memo entitled, "FAIR: Quo Vadis," in which he laid out a comprehensive, detailed legislative, executive, and judicial strategy for FAIR that included working with the Ways and Means Committees in Congress, "infiltrat[ing]" the Judiciary Committees, "focus[ing] our grass roots and direct mail efforts in Congressional districts that are of particular importance to us," blocking "the bills that our opposition wants," lobbying agencies in the executive branch to "secure changes in the administrative rules governing immigration," developing strong relations with the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and other related departments, pushing to "secure employer sanctions by using legislation already on the books," securing "appointments of our

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<sup>167</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to FAIR Board of Directors Dated May 18, 1988," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

friends to positions on the Board of Immigration Appeals, to the Commissioner's Post. . . , to other advisory boards in the INS and Justice Department," and using litigation and the court system "to prevent further weakening and increase enforcement of current laws."<sup>168</sup> He also stressed restructuring FAIR by shifting from an emphasis on media efforts to a grass roots campaign to "build the political strength of the organization. . . , finding more members through direct mail who can write, contribute and act on the local level," as well as making proposals consistent with the "[g]overnmental emphasis . . . on balancing the budget, cutting expenditures and, where possible, increasing revenues."<sup>169</sup> Finally, he counseled the organization to:

Continue to build the intellectual basis for immigration law reform. Ideas will win out in the end, or so I believe. We should continue to produce thoughtful monographs, op-ed pieces and participate in conferences that enrich the intellectual base form [sic] which we operate. The advent of the Center for Immigration Studies is a major step forward in this regard.<sup>170</sup>

In the implementation of these strategies, Tanton did not hesitate to engage in some political subterfuge and manipulation. In a letter to Greg Curtis in 1991, he advises a "much improved and expanded letters-to-the-editor program" of "letters from a wide variety of sources," in order to create the appearance of a groundswell of popular opinion, while also stating that "the letters can be virtually identical and generated by a central office."<sup>171</sup> In a

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<sup>168</sup> John Tanton, "FAIR: Quo Vadis," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Greg Curtis Dated February 25, 1991," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

2001 letter to C. Gary Gerst of La Salle Partners, Ltd., Tanton wrote of a strategy to sway Republican congressional leaders by playing off immigration as a Democratic agenda:

Roy Beck and I think we have come up with an idea that can actually move the battle lines on the immigration question in our favor. While we are working on other ideas to move Democrats, this one involves using the recently released census data to show Republican members of Congress, the Administration, and the party's leadership how massive immigration imperils their political future. The goal is to change Republicans' perception of immigration so that when they encounter the word 'immigrant,' their reaction is 'Democrat.' . . . Our plan is to hire a lobbyist who will carry the following message to Republicans on Capitol Hill and to business leaders: **Continued massive immigration will soon cost you political control of the White House and Congress**, given the current, even division of the electorate, and the massive infusion of voters about to be made to the Democratic side.<sup>172</sup>

Tanton is also a bit disingenuous in his accusations toward "our opposition," as for example when he and his colleague Otis Graham accuse "the opposition" of questioning Tanton's motives and suggesting a racist motivation,<sup>173</sup> in the same context in which he questions the motives of the Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s, suggesting that the sheltered refugees were being exploited out of a political motivation to challenge Reagan Administration policy.<sup>174</sup> Tanton also states that, regarding FAIR proposals for an employer verification system: "The opposition painted a dire picture of having to carry around a plastic identification card, raising the specter of Nazi Germany and of people being stopped on the street and asked for identification. We did not and do not advocate that. . ." Yet, the Arizona legislation drafted substantially by FAIR (SB 1070) (but partially overturned by the federal courts) does require law enforcement officials throughout the state to do precisely that.

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<sup>172</sup> John Tanton, "Letter to Mr. C. Gary Gerst Dated May 4, 2001," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010). Bold print is Tanton's in the letter.

<sup>173</sup> Otis Graham and John Tanton, "A Skirmish in a Wider War: An Oral History of John H. Tanton," *ibid.*, 77.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

John Tanton certainly had a great appreciation for his own influence and that of the movement he created. Writing in December of 2001 to Roy Beck, Dan Stein, and other colleagues, he states: "We're all involved in making history, and at some point, you or someone else might want to write some of this up."<sup>175</sup> He leaves little room for doubt as to his stance toward the immigrants he seeks to deny entrance into the United States, as in writing to Dan Stein, the current director of FAIR, he offers this critique of a new FAIR brochure in November of 1994:

I would pick only one bone, and that is with the language. On the third panel, the text says, 'more than 20 million residents have been **welcomed** to the United States. . . .' That word 'welcomed' is one that the opposition likes to use. Obviously, a great many of them were not welcome. I would prefer a word like 'admitted' or 'accepted,' something that is closer to the actual situation.<sup>176</sup>

Indeed, John Tanton's life project, to which he has devoted countless hours, energy, and resources over the course of several decades now, has been to deny that welcome to the strangers sojourning among us.

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<sup>175</sup> John Tanton, "Memo to Roy Beck, Jim Edwards, Rosemary Jenks, K.C. Mcalpin, Linda Purdue, and Dan Stein, Dated December 21, 2001," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>176</sup> John Tanton, "Memo to Dan Stein Dated November 23, 1994," in *John Tanton Papers, 1960-2007* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 2010).

#### CHAPTER 4: DECONSTRUCTING “RACE” AS A DETERMINANT OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

*It may be obvious that there are a large series of genetic traits that vary, and vary considerably, among different persons. It is not at all obvious that these have to be coded as falling into three, five or fifteen reified groupings we call ‘races’. The number of categories, indeed the fact of any categorization, is a social decision.<sup>1</sup>*

--Immanuel Wallerstein

When discussing immigrants and immigration, advocates for greater restrictions on immigration will often say, “It’s not about race,” and argue that the issues of concern are something other than race. And indeed, there are many other issues to be considered in the debate over immigration. However, when one examines the actual discourse on immigration, it *is* substantially about race, sometimes in overt ways, and sometimes in terms that demean persons deemed to be of non-white races, but sometimes in more subtle ways as a subtext that lies beneath the surface argument.

The thinkers examined in Chapters 2 and 3 are very influential in shaping the restrictionist pole of the debate over immigration and are somewhat representative of argumentation on that side, though I have omitted examination of the plethora of available immigration discourse representing the most blatant demeaning—and even dehumanizing—of “non-white” immigrants. While John Tanton would likely be among those wanting to say that his views on immigration are not based upon race, I have shown here that race pervades and underlies his thinking on immigration, that Tanton has maintained very close working relationships and even strong alliances with some of the most extreme white supremacist thinkers and organizations, and that Tanton's thinking about immigration is profoundly

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<sup>1</sup>Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, and Class: Ambiguous Identities*, 80.

influenced by a very racially charged novel and a larger social narrative on race embodied in that novel.

Samuel Huntington is an example of the more subtle presence of race in his immigration arguments, though he does recite the history of the exclusion of non-white races (African Americans, Native Americans, Mexicans, Asians, etc.) from “the people” as part of his argument for the existence of a constant Anglo-Protestant culture from the origin of the nation through the mid-twentieth century,<sup>2</sup> he does describe the America that existed through the 1950s as a “white society,”<sup>3</sup> and there are racial overtones to his attempt to define “Latin America” as a civilization other-than Western civilization, with an “indigenous core” to Mexican culture.<sup>4</sup> But Huntington’s arguments, at least on the surface, are focused more upon the category of “culture” than the category of race. However, this may be something of a false distinction. I have already mentioned Etienne Balibar’s point that culture has come to function as a substitute for race, in a kind of “neo-racism,” as the previous language of racial differences is translated into the language of cultural differences,<sup>5</sup> following the discrediting of ideas about biological race and genetic determinism, and as culture comes to “function like a nature,” locking people into a genealogical determinism,<sup>6</sup> even if not a biological determinism.

The distinction between race and culture tends to break down in Huntington’s thought on the assimilation of immigrants, as he asserts, “Throughout American history, people who

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<sup>2</sup> Huntington, *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity*, 53.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>4</sup> Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 149.

<sup>5</sup> Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, and Class: Ambiguous Identities*, 17-27.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

were not white Anglo-Saxon Protestants have become Americans by adopting America's Anglo-Protestant culture and political values."<sup>7</sup> Here he does at least allow that non-white persons are not inassimilable, but at the same time he assumes that such persons are "other" and must erase all cultural otherness in order to become part of the people—in other words, that American culture is defined by its white members, while his argument that intermarriage is one of the principal markers of assimilation<sup>8</sup> could be seen as a demand that physical differences also be erased. There is also Huntington's discussion of "white nativism" as a "plausible reaction" to the "diminished role in U.S. society" of "male WASPs" and "the perversion of *their* culture."<sup>9</sup>

So the category of "race" pervades the thought of both the scholar (Huntington) and the political activist/organizer (Tanton) examined here (and, as far as I have observed, virtually all the discourse on immigrants as a threat to American national identity), whether in overt or subtle ways, whether in terms that are consciously demeaning toward "non-white" persons or in terms that purport to be respectful toward persons of other races but nonetheless assume "white" to be normative in the definition of American national identity. This raises, then, the question: Why is it problematic to define American national identity in racial terms and to define the United States as a fundamentally "white society"? Of course, the most obvious reason involves those persons excluded from the "white race" who were present from the beginning of the nation and its colonial antecedents—Africans brought here as slaves against their will, Native Americans who were displaced from the land when they were not

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<sup>7</sup> Huntington, *Who Are We?*, 61.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 230-31, 239-41, 296-300, 305-08.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 309-16, emphasis mine.

exterminated, and Mexicans who inhabited vast tracts of the southwestern part of the United States long before these lands became part of this nation, along with the descendants of all of these categories of people. To define the U.S.A. as a white nation is to exclude these persons, quite independently of the question of immigrants. That is an argument in itself sufficient to problematize the construction of American national identity as “white,” either racially or culturally. But what I want to do here is to deconstruct the very category of “race” as a marker or determinant of collective identity.

### **The Social Construction of “Race”:**

The whole notion of “race” is grounded in a categorization of people based upon selected physical characteristics which presumably differentiate one racial type from another. Anthropologist Ruth Benedict describes the history of attempts to classify humans into races based on skin color, eye color and eye form, hair color and hair form, shape of the nose, stature, cephalic index, and blood groups and blood types, with all the ambiguities and inconsistencies those attempts have demonstrated.<sup>10</sup> She concludes:

IN ALL MODERN SCIENCE there is no field where authorities differ more than in the classifications of human races. Some have separated races on the basis of geographical distribution, some on the basis of skin color, some on the basis of cephalic index, some on a combination of several traits. Some have divided mankind into three races, some into seventeen, some into thirty-four.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, ironically, despite all of this confusion and ambiguity, Benedict believes that race is something real and substantive, still waiting for science to reveal a sustainable classification

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<sup>10</sup> Ruth Fulton Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics* (New York,: Viking Press, 1959), 22-34. (Benedict’s book was originally published in 1940, with a revised edition in 1943, before this 1959 edition.)

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

system,<sup>12</sup> and even argues for a major division of humanity into three “major human stocks” — Caucasoid, Mongoloid, and Negroid, proceeding to describe characteristics of each. But then, confusion arises in attempting to explain populations that do not fit neatly into any of these categories and attempting to delineate subdivisions within them.<sup>13</sup> Much more apt is a quote she offers from J. C. Prichard:

The different races of man are not distinguished from each other by strongly marked, uniform, and permanent distinctions, as are the species belonging to any given tribe of animals. All the diversities which exist are variable, and pass into each other by insensible gradations.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, Immanuel Wallerstein makes this point about racial essentialism:

It may be obvious that there are a large series of genetic traits that vary, and vary considerably, among different persons. It is not at all obvious that these have to be coded as falling into three, five or fifteen reified groupings we call ‘races’. The number of categories, indeed the fact of any categorization, is a social decision.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the characteristics that are cited as delineating racial types are individual differences that exist along a continuum, much as the “colors” we give names through cultural conditioning are in reality points along a continuum of the solar spectrum. Color of skin, in particular, exists in gradations among people whose distant ancestors had varying shades of skin tone consistent with latitude and climate, in evolutionary adaptation to the climate of the original homeland tens of thousands of years ago, generally from lighter skin tones in colder, more northern climates, to darker skin tones in warmer, more southern climates. There is no

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 97-98.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 34-38.

<sup>14</sup> J. C. Prichard, *Natural History of Man* (London: H. Bailliere, 1855), 473. Cited in Benedict, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Balibar and Wallerstein, 80.

clear-cut line to draw separating “white” from “black” but a continuum of skin tone variation. (Actually, geneticist Spencer Wells indicates that the DNA evidence on human migration suggests that the earliest humans, who lived in Africa, were fairly dark skinned, and that lighter skin was an evolutionary adaptation to colder northern climates [in order to admit more vitamin D from the sun's rays], as some human groups migrated northward out of Africa.<sup>16</sup>) Other physical characteristics used to differentiate races have similar gradations.

In fact, renowned geneticist and statistician Richard Lewontin conclusively demonstrated in the 1970s that 85 percent of human genetic variation occurs *within*, rather than *between*, different population groups identified either as distinct races, ethnic groups, or nations and is, in fact, shared across populations and races, while identified races account for less than 10 percent of the genetic variation in the human species. This was in spite of the fact that Lewontin had set out to prove genetically the existence of distinct human subspecies, but based on the results of his analysis, he was forced to conclude that no such subspecies exist.<sup>17</sup> In other words, the various “races,” however defined, have more in common with each other physically than two individuals within the same “race” may have in common.

Furthermore, as Jacques Barzun describes, attempts to define race in terms of physical characteristics, blood, common ancestry, environment, genetics, history, nationalism, or a common way of life have all failed to adequately distinguish one racial group from another in terms of consistently differentiating the proposed races while consistently uniting those within

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<sup>16</sup> Spencer Wells, *The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey*, Random House trade paperback ed. (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2002), 58-59.

<sup>17</sup> Wells, *Deep Ancestry: Inside the Genographic Project*, 19-22.

the same race.<sup>18</sup> More problematic still are attempts to apply certain intellectual capabilities and social and moral traits to different groups in correlation with the identified physical “types.”<sup>19</sup> Barzun does not deny that similarities exist within social groups such as a family, nation, climate, class, etc. Rather, he asserts that existing classification schemes oversimplify the complexity of human differences.

What is asserted and implied is that *these tendencies to think and look alike, if they exist, must be proved*. They must not be merely presumed. . . . The problem of when and how similarities of body and mind occur, and to what degree, is extraordinarily complex, and man’s fatal tendency is to assume greater simplicity and regularity in nature than actually exists. That propensity is the source of the countless over-simplifications studied in this book as race-theories.<sup>20</sup>

Martha Minow describes the general manner in which humans attempt to classify other humans by selecting certain perceived differences as significant and others as insignificant and then investing these differences with social consequences that often have destructive impact for the socially excluded categories of people.<sup>21</sup>

When we analyze, we simplify. We break complicated perceptions into discrete items or traits. We identify the items and call them chair, table, cat, and bed. We sort them into categories that already exist: furniture and animal. It sounds familiar. It also sounds harmless. I do not think it is.<sup>22</sup>

There may be similarity as well as difference: e.g., the chair, table, cat, bed each have four legs. And there may be differences that demand new categories for each item—based on color, size, age, physical location, symbolic significance,

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<sup>18</sup> Barzun, *Race: A Study in Modern Superstition*, 11-17.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-21.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 22. Emphasis is that of the author.

<sup>21</sup> Martha Minow, *Making All the Difference: Inclusion, Exclusion, and American Law* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

and a variety of still more distinguishing traits. Thus, the selected traits may submerge from view other traits that provide different axes for comparison.<sup>23</sup>

Minow sees it as a mistake to “assume that the categories we use for analysis just exist and simply sort our experiences, perceptions, and problems through them.”<sup>24</sup> When we perceive likenesses between things, we are not only classifying but also “investing particular classifications with consequences and positioning ourselves in relation to those meanings.”<sup>25</sup> When we see difference between things, “we are dividing the world; we use our language to exclude, to distinguish—to discriminate. . . . Sometimes, classifications express and implement prejudice, racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, intolerance for difference.”<sup>26</sup>

This is not to deny that there are real differences, as people are different from one another in many ways, but “when we simplify and sort, we focus on some traits rather than others, and we assign consequences to the presence and absence of the traits we make significant,” neglecting other traits where there is similarity and often using the perceived differences as justification for exclusion, forgetting that we, too, are “different.”<sup>27</sup> Presuming our own characterization of difference as real and universally valid “presumes that we all perceive the world the same way and that we are unaffected by our being situated in it.”<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, embedded in our language for describing difference are “unstated points of

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 3, footnote 4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 4.

comparison inside categories that falsely imply a natural fit with the world.”<sup>29</sup> Moreover, “Labels of difference often are assigned by some to describe others in ways they would not describe themselves, and in ways that carry baggage that may be difficult to unload.”<sup>30</sup>

When we classify people into “races,” amidst a vast array of human differences, we select certain differentiating traits as significant in defining group identity while ignoring similarities between racial groups and other traits that would differentiate persons within each racial group. When we divide humanity in these ways, we tend to assign consequences to the distinctions—often consequences that are life-damaging to those excluded as “other.” Racial and/or ethnic categories such as White, Black, Hispanic, Indian, and Asian lump together into each category a wide diversity of peoples who are different from each other in numerous ways, while artificially asserting that the perceived differences *between* these reified and imposed group identities are more significant than the (perhaps ignored) differences that exist *within* each of the respective groups.

And of course, the racial differences and their significance as delineated in modernity have all been defined by white Western Europeans and Americans. For other groups, these were not self-definitions but were imposed identities, though they eventually have been forced or pressured into accepting the same categories as a self-definition, while seeking to transform a negative identity into a positive one. As Charles Mills states,

‘Blackness’ itself, of course (as in ‘black Americans’), is not an African concept but a white or New World one, a category in which people from many different ethnic groups and linguistic communities were originally subsumed against their will, and which they then tried to recreate in a more positive self-image. So

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

there is no blackness without whiteness, and this intimately interrelational dynamic means that one cannot be studied in monadic isolation from the other. . . Black culture has been shaped by, even when reacting in an oppositional way against, white culture. On the other hand, neither is there any whiteness without blackness. Cultural 'purity' is as much a myth as racial purity.<sup>31</sup>

Walter Mignolo makes the same point in reference to "Latin America" and "Latin Americans," that this was not a self-chosen identity but was a European and European-American category imposed as an identity on a very diverse group of people and cultures, and that even the idea of "America" and the division of the world into "continents" with labels that were foreign to the people indigenous to those lands was a European invention.<sup>32</sup>

### **Conquest, Colonialism, and the Construction of the Racialized "Other":**

This raises the question: Why does one segment of humanity have the right to define and classify all of humanity, imposing its categories on others who did not define themselves in terms of those categories? Mignolo describes how it was conquest and colonialism that allowed white Western Christian males to be the "locus of enunciation" for both classifying and ranking humanity in terms of races, with themselves at the top of the hierarchy as the normative human beings, as well as providing the motivation for doing so.<sup>33</sup> "History" became "the history of the discoverers, conquerors, and colonizers," so that other histories and the peoples who lived them, came to be marginalized as not part of history and not fully human.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Charles W. Mills, "Multiculturalism as/and/or Anti-Racism?," in *Multiculturalism and Political Theory*, ed. Anthony Simon Laden and David Owens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 99.

<sup>32</sup> Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16. 34-37.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

Thus, colonization and the justification for the appropriation of land and the exploitation of labor in the process of the invention of America required the simultaneous ideological construction of racism. The emergence of the Indians in the European consciousness, the simultaneous expulsion of the Moors and Jews from the Iberian peninsula in the late fifteenth century, and the redefinition of the African Blacks in slavery prompted a specific classification and ranking of humanity. The presumptuous 'model' of ideal humanity on which it was based was not established by God as a natural order, but according to the perception of Christian, White, and European males.<sup>35</sup>

The hierarchy of human beings (later to be distilled in the idea of a hierarchy of races) was established by those who had the power to do so, as they determined the model for the ideal human being and where other peoples stood in relation to that model.<sup>36</sup>

Thus it happened that the European Renaissance model of humanity became hegemonic and the Indians and African slaves were considered second-class human beings, if human beings at all. . . 'Race,' of course, at this level is not a question of skin color or pure blood but of categorizing individuals according to their level of similarity/ proximity to an assumed model of ideal humanity.<sup>37</sup>

Racialization does not simply say, 'you are Black or Indian, therefore your [sic] are inferior.' Rather, it says, 'you are not like me, therefore you are inferior,' which in the Christian scale of humanity meant Indians in America and Blacks in Africa were inferior.<sup>38</sup>

In its hegemonic epistemology, Western Europe invented and imposed on others the ideas of "the West," "Occidentalism," and "Western civilization" as a geopolitical organization of the globe with itself at the center as "the privileged locus of enunciation."<sup>39</sup> In other words, Western Europe arrogated to itself the role of dividing and defining the world according to its

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 34-37.

own categories, none of which were inherent or self-evident in the world or in history, including defining other peoples, rather than affording them the right to define themselves and offer their perspective on the world.

America as the extreme West is rooted in Christian cosmology in which the destiny of Japheth, the son [of Noah] located in the West, was to expand. . . It is from the West that the rest of the world is described, conceptualized, and ranked: that is, modernity is the self-description of Europe's role in history rather than an ontological historical process. . . History moves from East to West. In that move, the very idea of Western civilization became the point of reference for the rest of the world, and the goal as well.<sup>40</sup>

The ideas of "Western Europe," "the West," and the ideology of Western expansion began with the "discovery" (or as Mignolo says, the "invention") of America.<sup>41</sup> Henceforth, Western Europe became the "locus of observation that placed itself at the center of the world being observed, described, and classified."<sup>42</sup>

This allowed Western Europe to become the center of economic and political organization, a model of social life, an exemplar of human achievement, and, above all, the point of observation and classification of the rest of the world. Thus the idea of the 'West' as 'center' became dominant in European political theory, political economy, philosophy, arts, and literature, in the process by which Europe was conquering the world and classifying the world being conquered.<sup>43</sup>

Mignolo insists that it is not only people who are classified, ranked, and racialized but also forms of knowledge, languages, religions, cultures, countries, and continents, including dividing the world into East-West; North-South; and First, Second, and Third World distinctions.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 35-36.

Tzvetan Todorov, in *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*,<sup>45</sup> sees this hierarchical categorization of people as rooted in a failure to see the other in her or his otherness. Beginning with Columbus' attitude in his encounter with the indigenous other, the European consciousness has been shaped by two alternating or even simultaneous contradictory perceptions: either deny difference and see the other as identical to self, "and this behavior leads to assimilationism, the projection of his own values on the others", or start with difference, "immediately translated into terms of superiority and inferiority."<sup>46</sup>

What is denied is the existence of a human substance truly other, something capable of being not merely an imperfect state of oneself. These two elementary figures of the experience of alterity are both grounded in egocentrism, in the identification of our own values with values in general, of our / with the universe—in the conviction that the world is one.<sup>47</sup>

Columbus alternated between "two apparently contradictory myths, one whereby the Other is a 'noble savage' (when perceived at a distance) and one whereby she or he is a 'dirty dog,' a potential slave", and was able to do so "because both rest on a common basis, which is the failure to recognize the Indians, and the refusal to admit them as a subject having the same rights as oneself, but different."<sup>48</sup> Both Montezuma and the Aztecs, on the one hand, and Columbus, Cortez, and the Spaniards, on the other hand, proved incapable of perceiving the other in the encounter as different but equal. Columbus and the Spaniards instead perceived the Indian other as animal, as less than human. Montezuma and the Aztecs initially perceived

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>45</sup> Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 42-43. Emphasis is that of the author.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 49.

the Spanish/European other as gods, as more than human. The Indians' mistake did not last long, but long enough for the battle to be lost.<sup>49</sup>

Luis N. Rivera Pagán, in his essay, "Identidad y Dignidad de los Pueblos Autóctonos: Un Desafío para los Cristianismos Liberacionistas Latinoamericanos,"<sup>50</sup> provides a detailed history of how the Spanish conquerors of the indigenous peoples of Latin America, from government and military leaders to colonizers and even religious leaders, systematically portrayed the indigenous peoples as subhuman, animal-like, and incapable of reason—or at best inferior in their intellectual and rational capacity and incapable of self-government, in order to justify their own acts of greed and cruelty in taking the people's land and resources and making slaves out of them. There were contrasting voices defending the indigenous peoples, particularly among some of the religious leaders working closely with them, though in many cases these voices problematically idealized and romanticized the indigenous peoples as morally superior rather than inferior or else patronizingly described them as underdeveloped children in need of the protection and tutelage of Spain in order to develop their capacity for reason and the Christian faith. Even when the indigenous peoples began to be freed from the bonds of slavery and to receive some educational opportunities, they were excluded from the priesthood out of a motivation to prevent them from seeking complete autonomy.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 75-77.

<sup>50</sup> Luis N. Rivera-Pagan, "Identidad Y Dignidad De Los Pueblos Autóctonos: Un Desafío Para Los Cristianismos Liberacionistas Latinoamericanos," in *Teologías Latinoamericanas De La Liberación: Pasión, Crítica Y Esperanza*, ed. Jonathan Pimentel (Heredia, Costa Rica: Escuela Ecueménica de Ciencias de la Religión, Universidad Nacional, 2010).

Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*,<sup>51</sup> writing from the standpoint of the Algerian people who had been subjected to the colonial rule of the French, describes how the discourse of colonialism reduces the colonized to a subhuman or even anti-human level, the antithesis of human values and moral goodness.

The colonial world is a Manichaeian world. . . . As if to illustrate the totalitarian nature of colonial exploitation, the colonist turns the colonized into a kind of quintessence of evil. . . . The 'native' is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values. He is, dare we say it, the enemy of values. In other words, absolute evil.<sup>52</sup>

Sometimes this Manichaeism reaches its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the colonized subject. In plain talk, he is reduced to the state of an animal. And consequently, when the colonist speaks of the colonized he uses zoological terms. Allusion is made to the slithery movements of the yellow race, the odors from the 'native' quarters, to the hordes, the stink, the swarming, the seething, and the gesticulations. In his endeavors at description and finding the right word, the colonist refers constantly to the bestiary.<sup>53</sup>

Reginald Horsman similarly describes how it was the desire in the United States to justify the enslavement of Africans, the displacement and extermination of Native Americans in order to take their land, and the expropriation of lands that belonged to Mexico that drove the discourse of Anglo-Saxon superiority and "manifest destiny" and the defining of Blacks, Indians, and Mexicans as racially inferior and fit only to be either enslaved or destroyed, in order to make way for the advance of the bearers of "civilization" and "freedom." Science was enlisted in the support of this racial ideology during the nineteenth century, in order to "prove" that the "white" race was superior, intellectually and morally equipped to lead, and that other races

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<sup>51</sup> Fanon and Philcox, *The Wretched of the Earth / Frantz Fanon; Translated from the French by Richard Philcox; Introductions by Jean-Paul Sartre and Homi K. Bhabha*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

were naturally inferior, so that their subjugation was natural and inevitable. In a cross-pollination of ideas between the United States and Europe, racial ideologies codified and rationalized the longstanding practice of dehumanization of indigenous peoples in Africa, the Americas, and around the globe.<sup>54</sup>

### **Antecedents of the Politics of Race in Europe:**

Jacques Barzun goes behind this history by reaching back into the seventeenth century to the origins of modern race-thinking, at a time when “races” meant not merely the large grouping of people into a few racial categories but also various peoples in Europe who today would all be classified as belonging to the same white race. Here again, he points out the political motives for the discourse of race and the assertion of superiority-inferiority among the “races,” as he describes a complex history of thinkers in the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries defining Europe in terms of a conflict of races, such as the Franks, the Gauls or Celts, the Romans or Latins, and the Nordics or Teutonics, correlating *political* divisions with the identified racial groups.<sup>55</sup>

In France, the struggle of the liberals and republicans against the monarchists was cast in terms of the Franks vs. the Gallo-Romans. In England, the myth of Anglo-Saxon liberty was connected with the English revolution of 1688 as “the triumph of the Saxon over the Roman idea of kinship.”<sup>56</sup> Rome was associated with Popery, and the roots of modern England were seen to lie in its freedom-loving Germanic past. “For one thing, had not French and German

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<sup>54</sup> Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*.

<sup>55</sup> Barzun, 29-50.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

scholars told her that English freedom, English power, the English gift of self-government were all a racial heritage from the Nordic tribes that repeatedly conquered Britain until 1066?"<sup>57</sup> In Italy and Germany, the myth of Nordic superiority became part of "the movement towards national unification, but in both countries it was held in check by the opposite fiction of the superior southern or Latin race."<sup>58</sup> In the midst of the various political struggles for supremacy throughout Europe and the conflicts between different political parties, appeals to the past and to a presumably admirable racial heritage became a way to disguise and "sanctify" "an obviously selfish interest."<sup>59</sup>

The thought is a continual begging of the question by selecting in the past particular traits and tendencies and asserting those to be the root of forces or parties at work in the present. The emotion is one of political expediency: race is a convenient living symbol for ideas and principles, and it is useful propaganda for keeping one's own followers conscious of their worth. The value of historical essays on racial principles is to persuade the 'Nordics' themselves that they have a great past, encourage them to feel superior, and justify their attack on a neighboring group.<sup>60</sup>

Between 1870 and 1914, as race-thinking reached full maturity and rose to a fever pitch, Barzun identifies four general trends among the confused and conflicting litany of racialist voices:

The one involves France and Germany and deals in Aryanism, Celticism, and Germanism. Another comprises all the attempts to connect race with social unrest. Generally it makes of the socialists a race of revolutionaries with Semitic noses and brachycephalic heads. The third divides Europe into two camps—the Anglo-Teutonic in the ascendant, and the Latin in decline. The Slavic group oscillates between the other two. The fourth and last race-grouping sees things

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 37-38.

in black and white. Europeans must stand shoulder to shoulder against the colored hordes of black, red, and yellow men whom they have aroused from their ancestral torpor in the name of civilization, else European culture, or rather Civilization itself, is doomed.<sup>61</sup>

Eventually, however, as Etienne Balibar describes, the colonizing European and Euro-American nations, as they competed with each other to divide the world among themselves, saw a commonality among themselves as conquering powers and “recognized that they formed a community and shared an ‘equality’ through that very competition, a community and an equality to which they gave the name ‘White’.”<sup>62</sup>

The colonial castes of the various nationalities (British, French, Dutch, Portuguese, and so on) *worked together* to forge the idea of ‘White’ superiority, of civilization as an interest that has to be defended against the savages. This representation – ‘the White man’s burden’ – has contributed in a decisive way to moulding the modern notion of a supranational European or Western identity.<sup>63</sup>

### **The Construction of “Whiteness” and Its Polar Opposite of “Non-Whiteness”:**

But how is “whiteness” itself defined and constructed? Ian F. Haney López documents the struggle of the United States court system to define whiteness as it faced the challenge of deciding who was and who was not white among litigants arguing their whiteness and seeking naturalization under a 1790 law that limited naturalization to applicants who qualified as a “free white person.”<sup>64</sup>

The petitioners for naturalization forced the courts into a case-by-case struggle to define who was a ‘white person.’ More importantly, the courts were required

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 185-87.

<sup>62</sup> Balibar and Wallerstein, 62.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 43. Emphasis is that of the author.

<sup>64</sup> Ian F. Haney López, “White by Law,” in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

in these prerequisite cases to articulate rationales for the divisions they were promulgating. It was not enough simply to declare in favor of or against a particular applicant; the courts, as exponents of the applicable law, faced the necessity of explaining the basis on which they drew the boundaries of Whiteness. They had to establish in law whether, for example, a petitioner's race was to be measured by skin color, facial features, national origin, language, culture, ancestry, the speculations of scientists, popular opinion, or some combination of the above, and which of these or other factors would govern in those inevitable cases where the various indices of race contradicted each other. In short, the courts were responsible not only for deciding who was White, but *why* someone was White.<sup>65</sup>

The courts were tasked with defining the boundaries of whiteness, and the outcome of their decisions was full of imprecision, ambiguity, and contradictions.

The courts offered many contradictory rationales for defining who was or was not white, but eventually arrived at two primary determinants for distinguishing white from non-white: common knowledge and scientific evidence. Common knowledge meant deference to popular beliefs about race that appeared to be self-evident to white persons, who were the locus of enunciation for defining race. "Scientific evidence" meant reliance upon the racial taxonomies of such thinkers as Blumbach and Buffon. However, as science and anthropology progressed and began to diverge from popular opinions about race, and as leading anthropologists began to classify as white or Caucasian some whom popular belief did not regard as white, such as Syrians and Asian Indians, the courts shifted to a reliance only on common knowledge.<sup>66</sup> "In 1922 and 1923, the Supreme Court intervened in the prerequisite

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 542-43.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 544-47

cases to resolve this impasse between science and popular knowledge, securing common sense as the appropriate legal meter of race."<sup>67</sup>

As Haney López describes, the dilemma of attempts to establish the boundaries of whiteness scientifically was that "such boundaries are socially fashioned and cannot be measured, or found, in nature."<sup>68</sup> "The early congruence between scientific evidence and common knowledge" lay in the fact that neither actually "measured human variation. Both only reported social beliefs about races."<sup>69</sup>

Whiteness is a social construct, a legal artifact, a function of what people believe, a mutable category tied to particular historical moments. . . 'White' is: an idea; an evolving social group; an unstable identity subject to expansion and contraction; a trope for welcome immigrant groups; a mechanism for excluding those of unfamiliar origin; an artifice of social prejudice. Indeed, Whiteness can be one, all, or any combination of these, depending on the local setting in which it is used. On the other hand, in light of the prerequisite cases, some answers are no longer acceptable. 'White' is not: a biologically defined group; a static taxonomy; a neutral designation of difference; an objective description of immutable traits; a scientifically defensible division of humankind; an accident of nature unmolded by the hands of people. No, it is none of these.<sup>70</sup>

The prerequisite courts constructed "white" as a category through a two-step process. In the first step, they "constructed the bounds of Whiteness by deciding on a case by case basis who was *not* White."<sup>71</sup> Whiteness was thus defined negatively, by exclusion of some persons as non-White.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 545.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 546.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 546-47.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 547. Emphasis is that of the author.

Thus...the courts did not establish the parameters of Whiteness so much as the non-Whiteness of Chinese, South Asians, and so on. This comports with an understanding of races, not as absolute categories, but as comparative taxonomies of relative difference. Races do not exist as abstract categories, but only as amalgamations of people standing in complex relationships with each other. In this relational system, the prerequisite cases show that Whites are those not constructed as non-White. That is, Whites exist as a category of people subject to a double negative: they are those who are not non-White.<sup>72</sup>

Then the second step taken by the courts in the construction of whiteness was to denigrate those it declared non-white, to label those excluded as inferior and, by implication those admitted as superior. This correlates with popular beliefs about race, constructing white and non-white as polar opposites.

Blacks have been constructed as lazy, ignorant, lascivious, and criminal, Whites as industrious, knowledgeable, virtuous, and law abiding. For each negative characteristic ascribed to people of color, an equal but opposite and positive characteristic is imputed to Whites. To this list, the prerequisite cases add Whites as citizens and others as aliens. These cases show that Whites fashion an identity for themselves that is the positive mirror image of the negative identity imposed on people of color.<sup>73</sup>

### **The Embeddedness and Functioning of Race:**

So the history of the courts' attempt to determine who was white for inclusion as citizens and who was non-white for exclusion as aliens demonstrates how "whiteness," as well as "non-whiteness," are socially constructed categories that are not inherent in nature and cannot be delineated in a precise and non-contradictory manner, as the boundaries between "white" and "non-white" cannot be consistently drawn. The same is true of "race" in general.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 548.

Its boundaries cannot be delineated in a precise, consistent, non-contradictory manner. Race is not a category inherent in nature. It is a social category.

Yet, as a social category race cannot simply be abandoned as irrelevant because it is deeply embedded in our society in both conscious and unconscious ways, and as such it has real consequences. However artificial it may be in its construction, it nonetheless *functions* in ways that determine a person's place in society and access to the benefits of society, while advantaging certain persons and disadvantaging others. As Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic elaborate, racism is one of the preconceptions that shape "the way we see and organize the world," part of the dominant social narrative that undergirds all of our reasoning.<sup>74</sup>

The narrative teaches that race matters, that people are different, with the differences lying in a predictable direction. It holds that certain cultures, unfortunately, have less ambition than others, that the majority group is largely innocent of racial wrongdoing, that the current distribution of comfort and well-being is roughly what merit and fairness dictate.<sup>75</sup>

In an important sense we *are* our current stock of narratives, and they us. We subscribe to a stock of explanatory scripts, plots, narratives, and understandings that enable us to make sense of—to construct—our social world. Because we then live in that world, it begins to shape and determine *us*, who we are, what we see, how we select, reject, interpret, and order subsequent reality.<sup>76</sup>

Delgado and Stefancic assert that racism cannot be reduced to a mistake nor to the irrational individual acts of ill-willed people. Rather, "It is ritual assertion of supremacy, like animals

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<sup>74</sup> Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, "Images of the Outsider in American Law and Culture: Can Free Expression Remedy Systemic Social Ills?," in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 220.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 221. Emphasis is that of the authors in all cases.

sneering and posturing to maintain their places in the hierarchy of the colony. It is performed largely unconsciously, just as the animals' behavior is."<sup>77</sup>

Jennifer Harvey describes how, "Race is not reducible to any of the infinite varieties of human features I take in when I observe my own or another person's physical being."<sup>78</sup> Yet, we believe we can recognize it and unconsciously "assume that race simply *is*: that race exists on its own, as an autonomous, self-evident category."<sup>79</sup> Race as a natural category is understood to be "common sense," previously articulated in terms of biological categories, but in more recent history, "notions of innate differences were increasingly transposed onto culture. . ."<sup>80</sup> She insists, though, that one cannot infer from the fact that race is not a natural category that it is not real. Though there is no *natural* significance to the physical characteristics we associate with race, these characteristics are invested with *social* significance. "In the dynamic convergence of various systems, corporate and individual activities, beliefs and behaviors—all undergirded with power—white, as a racial category, comes to be."<sup>81</sup> And the corollary to this proposition is that non-white likewise comes to be, within the same social network and power structures.

Similarly, Charles Mills asserts that "it is a mistake to infer the socio-political non-existence of race from the biological non-existence of race."<sup>82</sup> Rather than a natural category,

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>78</sup> Jennifer Harvey, *Whiteness and Morality: Pursuing Racial Justice through Reparations and Sovereignty*, 1st ed., Black Religion/Womanist Thought/Social Justice (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 19.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. Emphasis is that of the author.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 20.

race is a social category “‘constructed’ by law, custom, and inter-subjective identification, and objectively signifying a particular location in a system of domination.”<sup>83</sup> Still, attempts to abandon race as a social category, even for correcting the injustices that category has enabled in the past and present, result in a conservative “color-blindness” that “denies the reality and causal importance of race even while simultaneously refusing to give up (indeed refusing to see) the advantages of white privilege that race has brought about.”<sup>84</sup> The legal system has never been neutral, from its legitimation of colonialism and slavery, “to laws restricting citizenship and immigration (‘White American/Canadian/Australian’ policies),” to legislation “limiting the concept of discrimination to conscious discrete acts by specific perpetrators.”<sup>85</sup>

The last point represents the failure of our legal system to recognize systemic forms of racial discrimination and the reduction of that discrimination to a difficult to prove discriminatory *intent* by individual violators, dismissing discriminatory *outcomes* where that intent cannot be proven and thereby seeking to define racial discrimination in subjective rather than objective terms, which makes it more debatable and virtually impossible to prove. Meanwhile, in many ways, “black disadvantage in the United States has translated into cumulative, multiplying, self-perpetuating white advantage,” from slavery itself to:

. . . postbellum debt servitude, land theft, employment and promotion discrimination, racialized industry location, destruction of competing black businesses and the blocking of others’ entry to the white market, differential educational funding, the color-coding of transfer payments by the state, selective urban renewal, and the federal role in sanctioning restrictive covenants

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<sup>82</sup> Mills, 104.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 106-07.

for white homeowners, thereby guaranteeing that for decades blacks would be locked out of what has traditionally been the main way for the working and middle class to accumulate wealth, home ownership.<sup>86</sup>

Martha Minow states that “Anglo-American law has historically used categories to assign people to different statuses” and “has treated as marginal, inferior, and different any person who does not fit the normal model of the autonomous competent individual.”<sup>87</sup>

I suggest that the dilemma of difference is not an accidental problem in this society. The dilemma of difference grows from the ways in which this society assigns individuals to categories and, on that basis, determines whom to include in and whom to exclude from political, social, and economic activities. Because the activities are designed, in turn, with only the included participants in mind, the excluded seem not to fit because of something in their own nature.<sup>88</sup>

The dilemma of difference is embedded in legal reasoning that is based on the prevailing categories which oversimplify the complexity of human differences, while treating “those categories as natural and inevitable.”<sup>89</sup> This categorization obscures the reality of “relationships among people . . . marked by power and hierarchy,” relationships that form the context in which our lives are shaped and ordered.<sup>90</sup> “Yet, by sorting people and problems into categories, we each cede power to social definitions that we individually no longer control.”<sup>91</sup>

At the same time, the norm which determines who is “different” is often unstated and yet assumed, while it is established in law and in socialization by those who have the power to name and categorize others. “The unstated reference point promotes the interests of some but

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>87</sup> Minow, 10.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

not others; it can remain unstated because those who do not fit have less power to select the norm than those who fit comfortably within the one that prevails.”<sup>92</sup>

Difference, after all, is a comparative term. It implies a reference: different from whom? I am no more different from you than you are from me. . . . But the point of comparison is often unstated. Women are compared with the unstated norm of men, ‘minority’ races with whites, handicapped persons with the able-bodied, and ‘minority’ religions and ethnicities with majorities. If we identify the unstated points of comparison necessary to the idea of difference, we will then examine the relationships between people who have and people who lack the power to assign the label of difference.<sup>93</sup>

As Audrey Lorde describes, at least in America there is a “mythical norm” for humanity, serving as the dividing line between normative human being and human deviation from what is “normal”:

In America, this norm is usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure. It is with this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within the society.<sup>94</sup>

It is propertied white males who set up the American socio-politico-economic and legal system and have the power to define the unstated norm and therefore to determine who is “different”—the “other” to be afforded a different—and decidedly lower—status within the system. Challenges to the system that seek to correct its injustices—e.g., affirmative action—are dismissed by the owners of the system as seeking special treatment that undermines government neutrality in matters of race and equality before the law, and as Huntington asserts, puts group rights ahead of individual rights. Yet, as I stated in response to Huntington in Chapter 2, the latter is a false construal of the situation, since “group rights” are really

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>94</sup> Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, The Crossing Press Feminist Series (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), 116.

individual rights that have been systematically denied to individuals based upon their imposed (not self-chosen) group identity.

Minow addresses the issues of “government neutrality” and “equality,” as “government neutrality may also freeze in place the past consequences of differences”<sup>95</sup>, and “equality” is attached to and entangled with the unstated norm.<sup>96</sup>

A reference point for comparison purposes is central to a notion of equality. Equality asks, equal compared with whom? A notion of equality that demands disregarding a ‘difference’ calls for assimilation to an unstated norm. To strip away difference, then, is often to remove or ignore a feature distinguishing an individual from a presumed norm—such as that of a white, able-bodied, Christian man—but leaving that norm in place as the measure for equal treatment.<sup>97</sup>

Arguments for neutrality assume “that the existing social and economic arrangements are natural and neutral” and that the status quo is one freely chosen by all individuals based on their own preferences,<sup>98</sup> when in fact:

Difference is a clue to the social arrangements that make some people less accepted and less integrated while expressing the needs and interests of others who constitute the presumed model. And social arrangements can be changed. Arrangements that assign the burden of ‘differences’ to some people while making others comfortable are historical artifacts. Maintaining these historical patterns embedded in the status quo is not neutral and cannot be justified by the claim that everyone has freely chosen to do so.<sup>99</sup>

Debates over affirmative action powerfully depict this dilemma, but the dilemma appears only when the background assumption is that the status quo is neutral

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<sup>95</sup> Minow, 21, 75.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 16, 51.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 53.

and natural rather than part of the discriminating framework that must itself be changed.<sup>100</sup>

### **Racial Formation and Racial Projects:**

Michael Omi and Howard Winant, in *Racial Formation in the United States*, argue that there are two opposite temptations which need to be challenged in dealing with race. One is to think of it “as an *essence*, as something fixed, concrete, and objective.” The other is to think of it “as a mere *illusion*, a purely ideological construct which some ideal non-racist social order would eliminate.”<sup>101</sup>

The effort must be made to understand race as an unstable and ‘decentered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle. With this in mind, let us propose a definition: *race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies*. . . In contrast to the other major distinction of this type, that of gender, there is no biological basis for distinguishing among human groups along the lines of race. Indeed the categories employed to differentiate among human groups along racial lines reveal themselves, upon serious examination, to be at best imprecise, and at worst completely arbitrary.<sup>102</sup>

Race cannot be dismissed as a mere illusion, with the pretense that ours is or can be a “color blind” society, since “despite its uncertainties and contradictions, the concept of race continues to play a fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world.”<sup>103</sup>

Omi and Winant instead take a theoretical approach they call “racial formation,” defined as “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited,

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>101</sup> Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 54.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 55. Emphasis is the authors’.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

transformed, and destroyed.”<sup>104</sup> Racial formation takes place through the interplay of a constantly evolving collection of “historically situated [racial] *projects* in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized” and is linked “to the evolution of hegemony, the way in which society is organized and ruled.”<sup>105</sup> “A racial project is *simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines.*”<sup>106</sup>

Racial projects seek to define lines of racial difference and to distribute (financial, material, social and political, etc.) resources in accordance with those definitions. Examples of racial projects include the “neoconservative racial project” associated with Charles Murray, which calls for people to stop considering race at all or awarding differential treatment (i.e., to be “color-blind”), an approach that ignores systemic racial injustice in need of rectification, and the “liberal racial project” associated with Thurgood Marshall, which focuses on racial dimensions of the social structure and the need to remedy the effects of prior racism.<sup>107</sup> There are also “radical projects,” including “far right” projects that argue for white supremacy and “new right” projects that claim to be “color-blind” but manipulate racial fears for political gains.<sup>108</sup> “On the left, ‘radical democratic’ projects invoke notions of racial ‘difference’ in combination with egalitarian politics and policy.”<sup>109</sup> Then there are “‘nationalist’ projects, both

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 56. Emphasis is the authors’.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

conservative and radical”, which identify the solution to racial conflict to be a "separation [of the races], either complete or partial.”<sup>110</sup>

To summarize the argument so far: the theory of racial formation suggests that society is suffused with racial projects, large and small, to which all are subjected. This racial ‘subjection’ is quintessentially ideological. Everybody learns some combination, some version, of the rules of racial classification, and of her own racial identity, often without obvious teaching or conscious inculcation. Thus are we inserted in a comprehensively racialized social structure. Race becomes ‘common sense’—a way of comprehending, explaining, and acting in the world. A vast web of racial projects mediates between the discursive or representational means in which race is identified and signified on the one hand, and the institutional and organizational forms in which it is routinized and standardized on the other. These projects are the heart of the racial formation process. . . . Racial formation, therefore, is a kind of synthesis, an outcome, of the interaction of racial projects on a society-wide level.<sup>111</sup>

Racial formation is “always historically situated,” so that our concepts of race change over time, and today’s racial projects are the “outcomes of a complex historical evolution.”<sup>112</sup>

The categorization of human groups in terms of physical appearance goes back to ancient times, as can be seen in the Bible and the writings of the ancient Greeks. “But the emergence of a modern conception of race does not occur until the rise of Europe and the arrival of Europeans in the Americas.”<sup>113</sup> Even Medieval hostility between Christians and non-Christian “Others,” mainly Jews and Muslims, as brutal and bloody as it was, was based on religion rather than race.<sup>114</sup> But with the “discovery” of the “new” world, “the Europeans also ‘discovered’

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 58-59.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

people, people who looked and acted differently.”<sup>115</sup> “For the ‘discovery’ raised disturbing questions as to whether *all* could be considered part of the same ‘family of man,’ and more practically, the extent to which native peoples could be exploited and enslaved.”<sup>116</sup> The seizure of territories and goods, slavery of natives and other forms of coerced labor, African slave trade, and extermination of native peoples “all presupposed a worldview which distinguished Europeans, as children of God, full-fledge human beings, etc., from ‘Others.’”<sup>117</sup>

Given the dimensions and the ineluctability of the European onslaught, given the conquerors’ determination to appropriate both labor and goods, and given the presence of an axiomatic and unquestioned Christianity among them, the ferocious division of society into Europeans and ‘Others’ soon coalesced.<sup>118</sup>

Prior to the “discovery,” Europe’s characterization of its “Others” was “in a relatively disorganized fashion.”<sup>119</sup> But the “conquest of America” brought about a more systematic racial awareness, as it was “the advent of a consolidated social structure of exploitation, appropriation, domination. Its representation, first in religious terms, but soon enough in scientific and political ones, initiated modern racial awareness.”<sup>120</sup> Thus, Omi and Winant consider the conquest of America “the first—and given the dramatic nature of the case, perhaps the greatest—racial formation project.”<sup>121</sup> It constituted Europe as the center of several empires that would divide the world among themselves and “represented this new

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-62.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

imperial structure as a struggle between civilization and barbarism, and implicated in this representation all the great European philosophies, literary traditions, and social theories of the modern age.”<sup>122</sup>

Within the thinking of the Enlightenment in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, there was a need to justify racial hierarchies established through conquest within the historical context of asserting the “natural rights” of “man” and opposing the arbitrary authority of monarchs, in order to deal with the inherent contradictions in the ideals of liberty, equality, and democracy which were not extended to all. This resulted in the “invocation of scientific criteria to demonstrate the ‘natural’ basis of racial hierarchy. . .”<sup>123</sup>

Spurred on by the classificatory scheme of living organisms devised by Linnaeus in *Systema Naturae* (1735), many scholars in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries dedicated themselves to the identification and ranking of variations in humankind. Race was conceived as a *biological* concept, a matter of species.<sup>124</sup>

Ideas about superior and inferior races and a “natural” basis for making the distinctions—particularly for the superiority of Europeans and the “white” race and the inferiority of “the negro race,” can be found in the writings of the great philosophers of Europe such as Locke, Hume, Kant, and Hegel, along with Voltaire and Thomas Jefferson—including some arguments for different human species.<sup>125</sup> “Such claims of species distinctiveness among humans justified

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 63-64.

the inequitable allocation of political and social rights, while still upholding the doctrine of ‘the rights of man.’”<sup>126</sup>

After more than a century, scholars have finally rejected race as a biological concept and come to a general agreement that race is “a socially constructed way of differentiating human beings.”<sup>127</sup> Omi and Winant argue, however, “that race is now a preeminently political phenomenon.”<sup>128</sup> The authors draw a distinction, adapted from Antonio Gramsci, between domination, which is virtually all coercion, and hegemony, which is a combination of coercion and consent. The conquest of the Americas, including the “mass murders and expulsions of indigenous people” and “the enslavement of Africans,” was a matter of domination, almost entirely coercive, with little or no consent among the dominated involved. “Over time, however, the balance of coercion and consent began to change”, as there was a shift from domination to hegemony, with a number of competing projects of social construction of race, class, and gender as overlapping “regions of hegemony.”<sup>129</sup> In other words, racial formation becomes a way to procure the consent of the dominated for the patterns of domination. (The same can be said of gender formation, remembering the distinction between biological sex and socially constructed gender, with gender assigning roles and expectations that are tied to but not derived from biological sex, roles and expectations that serve the interests of patriarchy.)

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 67-68.

Racism is not mere prejudice and individual discrimination but has deeper roots in patterns of socialization and structural inequality, and racial awareness cannot be automatically understood as racism.<sup>130</sup>

Whites tend to locate racism in color consciousness and find its absence in color-blindness. In doing so, they see the affirmation of difference and racial identity among defined minority students as racist. Non-white students, by contrast, see racism as a system of power, and correspondingly argue that blacks, for example, cannot be racist because they lack power.<sup>131</sup>

Racial formation theory allows us to differentiate between race and racism. The two concepts should not be used interchangeably. We have argued that race has no fixed meaning, but is constructed and transformed sociohistorically through competing political projects. . . . A racial project can be defined as *racist* if and only if it *creates or reproduces structures of domination based on essentialist categories of race*. . . . Further, it is important to distinguish racial awareness from racial essentialism.<sup>132</sup>

To notice race and to restructure based on racial categories in order to equalize or level the field is not racist. To *reverse* the pattern of domination and subordination would be racist.<sup>133</sup>

The authors conclude that since “race is present in every institution, every relationship, every individual,” both in the organization of society and in the socialization of personality,<sup>134</sup> “we are compelled to think racially, to use the racial categories and meaning systems into which we have been socialized. Despite exhortations both sincere and hypocritical, it is not possible or even desirable to be ‘color-blind.’”<sup>135</sup> To oppose racism “requires that we notice

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 69-71.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 71. Emphasis is the authors’.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 72-73.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 159.

race, not ignore it, that we afford it the recognition it deserves and the subtlety it embodies.”<sup>136</sup>

By noticing race, we can challenge racism, challenge the inequality and injustice built into our governmental and social institutions, and “develop the political insight and mobilization necessary to make the U.S. a more racially just and egalitarian society.”<sup>137</sup>

### **Functions of Race in a Capitalist Politico-Economic System:**

Immanuel Wallerstein offers further insights into some of the ways race functions in support of the global capitalist economic system, as the system needs both of the seemingly contradictory forces of racism and universalism (which denounces racism and sexism in the name of the oneness of humanity) in order to function effectively. Xenophobia historically has sought to eject the “other” from the physical community or in-group as an outsider, in order to preserve the “purity” of the group. But then the labor power of the ejected person is lost, which is a particularly serious loss “in the case of a system whose whole structure and logic are built around the endless accumulation of capital.”<sup>138</sup>

A capitalist system that is expanding (which is half the time) needs all the labour-power it can find, since this labour is producing the goods through which more capital is produced, realized and accumulated. Ejection out of the system is pointless. But if one wants to maximize the accumulation of capital, it is necessary simultaneously to minimize the costs of production (hence the costs of labour-power) and minimize the costs of political disruption (hence minimize—not eliminate, because one cannot eliminate—the protests of the labour force). Racism is the magic formula that reconciles these objectives.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Balibar and Wallerstein, 32-33.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 33.

In other words, racism balances the need for an extensive labor force with the need to hold down wages, as it subverts the law of supply and demand in relation to wages by providing a rationale for paying lower wages than the demand for labor would otherwise dictate.

“Racism operationally has taken the form of what might be called the ‘ethnicization’ of the work force. . .”<sup>140</sup> “Ethnicization, or peoplehood, resolves one of the basic contradictions of historical capitalism—its simultaneous thrust for theoretical equality and practical inequality—and it does so by utilizing the mentalities of the world’s working strata.”<sup>141</sup> Inequality, that is, is justified based on the prevailing assumption that lower status, less appealing work, and lower wages are the natural lot of non-white races and certain ethnic groups. But the pattern of ethnicization must be flexible enough in its exact boundaries to meet the changing needs of the economy in a given time and place. Hence racial and ethnic essentialism must be combined with flexibility in defining racial and ethnic lines and boundaries.<sup>142</sup> This flexibility “takes the form of the creation and constant re-creation of racial and/or ethno-national-religious groups or communities. They are always there and always ranked hierarchically, but they are not always exactly the same.”<sup>143</sup>

This kind of system—racism constant in form and in venom, but somewhat flexible in boundary lines—does three things extremely well. It allows one to expand or contract the numbers available in any particular space-time zone for the lowest paid, least rewarding economic roles, according to current needs. It gives rise to and constantly re-creates social communities that actually socialize children into playing the appropriate roles (although, of course, they also

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 34.

socialize them into forms of resistance). And it provides a non-meritocratic basis to justify inequality.<sup>144</sup>

Sexism and ageism play complementary roles, as non-wage work in the household by women as “housewives” and by the young and the aged creates surplus value that keeps wage laborers within the household in the work force. Sexism and age discrimination justify this arrangement by redefining the household division of labor and declaring the household labor “non-work.”<sup>145</sup> This is to be contrasted with agrarian economies in which economic activity is/was centered in the household, as in that economic system there is a division of labor within the household that is not distinguished as wage work vs. “non-work,” since all who labor are contributing to the maintenance of the household/ economic system.

The capitalist system must balance the inherent tensions of the contradictions within it, neither allowing racism nor universalism to “go too far,” keeping racism in check in order not to lose its ethnicized labor force and keeping universalism in check in order to prevent workers from seeking “to implement a truly egalitarian allocation of work roles and work rewards in which race (or its equivalent) and gender genuinely play no part.”<sup>146</sup> Universalism is easier to manage due to “internalized patterns of ethnicization,” so that: “In the name of universalism itself, one merely has to denounce the so-called reverse racism [or reverse discrimination, covering corrective measures to counter both racial and sexual discrimination] wherever steps are taken to dismantle the institutionalized apparatus of racism and sexism.”<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

What we see therefore is a system that operates by a tense link between the right dosage of universalism and racism-sexism. There are always efforts to push one side or the other of this equation 'too far'. The result is a sort of zigzag pattern. This could go on forever, except for one problem. Over time, the zigs and zags are getting bigger, not smaller. The thrust toward universalism is getting stronger. So is the thrust towards racism and sexism. The stakes go up.<sup>148</sup>

Derrick Bell elaborates another political and economic function of race in the U.S. politico-economic system, as race is used to procure the support of poor, propertyless, and politically marginalized whites for the agenda of the powerful by convincing the former that they have a property right in their "whiteness."<sup>149</sup>

There are two other inter-connected political phenomena that emanate from the widely shared belief that whites are superior to blacks that have served critically important stabilizing functions in the society. First, whites of widely varying socio-economic status employ white supremacy as a catalyst to negotiate policy differences, often through compromises that sacrifice the rights of blacks.

Second, even those whites who lack wealth and power are sustained in their sense of racial superiority, and thus rendered more willing to accept their lesser share, by an unspoken but no less certain property right in their 'whiteness.' This right is recognized and upheld by courts and the society like all property rights under a government created and sustained primarily for that purpose.<sup>150</sup>

All the way back to the founding of the United States as a nation, in the negotiations over the Constitution, amidst disagreements between North and South over slavery, a compromise allowing the institution of slavery not only afforded the nation great wealth that made independence possible but also provided a basis for poor and non-propertied whites to identify with wealthy and propertied whites and support their policies, by making them willing

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 35-36.

<sup>149</sup> Derrick Bell, "Property Rights in Whiteness—Their Legal Legacy, Their Economic Costs," 75-83. In Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefancic, eds. *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 75-76.

to accept a lesser share in the wealth and power due to a sense of racial superiority that afforded them greater rights, freedom, and dignity in comparison with blacks.<sup>151</sup>

According to historians, including Edmund Morgan and David Brion Davis, working-class whites did not oppose slavery when it took root in the mid-1660s. They identified on the basis of race with wealthy planters even though they were and would remain economically subordinate to those able to afford slaves. But the creation of a black subclass enabled poor whites to identify with and support the policies of the upper class. And large landowners, with the safe economic advantage provided by their slaves, were willing to grant poor whites a larger role in the political process. Thus, paradoxically, slavery for blacks led to greater freedom for poor whites, at least when compared with the denial of freedom to African slaves. Slavery also provided mainly propertyless whites with a property in their whiteness.<sup>152</sup>

Indeed, I would argue that race functions much the same way in politics today, securing the support of working-class whites for policies detrimental to their own economic interests and beneficial to the interests of the wealthy and of large corporations, by injecting race into partisan political divisions in subtle—and sometimes not so subtle—ways, particularly with images of whites paying more in taxes in order to support (supposedly) non-whites on welfare rolls, outcries of “reverse discrimination” in reference to affirmative action policies, fear-inducing images of non-whites as frightening criminals, and other racially charged political images. This creates an attitude that “whites” must unite politically in order to prevent “non-whites” from taking their goods and taking over their society. In a sense, Peter Brimelow, in his book, *Alien Nation*, had it right, and was at least more honest than many, in seeing the real threat of immigration as a shifting of racial dynamics and political power such that, with a

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-78.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 78-79.

growing percentage of non-white “minorities” across the United States, the power of the white majority is at risk.<sup>153</sup>

**Conclusion:**

Race is an imprecise, artificial way of dividing humanity. It creates artificial divisions within humanity, as if there were distinct subspecies, while simultaneously creating an artificial unity among diverse peoples and cultures lumped together into one race as a subset of humanity. Race is an inept way of dealing with human difference, as it oversimplifies the complexity of human differences. It is not a biological reality but is a social and political construction that serves certain interests.

Racial classification serves the interests of those who do the classifying. The racial classifying—at least in its modern formulations—has all been done by white Westerners (Europeans and Americans) for their own advantage. It does not allow people to define themselves but imposes an artificially constructed collective identity on them. It has been used to justify conquest, colonialism, the appropriation of other peoples’ lands and resources, slavery, and ongoing social, political, and economic inequities. Racial construction makes patterns of domination or hegemony seem natural and inevitable, which they are not.

Race creates political alliances among “whites” that might not otherwise happen, as powerless and dispossessed whites are brought into political alignment with the interests of the wealthy whites who hold political, economic, and social power, identifying with them based on commonality of race rather than with similarly powerless and dispossessed non-whites. In reality, though, “white” itself is as artificial and imprecise a social construction as are the “non-

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<sup>153</sup> Brimelow, *Alien Nation: Common Sense About America's Immigration Disaster*, 193-201.

white” races. Yet, “white” has become the unstated norm for defining who is “normal” and who is “different,” who belongs and fits and who does not. Social and legal systems are set up to advantage those who conform to the norm and disadvantage those who are “different.”

Race pervades our society, our conscious and unconscious socialization, and certainly also the discourse on immigration. We cannot dismiss race as irrelevant, ignore it, or pretend to be a “color blind” society but must notice race, not in order to perpetuate domination, inequality, and injustice but to overcome them. To talk about race is always politically motivated, either to establish or reinforce patterns of domination or to seek to dismantle them. Pretending to be “color blind,” not to notice race, is a way to reinforce or keep in place existing patterns of domination.

Race cannot simply be brushed aside as a vestige of the past, with no bearing upon the present, for although it does indeed have deep roots in the past—in history, it is still a powerful force shaping present realities. It is deeply embedded in our self-awareness and other-awareness and continues to ground our social structures and institutions in powerful and oppressive ways. Race is continually being constructed and cannot be ignored or unmade, though it must be continually deconstructed as a false and oppressive way of conceiving human difference, so as to bring to the surface of our conscious awareness all the ways in which it does its damage. Otherwise, its destructive force will be intensified through remaining unconscious.

Racial categorization creates a narrative of the superiority of some peoples over others; a narrative of the dehumanization of “non-white” peoples; a narrative of conquest, colonialism, exploitation, and slavery; all with race as justification. It also creates a narrative of inequality in being (ontological inequality) which provides justification for inequality in the allocation of

(political power and) economic resources. There are those who insist that these two types of inequality must be kept separate and distinct. Yet, all attempts to rationalize a meritorious ground for economic inequality, first of all ignore the past and present systems of domination that have generated this inequality, and secondly resolve into some argument that those at the bottom, who are disproportionately non-white, are somehow deficient and therefore unfit to be elsewhere—to wit, ontologically unequal.

Race and culture are intertwined in the discourse on human differences. To talk about cultural differences can be a subtle and socially acceptable way to recycle prior eras' discourse over racial differences. The notion that we must resist the incursion of the other in order to preserve cultural purity is not essentially distinct from efforts to preserve racial purity. Actually, it is even more restrictive, in that the latter requires only prevention of intermarriage, while the former requires prevention of the very presence of the other. To a substantial degree, efforts to keep out Latino immigrants, especially based on the idea that they are a threat to American national identity and/or to Western civilization, are driven by and reinforcing of racial narratives of superiority and inferiority, of civilization vs. barbarians who would destroy it, and of white supremacy, whether these are directly and overtly vocalized or buried beneath concerns over cultural purity.

The United States of America is not and never has been a “white society,” though it has been and continues to be a society characterized by white hegemony, as the power structures have been and still are dominated by those who consider themselves white. Even if there could be a universally agreed-upon and consistent definition of what it means to be “white,” certainly from the beginning of this nation there has been a strong presence of persons unequivocally

regarded as non-white, Native Americans and African slaves (and with the westward expansion adding Mexicans). These peoples were present all along but were prevented from being a part of “the people,” from the power to shape the nation’s destiny and to define its identity. They were here. Yet their presence, at least as part of the people, was unacknowledged.

Through racial ideologies and constructions of people, difference can become a barrier to unity and equality, a source of fear, oppression, and injustice, but it does not have to be. It can instead be a source of beauty and enrichment, of the rich variety of the wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10). To quote Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, “‘Difference’ is a reality. Difference can become a source of fear, bias and ignorance that results in injustice, but it can also be a platform for celebrating variety and plenty.”<sup>154</sup>

In the final section of this dissertation, I will offer several alternative narratives from the Christian faith about dealing with difference and encountering the “other” —not as a threat but as a gift from God and a part of how humanity bears the image of God. But first, I will examine some Christian voices calling for a more restrictive immigration policy, for the most part seeing the presence of *undocumented* immigrants as a threat to American identity as a sovereign nation with borders, guided by the rule of law.

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<sup>154</sup> Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, "The Challenge of Feminist Theologies," in *In Search of a Round Table: Gender, Theology & Church Leadership*, ed. Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro (Geneva: Published for the Lutheran World Federation by WCC Publications, 1997), 177.

## CHAPTER 5: CHRISTIAN VOICES CALLING FOR A MORE RESTRICTIVE IMMIGRATION POLICY

*The liberal Christians who advocate the open-borders policy on immigration make in my judgment three cardinal mistakes from a biblical point of view. They simultaneously (1) fail to acknowledge the special obligation we all have toward those closest to us and to the specific communities wherein we reside; (2) pay insufficient attention to the biblical obligation that civil authorities have to protect the people and the communities entrusted to their care; and (3) ignore the very real pragmatic harms that the policies they advocate would have on the health and well-being of American society.<sup>1</sup>*

*--James R. Edwards, Jr.*

I have critically examined some of the influential voices calling for a more restrictive immigration policy and positing a narrative of immigrants--particularly Latino immigrants--as a threat to the unity, collective identity, and continuity of the United States as a nation--and indeed, along with Muslims in Europe, a threat to the future of Western civilization. Before exploring some theological counter-narratives offered by the Christian faith to this narrative of immigrants as a threat, I will examine a few explicitly Christian interlocutors arguing for immigration restrictions and perceiving immigrants as a threat in certain ways, particularly seeing the presence of undocumented immigrants, along with any offer of legal residency status to them, as a threat to our identity as a nation with borders guided by the rule of law.

It is a challenge to find Christian leaders who offer a theological argument for a more restrictive immigration policy. Most of the church leaders and official statements of the major Christian denominations have produced biblical and theological arguments for an *increase* in *legal* immigration and a conditional legalization of undocumented immigrants, though some polling data suggests that a majority of church members disagree with their leaders on these

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<sup>1</sup> James R. Edwards, Jr., "A Biblical Perspective on Immigration Policy," in *Debating Immigration*, ed. Carol M. Swain (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 55.

immigration stances.<sup>2</sup> A 2003 “Pastoral Letter Concerning Immigration” issued jointly by the U.S. Catholic Bishops and their counterparts in Mexico<sup>3</sup> argues for a “generous, legal flow of migrants” between the United States and Mexico,<sup>4</sup> an immigration policy that supports immigrants' reunification with their families and reduces the long wait times for immigration processing,<sup>5</sup> and a “broad legalization program for the undocumented.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, statements by the bishops of The United Methodist Church, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church USA website, and the United Church of Christ website, call for an increase in the number of visas for immigrants to come legally to the United States and a pathway to legalization for the undocumented.<sup>7</sup> Even a large number of leaders from the more conservative “evangelical” churches have joined together to form the “Evangelical Immigration Table” (EIT), lobbying Congress and buying radio ads advocating in favor of the “comprehensive immigration reform” bill passed by the Senate in 2013 (but never taken up by the House), which included the creation of “tens of thousands of new visas for foreign workers in low-skilled jobs”

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<sup>2</sup> Steve Camarota, “Religious Leaders vs. Members: An Examination of Contrasting Views on Immigration,” in *Backgrounder* (Washington, DC: Center for Immigration Studies, 2009). Alan F. H. Wisdom, “Immigration Reform: Another Christian View,” *Christianity Today* (2010), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/julyweb-only/immigration-reform-another-christian-view.html>.

<sup>3</sup> “Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope,” (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003). See also the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ statement in 2000, “Welcoming the Stranger among Us: Unity in Diversity,” (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> “Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope,” 57.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-66.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>7</sup> Camarota, 3-5.

and a path to legalization and eventual citizenship for the undocumented.<sup>8</sup> The EIT also issued an “Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform” that includes calling “for a bipartisan solution on immigration” that “[e]stablishes a path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and who wish to become permanent residents.”<sup>9</sup>

There certainly are occasional statements against allowing further Latino immigration, such as that of Pat Robertson, asserting that passing comprehensive immigration reform would put the U.S. government "firmly in the hands of left-wing progressives" by creating more Democratic voters and would radically change this country such that "our politics will be dictated by Mexico,"<sup>10</sup> or the American Family Association's Sandy Rios, who referred to a Mexican-American parade carrying a statue of a saint as an "invasion" and an attempt to transform American culture into another culture that purportedly "has produced poverty and dependence," while she simultaneously asserted that Irish-American St. Patrick's Day parades are acceptable as a way of "celebrating their ethnicity."<sup>11</sup> Yet, in reality these statements are more political and cultural than theological, and they are not carefully thought-out arguments.

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<sup>8</sup> Melissa Steffan, "Evangelicals Lobby Congress for Immigration Reform," *Christianity Today* (2013), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2013/april/evangelicals-lobby-congress-for-immigration-reform.html>; Melissa Steffan, "Radio Ads Continue 'Largest Ever' Immigration Reform Effort by Evangelicals," *Christianity Today* (2013), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2013/january/new-video-launches-largest-ever-immigration-reform-effort.htm>. See also Julia Preston, "For Evangelicals, a Shift in Views on Immigration," *The New York Times* (2013), [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/14/us/evangelical-christians-increasingly-favor-pathway-to-legal-status-for-immigrants.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=2&](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/14/us/evangelical-christians-increasingly-favor-pathway-to-legal-status-for-immigrants.html?pagewanted=all&_r=2&).

<sup>9</sup> "Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform," Evangelical Immigration Table, <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/>.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Tashman, "Pat Robertson: 'Our Politics Will Be Dictated by Mexico' If Immigration Reform Passes," People for the American Way, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/pat-robertson-our-politics-will-be-dictated-mexico-if-immigration-reform-passes>.

<sup>11</sup> Brian Tashman, "Sandy Rios: Irish Parades on St. Patrick's Day Ok, Mexican Parades an 'Invasion'," People for the American Way, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/sandy-rios-irish-parades-st-patricks-day-ok-mexican-parades-invasion>.

The American Family Association's Bryan Fischer is somewhat more thoughtful and theological in his arguments for one national language and for immigrants' complete assimilation into the culture of the United States. He bemoans a U.S. Census Bureau statistic that a language other than English is spoken in 25 percent of the homes across the United States and an unnamed source indicating that 82 different languages are spoken in one school in New Hampshire, and he invokes the story of the "Tower of Babel" in Genesis 11:1-9 as evidence that linguistic diversity and the resulting barriers to communication are the judgment of God against human arrogance and turning away from God, a judgment that in our case we are bringing on ourselves rather than it being a direct act of God.<sup>12</sup> Fischer also asserts that "God's way" of doing immigration, typified by the biblical standards for welcoming immigrants into ancient Israel, was "complete, utter and total assimilation. It was cultural assimilation, social assimilation, linguistic assimilation and above all, spiritual or religious assimilation."<sup>13</sup> "Another way to put it is that when God established immigration guidelines for the nation he formed, there was no room for multiculturalism."<sup>14</sup> "Immigrants were expected to adapt to the cultural mores of Israel. The Israelites were not expected to adapt to the cultural mores of immigrants."<sup>15</sup> He holds up the model of Ruth as an example of this total assimilation:

Although she was a foreigner, when she came to Israel with Naomi, she did not cling to her native customs and her native religion. Instead, she uttered these famous words: 'Your people shall be my people, and your God my God' (Ruth

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<sup>12</sup> Bryan Fischer, "Is God Judging America the Way He Judged the Tower of Babel?," American Family Association, <http://www.afa.net/the-stand/immigration/is-god-judging-america-the-way-he-judged-the-tower-of-babel/>.

<sup>13</sup> Bryan Fischer, "If We Did Immigration God's Way," American Family Association, <http://www.afa.net/the-stand/immigration/if-we-did-immigration-gods-way/>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

1:16). That passage is not about marriage at all. It's about assimilation. If we are looking for biblical instruction about immigration, perhaps that's the place to start.<sup>16</sup>

Of course, in Fischer's use of the Tower of Babel as an indicator that linguistic diversity and its resultant barriers to communication are the judgment of God, he neglects to consider Pentecost in Acts 2 as a sign that in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, linguistic diversity ceases to be a barrier to communication, as a multilingual and multicultural group are able to hear and respond to the gospel and are united into one intense fellowship. He strongly overstates the "total assimilation" required of sojourners among the ancient Israelites, as in reality Israel was as much *assimilated by* Canaanite, Phoenician, Babylonian, Persian, and Hellenistic culture as it assimilated others, in spite of the protests of some of the prophets and religious leaders. Moreover, the biblical demand is exclusive worship of Israel's God Yahweh and adherence to the covenant legislation, leaving significant room for cultural diversity within those boundaries. Finally, in Fischer's use of Ruth as a model of assimilation, he disregards the fact that Ruth's unequivocal commitment was to Naomi personally rather than to Israel, and in terms of cultural assimilation, among Semitic peoples of the Ancient Near East, including Moab and Israel, there was likely as much similarity of culture as difference. In any case, as I argued in Chapter 2, cultures are not fixed entities into which immigrants must be incorporated in a one-way process of the immigrant changing and not the culture. Rather, cultures are always evolving as they take on new elements, in a two-way process of both assimilating new persons and accommodating to these "liminal" people, who become agents of change within them, both influencing and being influenced by those who are being incorporated.

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<sup>16</sup> Bryan Fischer, "Why the President Is Wrong About the Bible and Immigration," American Family Association, <http://www.afa.net/the-stand/immigration/why-the-president-is-wrong-about-the-bible-and-immigration/>.

Still, there are some substantive Christian theological arguments for a more stringent immigration policy that particularly focus on the issue of what should be done with undocumented immigrants, those who either entered the country without legal authorization or overstayed the expiration of a legally authorized stay (non-immigrant visa). These arguments are especially made on the basis of the Apostle Paul's exhortation about being subject to governing authorities in Romans 13 (verses 1-7; cf. 1 Peter 2:13-17), along with more general theological statements about the government's divinely established mandates of protecting its people and maintaining order.

#### **Dominique Peridans Contra Ecclesiastical Pronouncements on Immigration:**

Dominique Peridans, an ordained Roman Catholic minister currently pursuing a degree in pastoral counseling, writing for the Center for Immigration Studies (one of the organizations founded by John Tanton as a research component of his immigration restriction movement), offers a critique of official Roman Catholic statements on immigration.<sup>17</sup> He argues that the Catholic Church's lobbying for "comprehensive immigration reform" "stems from. . . an erroneous application, in the political sphere, of the Christian perspective on immigration."<sup>18</sup> The Christian perspective on immigration is that it does not see "immigrant" but sees "child of God" and therefore makes no distinction between legal and illegal immigrant. The error comes in applying the Christian perspective in the political sphere, thus subsuming and supplanting other perspectives and blurring the lines between faith and politics, church and state.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Dominique Peridans, "What Are They Thinking?: A Look at Roman Catholic 'Doctrine' on Immigration," in *Backgrounder* (Washington, DC: Center for Immigration Studies, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

Peridans particularly takes issue with the U.S. and Mexican Catholic bishops in the document referenced earlier, “Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope,” which he perceives to be taking a political stance and agenda and turning it into church doctrine.<sup>20</sup>

Peridans states that the oneness of believers in Christ which Paul mentions in Galatians 3:28, beyond distinctions of race, class, and gender, is a spiritual reality rather than a political reality, and that even Jesus Christ recognized a distinction between Christian spiritual authority and the authority of the state in his statement in all three synoptic gospels about paying taxes to Caesar, “Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God,” and in his statement to Pilate that his (Jesus’) kingdom is not of this world.<sup>21</sup>

Jesus, in fact, articulates a more fundamental truth that is, unfortunately, insufficiently developed by the bishops: The kingdom of God respects human reality, from which it is distinct. And in respecting human reality, the kingdom of God respects distinctions (or differences) between persons and communities.<sup>22</sup>

To speak of something belonging to Caesar presupposes the legitimacy of Caesar's authority. Caesar's authority is legitimate not because it is well exercised, but because the community over which he has authority is legitimate, is a human reality that the kingdom of God respects. Caesar's community is a *sovereign* nation.<sup>23</sup>

Jesus commands Christians to respect Caesar’s political authority as leader over a sovereign community even though he is persecuting them. This does not mean tolerating injustices, but it means that Caesar’s injustices do not nullify his legitimate authority nor “render Christian

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 6. Emphasis is that of the author.

members of the Roman Empire non-members. If still members, then there is legitimate respect that must be paid: primarily to the common good and, in the light of the common good, to those in authority whose purpose it is to safeguard the common good.”<sup>24</sup> (Contrast this with the perspective of Revelation, that the Roman Emperor is an unholy Beast and an instrument of the rule of Satan.)<sup>25</sup>

What Peridans seems to be getting at here is to impose a limit upon the authority of the church to make declarations upon political matters, while at the same time affirming the sovereign authority of the state to establish and defend its borders and to discriminate between legal and illegal immigrants, over against what he perceives to be the bishops’ questioning of that authority. Peridans also asserts that “the work of the Redeemer respects the work of the Creator. The renewing work wrought by Christ respects the natural order come from the Creator.”<sup>26</sup> By this he means that “we must still, while guided by God in a way that is deeply respectful of human freedom, think for ourselves, and make our own political and personal choices. . .”<sup>27</sup> Again, this seems to imply a limit upon the authority of the church to dictate political decisions and policies, which are to be guided, not by the rule of faith but by reason, philosophical thought, and common sense.<sup>28</sup> “Christians, although elevated and enriched with what they believe to be revelation from God, must still think for themselves.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> See especially Revelation 13:1-8.

<sup>26</sup> Peridans, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

The bishops, in his estimation, are practicing what the church itself has condemned, “*fideism*, that is to say, the suppression of philosophical thought and common sense by faith—in this case, for the sake of vague principles of Christian charity.”<sup>30</sup>

Fideism is the silencing of the human mind in its capacity for autonomous thought. Fideism entails the presumed direct application of Christian principles to the social and political realm, to the disparagement of reason. . . . Christian revelation *per se* sheds no new light on immigration. It is not meant to do so. . . . Thus, there is no official doctrinal position on immigration. There are simply exhortations to generous charitable attitude and action toward immigrants.<sup>31</sup>

Peridans rightly sees immigration as a prudential issue rather than a doctrinal issue. The church’s social teachings are to provide “the main lines of ethical orientation,” but within that framework the church looks to insights from “competent people from the worlds of science and technology and the human and political sciences and philosophy.”<sup>32</sup> Yet, he goes on to deny Christian theological reflection a role at all in this issue and to reduce the church’s role to one of speaking to its own church members about the “humane treatment of immigrants.” “Theology, strictly speaking, has no place in the political conversation on immigration. And migration, strictly speaking, is not a ‘theological concept’. It is a *human* issue.”<sup>33</sup>

While Peridans may have a point about the church hierarchy making specific political policy proposals and investing them with divine authority, he seems perilously close to stating that the church has nothing to say in the political sphere or about justice in immigration policy at all, which would be for the church to deny its call to be a prophetic voice before the powers

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Emphasis is that of the author.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 10.

and principalities. As the Body of Christ in the world, the church has a responsibility to not only offer general ethical principles that may be relevant in the political sphere but also to point out injustices where it sees them. Moreover, specific Christian leaders can research political issues and become knowledgeable enough to suggest specific policy proposals, though these leaders certainly need to demonstrate a measure of humility that realizes there is room for, and need for, debate as to whether certain policies are, in fact, unjust and whether suggested policy proposals are the most just, sensible, and effective course to take. Policy proposals, in this case, are not the Word of God but are, hopefully, the carefully considered human attempt to apply theological truths to concrete situations, subject to human error.

Peridans also sees the statements of the Catholic Church hierarchy about immigration as a denial of the right of specific societies to exist, “in favor of a universal community, of a global village.”<sup>34</sup> Against this perceived denial, Peridans asserts that for humans to form community is a basic and universal human phenomenon, which every statement on immigration by the Catholic Church leadership acknowledges, though quickly relegating the existence of specific societies to “a camp of fearful existence, where it is plagued by guilt for daring to think that it might be able to manage its own distinct existence, especially if such management entails controlling its membership. . .”<sup>35</sup> If he is asserting that nation-states have a legitimate existence and rights of sovereignty over their borders and membership, I certainly will not argue with that, and I understand the bishops to be in agreement with that. On the other hand, if he is decrying the church’s stance as a universal community that relativizes nation-states and other

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

divisions among the human family and points toward a reality that transcends them, then he is attempting to thwart God's reconciling purpose in bringing unity and harmony to the whole of humanity and the whole of creation, toward which the church is called to be a witness, about which I will have more to say in Chapter 6.

Peridans wants to assert the right of sovereign societies/nations to establish and control their borders, as well as to control who is admitted to membership in the society. His main argument related to immigration itself, other than to insist that the church has no authority to say what immigration policy should be, appears to be the desire to draw a strong distinction between legal and illegal immigrants, affirming the right of nations to enforce their border security through the exclusion of the latter. Here he draws upon a distinction made by James Hoffmeier, professor of Old Testament and Near Eastern archaeology at Trinity International University, between the Hebrew terms *ger* (resident alien) and *nekhar* or *zar* (foreigner), which Peridans sees as tantamount to a distinction between today's legal and illegal immigrants, so that the biblical injunctions to welcome the *ger* would apply only to the former and not the latter.<sup>36</sup> Hoffmeier does not exactly say that the *nekhar* or *zar* is the equivalent of an undocumented immigrant today, though he does insist that the *ger* would be an immigrant with legal status, and that the distinction between these terms is a relevant one in the matter of applying biblical teachings to the question of "how illegal aliens should be treated by the legal system."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>37</sup> James Karl Hoffmeier, *The Immigration Crisis: Immigrants, Aliens & the Bible* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2009), 73.

According to E. J. Hamlin in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, the distinction between "foreigner" (*zar* or *nakri*, adjectival form of the verb *nakar* or the noun *nekar*<sup>38</sup>) and "sojourner" (*ger*) is of a different character. The distinction is between those in *temporary* contact with Israel (*zar* or *nakri*), such as a "trader, traveler, or soldier, without cutting ties with his original home," and the non-Israelite sojourner, "who makes Israel his home" (*ger*).<sup>39</sup> T. M. Mauch, also in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, says further about the sojourner (*ger*):

In the basic meaning of the term, a sojourner is a person who occupies a position between that of the native-born and the foreigner. He has come among a people distinct from him and thus lacks the protection and benefits ordinarily provided by kin and birthplace. His status and privileges derive from the bond of hospitality, in which the guest is inviolable. The *ger* is everyone who comes traveling and, settling in a strange place for a shorter or longer period, has claims to protection and full sustenance (cf. Gen. 18:1-8; 24; Judg. 19:16-21; Job 31:32).<sup>40</sup>

Hoffmeier suggests that the *ger* has legal standing, based on the provisions of hospitality in which she or he is the invited guest of a host and has the permission of that host to sojourn in the host's land.<sup>41</sup> But to make the supposed legal standing of the biblical *ger*, based on the customs of hospitality and the invitation and permission of a given host, the equivalent of the long and convoluted process of immigrating into the United States, a process for which many would-be immigrants do not qualify at all, and which in some cases may take 20 years or longer, is definitely an unwarranted superimposition upon the biblical texts and their linguistic usage.

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<sup>38</sup> Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon; Every Word and Inflection of the Hebrew Old Testament Arranged Alphabetically and with Grammatical Analyses* (Lynn, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1981), 549-50.

<sup>39</sup> E. J. Hamlin, "Foreigner," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 310.

<sup>40</sup> T. M. Mauch, "Sojourner," *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Hoffmeier, 50.

The *ger* was a foreigner sojourning among another people. As such, the biblical sojourner came among the people of Israel, seeking hospitality and to dwell among God's people—and, in fact, under Ancient Near Eastern and biblical expectations, having a *claim*—a *right*—to that hospitality. (I will have more to say about the expectations and provisions of hospitality in Chapter 8.) It can certainly be said that today's undocumented immigrant is seeking hospitality in our land. Many are seeking permission to dwell among us (legal standing/status), whether through the provisions of current immigration law or through changes in the law. Hoffmeier himself suggests “that churches can work to assist immigrants, legal or illegal, to have legal standing.”<sup>42</sup> Of course, it is evident from the example he offers<sup>43</sup> that he means working through existing immigration law, and indeed a role churches can play is to set up competent, properly accredited immigration law ministries that assist immigrants with working through complicated immigration processes. Yet, Christians can also assist immigrants to have legal status by advocating for changes in the law that will afford them an opportunity to earn that status.

Peridans is correct in asserting that nation-states do have a right and a responsibility to maintain and enforce their borders and to decide who is admitted to membership in the nation. That does not mean that a given nation's immigration laws and policies are just, sensible, or even effective in accomplishing their stated purpose. In Chapter 1, I cited Douglas Massey's evidence that the United States' current efforts at border security are counter-productive, producing the very opposite of the intended effect, as vastly increased border security

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 151-152.

expenditures, personnel, and militarization of the border have resulted in an increase, rather than a decrease, in undocumented migration by cutting off the outflow but not the inflow of migrants in what once was a circular pattern.<sup>44</sup> This ineffectiveness would be compounded by the impracticality of deporting 11 to 12 million people, not to mention the adverse impact on our economy of the loss of these workers. I also mentioned in Chapter 1 Massey's insight into the contradiction of seeking to integrate the economies of North America under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) by allowing the free flow of all factors of production (goods, services, capital, and information) *except* labor.<sup>45</sup> Given the role played by this trade agreement in restructuring Mexico's economy, displacing Mexican workers, and actually *generating* their migration, while closing the door to the logical and compensatory relief of allowing these workers to legally immigrate into the United States in search of jobs and in response to a need for their labor, this could be seen as an injustice in U.S. immigration law in need of correction. Another injustice is to put the whole burden of unlawful presence and employment on the immigrant trying to support a family and not on employers merely trying to increase profits. Actually, creating sufficient legal avenues for the immigration of unskilled laborers commensurate with the need of our economy for these workers, coupled with consistent enforcement against employers who hire unauthorized workers, will do more than anything to arrest the flow of undocumented migrants into the United States.

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<sup>44</sup>Massey, "Backfire at the Border: Why Enforcement without Legalization Cannot Stop Illegal Immigration."

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 12.

### **James R. Edwards, Jr. on Biblical Principles to Guide Immigration Policy:**

Another Christian thinker calling for a more stringent immigration policy is James R. Edwards, Jr., a Fellow with the Center for Immigration Studies, in his essay, "A Biblical Perspective on Immigration Policy."<sup>46</sup> Edwards states that "civil government is divinely instituted for the protection of the innocent and the punishment of the guilty."<sup>47</sup> Governing authorities "act as God's sword-bearer" (Romans 13:4), "established to maintain law and order," responsible to God "for the protection of the people whom God has placed under their authority," having also a "duty to defend the nation against foreign invaders."<sup>48</sup>

All of these duties of government relate to preserving the rule of law, executing justice, protecting order, and defending the law-abiding. The government's obligation, moreover, is particularistic. It safeguards the public good for a particular group of people, in a particular geographic location, who belong to a particular body politic.<sup>49</sup>

Here Edwards' biblical authority is Romans 13:4, which depicts governing authorities as "the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer." One could make an argument, based on such biblical texts as Psalm 72 in its depiction of the ideal ruler, that government also exists to "defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor" (72:4). There the ideal ruler also "delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life. . ." (72:12-14). So government also

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<sup>46</sup> Edwards, "A Biblical Perspective on Immigration Policy."

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

exists to deliver the poor from need, injustice, and oppression. (I will have more to say about God's mandate to engage in solidarity with the poor and the marginalized in Chapter 7.)

Edwards' insistence that the government's role is to serve a particular body politic in a particular location is not grounded in any biblical or theological principle but instead in the way existing governments actually do function, for the most part. It is interesting to note that the government at the time of Romans 13 was the Roman Empire, which did not rule over only a particular people in a particular location but, in fact, over a huge part of the world, incorporating a very diverse array of people. In relating this to the immigration issue, some have argued that the economic and at times military and political hegemony of the United States over Latin America constitutes an empire, so that the migration of persons from Latin America to the United States is a consequence of the exercising of that hegemony.<sup>50</sup> As was mentioned in Chapter 1 and will be discussed further below, the integration of North American economies under NAFTA also stretches the boundaries of the "particular geographic location" in relation to the economies of the United States and Mexico and generates the migration of workers.

Edwards goes on to indicate that corresponding to the government's "obligation to carry out the protective purpose for which it exists" is the obligation of those under the government's authority to submit to its "legitimate laws and commands."<sup>51</sup> It would be interesting to know what Edwards means by the qualifying adjective "legitimate" here, which he does not explain. Are there government laws and commands which are illegitimate and to

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<sup>50</sup> González, *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*. See also Nestor Miguez, Joerg Rieger, and Jung Mo Sung, *Beyond the Spirit of Empire: Theology and Politics in a New Key* (London: SCM Press, 2009).

<sup>51</sup> Edwards, 48.

which it is not the obligation of the governed to submit? If so, which ones, or of what nature? Here again Edwards cites Romans 13, along with 1 Peter 2:13-14 and Titus 3:1, all directing Christians to be subject to or submit to “every authority instituted among men,” including both “the king, as the supreme authority” and governors (the local authorities representing the king or the supreme authority) (1 Peter 2:13-14).<sup>52</sup> He quotes from Romans 13:1: “There is no [civil] authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”<sup>53</sup> This is indeed at least a surface reading of Romans 13. However, for Christians this must be held in tension with other New Testament perspectives on governing authorities, including the view expressed by Revelation 13 that the emperor derives his authority from Satan (the dragon) (13:4). Thus, the Bible does not give an unequivocal and unconditional endorsement to the government authorities and their commands. (I will have more to say about this at the end of this chapter.)

In relation to the applicability of biblical laws and commandments to a contemporary context, Edwards draws a distinction between moral laws such as the Ten Commandments, which he deems to be universal, and “ceremonial and judicial laws in the Old Testament,” which he asserts to be applicable only to ancient Israel. He cites Ephesians 2:15 which “says that Jesus Christ [abolished] in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.”<sup>54</sup> He then goes on to say, “The law that is meant here is clearly the ceremonial and judicial laws

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 49.

of ancient Israel, but not the universal moral commandments.”<sup>55</sup> How does he know this is what is clearly meant here? In an exegesis of the larger context of this verse from Ephesians 2 in Chapter 6, I will highlight how in that larger context, what is actually meant is the law as a marker of division between Jew and Gentile. This verse likely overstates the matter in talking about “abolishing” the law. But there is no clear distinction here between moral law and ceremonial and judicial law.

Furthermore, what other “moral laws” than the Ten Commandments does Edwards regard as universal? He goes on to say that “the civil laws of Israel were also of a temporary character.”<sup>56</sup> Is there always a clear distinction between “civil” and “moral” law in the Old Testament? In this context, I wonder if he is implying here that the laws about treatment of the sojourner (*ger*) are not applicable beyond ancient Israel. He does not specifically say this, but in the context of a discourse on applying biblical principles to the issue of immigration, while stating the inapplicability of certain biblical laws beyond ancient Israel, what else would he be implying? If he is implying the inapplicability of the laws regarding the sojourner, upon what basis would these laws be considered only “civil” or “judicial” and not “moral”?

Edwards makes the point that while the government of the United States is very different from that of ancient Israel, the Bible does not prescribe any particular form of government, so that the difference between our government and that of biblical times is a “prudential development, not a form of unfaithfulness to the Bible.”<sup>57</sup> He adds that while the United States’ government is informed by scriptural principles, “we live in a democratic republic

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

whose governing structure separates church and state.”<sup>58</sup> “America’s Founders appreciated the need for keeping apart church governance and state rule.”<sup>59</sup> He goes on to state that our government is derived from both the Enlightenment stream of thought and that of the Christianity of the Protestant Reformation, with the nation’s founders seeking “to erect a limited civil government that would preserve liberty under law” and “achieve a healthy balance between order and liberty,” “combining an emphasis on individual rights with an equally important emphasis on the fulfillment of social obligations.”<sup>60</sup> Again, I wonder what is his point here, in relation to the immigration issue, unless he is implying what Peridans states directly, that church pronouncements on immigration policy have no place.

That this could be his implication is underscored by his next point “that the Bible speaks much more about the treatment of immigrants—that is, the treatment of the stranger, the sojourner, or the foreign resident in our midst—than it does about immigration policy in the sense of the laws and customs that should regulate the influx of foreigners into a settled community.”<sup>61</sup> Indeed, this is true, though an application of biblical principles would certainly include taking account of the biblical attitude toward the sojourner when considering immigration policy. As Peridans pointed out, the church cannot prescribe precisely what immigration policy should be as a divine directive, but it does make a difference with what attitude toward immigrants one comes to the debate about immigration policy.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

Edwards then sets out to “prove” that the division of the world into different nations and the fixing of national boundaries and borders were God’s idea, engaging in some mischievous “proof-texting” from Genesis 10, Deuteronomy 32:8, and Acts 17:26, taking these texts out of their context and making them say something very different than their original meaning. He sees the cataloging of peoples and where they live in Genesis 10, God “set[ting] up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of sons of Israel” in Deuteronomy 32:8, and Paul’s discourse on how “from one man [God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live” in Acts 17:26 as evidence that “nation-state boundaries and the division of mankind into different peoples living in different geographic locations is something God ordained and part of a providential plan. It is not something sinful, immoral, or contrary to the divine intent.”<sup>62</sup>

Genesis 10 is not a statement of divine purpose at all but merely a cataloging of peoples, and it is followed by an explanation in chapter 11 of how this division among the peoples came to be, on account of human sin and arrogance at the Tower of Babel, so that God divided their languages (11:7) and “scattered them abroad from there over the face of the earth.” There the basis for the division into various peoples is certainly not by God’s ordination and providential plan but precisely on account of human sin. Deuteronomy 32:8-9 seems to be a polytheistic remnant, reading in the NRSV: “When the Most High [*Elyon*, perhaps the High God] apportioned the nations, when he divided humankind, he fixed the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the gods; the LORD’s [YHWH’s] own portion was his people, Jacob

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 54.

his allotted share.” In other words, the message there is that the peoples were divided up between the gods, and Yahweh’s portion was Israel. So here the division is according to religious belief rather than nation as such. Joseph Fitzmyer translates Acts 17:26: “*He it is who has fixed the dates of their epochs and the boundaries of their habitation.*”<sup>63</sup> He interprets this as a “philosophy of nature” rather than a geopolitical division, in the sense of: “‘He ordered the seasons and the boundaries of their habitation,’ i.e., the habitable zones. . .”<sup>64</sup> The context is not one of God purposefully establishing nations but of God ordering the creation, with the intention that people throughout the earth might search for and find the God who is Lord over the creation (verse 27). In short, none of these texts proves Edwards’ point about divinely ordained nations and national boundaries. (In Chapter 6, I will highlight God’s opposite purpose of overcoming divisions among the peoples and uniting them into one new humanity in Christ, as described in Ephesians 2.)

Of course, I would not want to be mistakenly understood as saying that nation-states and national boundaries have no legitimacy. Nations and national boundaries are not inherently sinful but are definitely a human, rather than divine, creation. They are one of many different ways in which people organize themselves, though I would argue that they are not absolute and that they can and should in some instances be transcended, as they are part of a larger global reality. In fact, we live in an era of transnational corporations and economic globalization, the latter of which naturally generates migration, as described in Chapter 1,

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<sup>63</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 31, The Anchor Bible Series (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 609. Italics are that of the author.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

where I also discussed the integration of North American markets under NAFTA, a fact that renders national borders in some ways irrelevant.

Edwards acknowledges the universal message of the Christian faith, of a “salvation that is available to all regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity, or any other human distinction”, and how such human distinctions “have little value in the Kingdom of God.”<sup>65</sup> “But does this spiritual universalism translate into a biblical requirement for an open-borders policy of immigration as certain liberal Christians claim?”<sup>66</sup> Here Edwards sets up a false dualism of either “open borders” or the restrictive immigration laws currently in place (if not more restrictive ones). There is certainly room for flexibility/ adaptability of our immigration laws and policy that are far short of “open borders.” Appropriate border security measures are an important way in which governments do protect their people from harm—specifically, from being invaded and assaulted by people of hostile or criminal intent. A more open and flexible immigration policy (not to be equated with “open borders”) is not necessarily inconsistent with such border security. It can even reflect a need to limit the number of immigrants allowed into the nation, though I believe the limits should take account of our economy’s actual need for immigrant labor and should be adjusted accordingly, rather than being a fixed number per year that never changes. Moreover, as Douglas Massey points out, U.S. immigration policy needs to recognize the fact that in an integrated North American economy under NAFTA, labor markets will also merge.<sup>67</sup>

Edwards outlines the rest of his essay in the following statement:

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<sup>65</sup> Edwards, 55.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Massey, "Backfire at the Border: Why Enforcement without Legalization Cannot Stop Illegal Immigration," 12.

The liberal Christians who advocate the open-borders policy on immigration make in my judgment three cardinal mistakes from a biblical point of view. They simultaneously (1) fail to acknowledge the special obligation we all have toward those closest to us and to the specific communities wherein we reside; (2) pay insufficient attention to the biblical obligation that civil authorities have to protect the people and the communities entrusted to their care; and (3) ignore the very real pragmatic harms that the policies they advocate would have on the health and well-being of American society.<sup>68</sup>

Edwards argues that we have “special obligations to family, community, and nation.”<sup>69</sup>

We are members of different peoples and nations living in different parts of the world, “and our immediate obligations must clearly be to those concrete persons and groups nearest us rather than to tribes and persons living in different parts of the world.”<sup>70</sup> Though Christians “are commanded to love all people,” our first obligation is to those in our own group. As Americans, we “have a greater and more immediate moral obligation to be concerned with the welfare and quality of life in the United States than in other countries. . . .”<sup>71</sup> All of this is not essentially different from saying that our first obligation is to take care of ourselves before taking care of others, which is true, and our own family, our own group, our own nation are extensions of ourselves—in other words, self writ large.

Yet, a principle for Christians is always to hold our self-obligations in tension with our obligation to love (to seek the well-being of) others. Jesus gave as the second of the two great commandments the command to love the neighbor *as* (equal to) the self (Mark 12:31). He also rendered this, “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law

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<sup>68</sup> Edwards, 55.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

and the prophets.” (Matthew 7:12). In other words, treat others the way you would want to be treated, again expressing an equality between self and others. And when asked who the neighbor to love is, Jesus responded with a parable in which the neighbor turned out to be a Samaritan, a resented outsider from another people, another ethnicity, and another (though related) religious tradition (Luke 10:25-37). Note that Jesus did not say to love the neighbor above or more than self but *as* the self. I do not interpret all of this as meaning we should neglect our special obligation to self and all its extensions. Rather, love of self and of those closest to the self is held in tension with our more universal loves.

Within this tension between loving self/my own group and loving others/people of other groups, these cannot always be presumed to be in conflict with one another. There are often ways to act that are mutually beneficial to self and others—or at least are beneficial to others without necessarily being harmful to self. In terms of an immigration policy, what is good for the people of the United States is not necessarily in conflict with what is good for those seeking to immigrate here. There may be actions that are to our mutual benefit. (Later in this chapter, I argue that there are.) However, suppose there is a conflict. Suppose allowing immigrants in does cost us something. Here the tension may be affected by weighing the cost to self against the benefit to the other, and if the cost to self is small (say, some moderate degree of temporary job competition in a market in which there are still comparable jobs available for both the native-born and the immigrant), while the benefit to the immigrant is large (to have a job and support one’s family at all), then it would seem that the balance shifts toward the well-being of the immigrant, other things being equal.

An extension of Edwards' conclusion that there is a special obligation to our own family or group is that political leaders "have a special obligation to look out for the well-being of the political communities that are entrusted to their care."<sup>72</sup> They "have the obligation to protect the community from those who would do it harm and from those whose addition to the community for one reason or another would constitute an intolerable burden."<sup>73</sup> Here I have no argument but only a question: What constitutes "an intolerable burden"? This obligation to protect their community "includes the obligation to patrol national borders and to enforce immigration laws that are directed at the public good."<sup>74</sup> Yet, this obligation to enforce immigration laws does not say what those laws should be, who they should exclude and how they should be enforced. And are they, in fact, directed at the public good?

Thus the rightful power of the sword includes policing the nation's borders, as well as the arrest and deportation of immigrant lawbreakers, even when their only violation is of immigration status. The state is duty-bound to act in this manner because of the illegal alien's disregard for legitimately constituted authority and the adverse effect of his immigration upon the citizens whom the civil government is duty-bound to protect.<sup>75</sup>

Yet, the state has traditionally not only been charged with use of "the sword" to preserve order and protect the community but has also wielded the powers of clemency and pardon, when such actions are deemed to best promote justice and implement the common good. Whether that be the case with undocumented immigrants is what needs to be discussed and debated within the political process. And the other question is whether or not the enforcement

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 59.

methods used by the state actually work. As I pointed out in Chapter 1, Douglas Massey's research demonstrates that vastly increased border security expenditures and measures since the 1980s have been counterproductive, producing the very opposite of their intended outcome, actually increasing the number of undocumented immigrants rather than decreasing that number.<sup>76</sup>

Edwards concludes his essay with a list of harms he believes to be caused by the "large-scale influx of often unskilled and uneducated immigrants" (while he concedes the positive impact of "the influx of highly educated and entrepreneurially talented foreigners"), so that there is a "need for more restrictive immigration."<sup>77</sup> These perceived harms include his belief that these immigrants "pay few taxes and draw heavily upon public services such as health and education", increase urban congestion and crime, flood labor markets so as to compete with low-skilled citizens for jobs as well as depressing wages, and are "a threat to the social and cultural stability of the United States."<sup>78</sup> He goes on to state:

The greatest harm posed by immigration on the enormous scale that we have today may be to our ability to preserve a sense of common culture and community in a rapidly changing world. While controlled immigration can benefit a nation, in extremis immigration can be destructive to the cohesiveness of a society and hamper the societal norms and mores that ensure its preservation. This is particularly the case if immigrants are slow to assimilate or are averse to accepting the ways of the country to which they have moved.<sup>79</sup>

Regarding Edwards' cultural argument, we have already encountered it in Huntington, as discussed in Chapter 2. I need not repeat all of the arguments I presented there, but suffice

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<sup>76</sup> Massey, "Backfire at the Border: Why Enforcement without Legalization Cannot Stop Illegal Immigration."

<sup>77</sup> Edwards, 59, 60.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 60-61.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 60.

it to say that the United States has absorbed several large-scale waves of immigrants from different cultures (mostly poor and low-skilled), always with fears concerning their cultural alterity and inassimilability, but they have always added to and enriched rather than detracted from our common culture, which has never been, after all, a static thing. Immigrants have both changed and been changed by our cultural heritage, which, under the influence of globalization, is being subjected to intercultural encounters and the changes they facilitate quite independent of the influence of immigrants. Yet, through it all, there has continued to be a unified nation with a substantially integrated culture, though with some regional and subcultural variations (even among native-born white Anglo persons), which has been true from the nation's origins. First generation immigrants have always stood out from the mainstream culture in visible ways and have been perceived as a threat to the integrity of the nation and its social norms and customs, but with each successive generation they become more assimilated into that mainstream culture (though not leaving it unchanged). Today's Latino immigrants demonstrate similar patterns of assimilation from first to second and third generations onward, in terms of learning English and ceasing to speak Spanish, religious commitment, work ethic, identification as American rather than by an exclusively ethnic identity, and patriotism.<sup>80</sup>

Concerning the rest of Edwards' beliefs about the harm caused by immigrants, which are certainly widespread stereotypes about immigrants, that they "take away American jobs" and depress wages, pay little or no taxes and draw heavily upon public benefits, and increase the level of crime, these are all contestable assumptions which may not be supported by the actual facts and data. To address these allegations thoroughly would be a research project

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<sup>80</sup> Citrin et al., "Testing Huntington: Is Hispanic Immigration a Threat to American Identity?."

unto itself, but I will offer a few counterpoints of facts and data to contradict them, starting with the issues of crime, taxes, and public benefits, before offering a larger perspective on the economic impact of immigrants that affects jobs and wages, as discussed already in Chapter 1.

In contrast with prevailing public opinion presuming a high correlation between “immigrant” and “criminality,” “[d]ata from the 5 percent Public Use Microsample (PUMS) of the 2000 census”, which “were used to measure the institutionalization rates of immigrants and natives,” showed that “the incarceration rate of the US born (3.51 percent) was four times the rate of the foreign born (0.86 percent).”<sup>81</sup> The lower incarceration rate for immigrants than that of the native-born holds true for every ethnic group. The highest incarceration rate among the foreign born was for island-born Puerto Ricans (4.5 percent), who are U.S. citizens by birth and therefore not immigrants. With Puerto Ricans “excluded from the foreign-born totals, the national incarceration rate for the foreign born would drop to 0.68 percent.”<sup>82</sup> For Mexicans, who comprise the largest group of both legal and undocumented immigrants, the rate was 0.70 percent.<sup>83</sup> To be sure, this is only one set of data, but it is remarkable in the degree to which it contradicts the widespread association of immigrants, and particularly undocumented immigrants, with criminality.

It is also a popular belief that immigrants are a tax burden upon the public by drawing more upon government benefits than they pay in taxes. Research cited by Douglas Massey from a 1987 study indicates that while 84 percent of undocumented Mexican immigrants paid

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<sup>81</sup> Rubén G. Rumbaut, Roberto G. Gonzales, Golnaz Komaie, and Charlie V. Morgan, “Debunking the Myth of Immigrant Criminality: Imprisonment among First- and Second-Generation Young Men,” *Migration Information Source* (2006), <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?id=403>.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

taxes, only 2 percent had ever received welfare or Social Security payments and only 3 percent had ever received food stamps.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, Massey's research from the Mexican Migration Project reveals that out of 6,000 Mexican migrants studied, 66 percent reported having Social Security taxes withheld from their paychecks, and 62 percent had income taxes withheld, while only 10 percent filed a tax return (in order to receive a tax refund). Furthermore:

Whereas nearly three-quarters paid taxes, very few made use of any public service in the United States. Around 10 percent said they had ever sent a child to U.S. public schools and 7 percent indicated they had received Supplemental Security Income. Just 5 percent or less of all migrants reported ever using food stamps, AFDC, or unemployment compensation.<sup>85</sup>

Actually, undocumented immigrants were prohibited from receiving Social Security benefits, and their educational benefits were limited, by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which also "granted states the authority to limit public assistance to U.S. citizens alone," and "the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (better known as the Welfare Reform Act) barred *legal* immigrants from receiving food stamps or Supplemental Security Income and prohibited them from receiving AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children] for at least five years after admission to the United States."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Douglas S. Massey et al., *Return to Aztlan: The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico*, Studies in Demography (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987). Cited in Douglas S. Massey, Ph.D., "Five Myths About Immigration: Common Misconceptions Underlying U.S. Border-Enforcement Policy," *Immigration Policy In Focus* 4, no. 6 (2005): 7.

<sup>85</sup> Douglas Massey, "Five Myths About Immigration: Common Misconceptions Underlying U.S. Border-Enforcement Policy," 7.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, emphasis Massey's.

Then there is the job competition and wage depression issue. Douglas Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan Malone describe the reason for a chronic need for immigrant labor in highly industrialized nations, due to a “segmented labor market” in which there is a “capital-intensive primary sector” with “stable, skilled jobs working with tools and equipment” that require an investment in training and education, such that these workers are less expendable; and a “labor-intensive secondary sector” that is “composed of poorly paid, unstable jobs from which workers may be laid off at any time with little or no cost to the employer.”<sup>87</sup>

Low wages, unstable conditions, and the lack of reasonable mobility prospects make it difficult to attract native workers into the secondary sector. They are instead drawn into the primary, capital-intensive sector, where wages are higher, jobs are more secure, and there is a possibility of occupational advancement. To fill the shortfall in demand within the secondary sector, employers turn to immigrants.<sup>88</sup>

So native workers are drawn to the skilled labor jobs, if they either have the skills necessary *or can be trained*. Edwards expresses a preference for allowing educated and highly skilled laborers to immigrate but not the low skilled laborers, a preference that is built into our current immigration system. Ironically, this actually creates job competition for the *better paying* jobs rather than for the low wage jobs, whereas if there were a shortage of skilled laborers, industries would have to *train* unskilled native workers for the higher wage jobs. An immigration system that seeks out the high skilled workers from developing countries actually creates a double injustice. It denies the opportunity for low skilled native workers to be trained for the higher wage jobs, while also engaging in a “brain drain” that extracts from developing

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<sup>87</sup> Massey, Durand, and Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*, 17.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

countries the high-skilled workers they have trained and educated, whose presence would raise wages in those countries for those of lesser skill levels.<sup>89</sup>

It is often argued that if farms, poultry and meat-processing plants, restaurants, hotels, and other industries that hire large numbers of immigrant workers would raise their wages, they could attract native workers. This may or may not be true, given the social stigma associated with some of these jobs and the availability of other jobs. But what happens if employers have to then raise prices to a point that they are unable to be competitive and are driven out of business? How much are Americans willing to pay for a head of lettuce or a pound of chicken? In many cases this would mean importing most of our food, which in turn outsources the same jobs to other countries, along with other higher paying jobs supported by them.

Job competition may not be a real issue, at least in the long term, as the United States population is aging, which may increasingly create labor shortages due to a lack of young workers. The retirement of the baby-boom generation is, in fact, dramatically increasing the need for immigrant workers. Ben Bernanke, former chairman of the Federal Reserve, estimates “that the U.S. economy will need 3.5 million additional laborers each year to replace the 78 million baby boomers who began to retire in 2008.”<sup>90</sup> Some interesting data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) support Bernanke’s projection and help explain a growing market for undocumented workers.

The BLS estimates that the number of people in the labor force age 25-34 is projected to increase by only 3 million between 2002 and 2012, while the

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<sup>89</sup> Wolf, *Why Globalization Works*, 85-87. Stiglitz, *Making Globalization Work*, 89.

<sup>90</sup> Hing, *Ethical Borders: Nafta, Globalization, and Mexican Migration*, 151.

number of those 55 and older will increase by 18 million. By 2012, those who are 45 and older will have the fastest growth rate and will constitute a little more than 50 percent of the labor force. According to estimates by the United Nations, the fertility rate in the United States is projected to fall below replacement level by 2015-2020, declining to 1.91 children per woman (lower than the 2.1 children per woman rate needed to replace the population). By 2010, 77 million baby boomers will have retired, and by 2030, according to projections, one in every five Americans will be a senior citizen.<sup>91</sup>

To wit, the U.S. population is aging and retiring at rates that make it increasingly impossible to meet the demands of a growing labor market without an influx of young immigrant workers.

In the absence of a visa system that is sufficient to accommodate this need for immigrant workers, “market forces have made adjustments through the employment of undocumented workers.”<sup>92</sup>

Importantly, the Cato Institute, a libertarian [sic] public-policy research foundation based in Washington, D.C., has found that, of the thirty job categories with the largest expected growth, more than half fall into the least-skilled categories, such as combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food; waiters and waitresses; retail sales personnel; cashiers; security guards; nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants; janitors and cleaners; home-health aides; manual laborers and freight, stock, and material movers; landscaping and groundskeeping workers; and manual packers and packagers. But with the supply of American workers suitable for such work continuing to fall because of an aging workforce and rising educational levels, Cato concludes, Mexican migrants provide a ready and willing source of labor to fill the growing gap between demand and supply on the lower rungs of the labor ladder.<sup>93</sup>

Additionally, Bill Hing, who teaches Immigration Law and Policy at the University of San Francisco and the University of California-Davis and is the founder of the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, states that immigrants “fill jobs that are hard to fill, and, perhaps more

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 154. He cites Daniel T. Griswold, *Willing Workers: Fixing the Problem of Illegal Mexican Migration to the United States*, Center for Trade Policy Studies no. 9 (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2002).

important, the presence of immigrants helps to create jobs."<sup>94</sup> As consumers themselves, immigrants generate additional demand for goods and services that creates a need for more workers in order to produce them. "Time and again, studies demonstrate that areas of the country with the most immigrants actually have the lowest unemployment rates, and those regions with the fewest immigrants have the highest unemployment rates."<sup>95</sup> Economist Charles Wheelan, in his book *Naked Economics*, makes a similar argument about the threat of job losses due to immigration, as he points out that "huge waves of immigrants have come to work in America throughout our history without any long-run increase in unemployment."<sup>96</sup> There certainly are short-term displacements. However, in the bigger picture, over time, "new workers must spend their earnings somewhere in the economy, creating new demand for other products. The economic pie gets bigger, not merely resliced."<sup>97</sup> In other words, there are not a fixed number of jobs for which immigrants and native-born workers compete. Not only does the presence of immigrants generate additional jobs due to their consumption of goods and services, but their filling unskilled labor vacuums in certain industries may actually result in the creation of other skilled jobs supported by their unskilled labor, or at least prevent the loss of some of these jobs. As economists like to say, economics is not a "zero-sum game."

In terms of American prosperity and well-being in general, economist Ian Bremmer, in *The End of the Free Market*, argues that the free mobility of labor is essential to American and

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<sup>94</sup> Hing, 151.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Wheelan, *Naked Economics : Undressing the Dismal Science*, 132.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

global prosperity, while at the same time acknowledging the persistence of resistance to immigration:

Immigration has always been a hot topic in the United States for reasons political, cultural, and ideological, but wave after wave of immigrants over more than two centuries *have helped power American prosperity*. . . Unfortunately, every new generation meets resistance from those who fear change, competition, or both. . . *Globalization draws its power to create wealth from the cross-border flow not only of goods and services but of people.*<sup>98</sup>

So immigrants may be a boon to American prosperity and create jobs, rather than taking them away, depressing wages, and harming American workers, especially if we think long-term rather than short-term.

*Summary on Border Security and the Undocumented:*

Even though he has his “blind spots” and in some ways embraces stereotypes about immigrants rather than relying upon hard data, Edwards does make a strong argument that nation-states and their governing authorities have a right and a responsibility to defend their borders, in order to protect the people under their authority. He does not make an equally compelling case for allowing less immigration rather than more. Moreover, the right and responsibility of a nation to defend its borders is not automatically a barrier to a political decision to legislate a path to legalization, permanent residency, and eventual citizenship for the undocumented who have lived and worked several years in the United States without violating any laws other than their unlawful presence and employment, particularly if they pay a significant fine for their violation of immigration laws, go through a long and arduous process

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<sup>98</sup> Bremmer, *The End of the Free Market : Who Wins the War between States and Corporations?*, 193. Emphasis is mine in all cases.

of background checks, screening, and taking steps to earn their status, and have to wait for permanent residency until their "turn" ("go to the back of the line," behind those who have pursued permanent residency through legal processes), remaining in, and having to continually renew, a temporary provisional legal status until then. For a nation to defend its borders is especially no prohibition against opening up greater legal avenues for low-skilled workers to legally immigrate in numbers commensurate with the economy's need for their labor. Above all, a concern to preserve the rule of law does not render Latino immigrants or their culture inherently a threat to our collective identity as a people.

Alan Wisdom raises the most cogent argument against a legalization of the undocumented, the "moral hazard" that granting residency status to those in the U.S. unlawfully will lead more migrants to violate our immigration laws in the same ways.

We must consider the unintended 'moral hazard.' If we grant coveted U.S. residency status to those who entered the country illegally or overstayed their temporary visas, we will likely see more persons engaging in those kinds of lawbreaking—as happened after the 1986 immigration reform.<sup>99</sup>

Yet, consider the moral hazard of continuing to allow employers to hire undocumented workers without consequence and the injustice of putting the whole burden of unlawful presence and employment on the immigrant trying to support a family and not on employers.

All too often, the undocumented workers who are paid less than minimum wage and work in conditions that violate health and safety standards are hauled away, and the employer receives no punishment.<sup>100</sup>

Furthermore, given the realities already discussed about the counterproductive outcome of intensified border security measures in attempting to reduce the number of undocumented,

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<sup>99</sup> Wisdom, "Immigration Reform: Another Christian View".

<sup>100</sup> Hing, 168.

together with the impracticality of attempting to deport 11 or 12 million undocumented immigrants, a more effective way to uphold our immigration laws may be to concentrate on penalizing the employers who not only employ but even actively recruit these workers, since the jobs are the magnet that draws immigrants here in the first place. Actually, legalizing the undocumented would deter employers from illegally paying less than the minimum wage in some cases, subjecting workers to unsafe working conditions, and offering no employee benefits, since undocumented workers' lack of legal status currently allows for such practices due to the fact that the undocumented have no legal recourse to redress these violations.

Another advantage of offering legalization to the undocumented that directly relates to national security concerns is that the legalization process would bring these immigrants out of the shadows and facilitate background checks and security screenings of those applying for legal status. Moreover, if immigrant visas were available to unskilled and low skilled workers, and available in numbers directly tied to the economy's need for their labor, then there would assuredly be far fewer illegal entries by potential laborers, so that vital border security and homeland security resources could be redirected toward stopping terrorists and criminals from entering the country, rather than expending vast resources on stopping those who merely want to work here. It is far easier to find the proverbial needle in the haystack (terrorists and criminals) if we shrink the size of the haystack (total number of illegal entries).

**Additional Perspective on Romans 13 and Subjection to the Authorities:**

“Law and order” arguments against offering any kind of legalization to those who have violated our immigration laws through illegal entry or overstaying a non-immigrant visa, including those discussed here, often bring up Romans 13 and its mandate to “be subject to the

governing authorities” which “have been instituted by God.” As John Howard Yoder points out, much Protestant theological and ethical thought has long looked upon Romans 13:1-7 as the Bible’s and Christianity’s central teaching on the state and as a virtually unconditional directive to obey its every command, whether the government be benevolent or tyrannical and whether the law be just or not, at least so long as it does not directly violate the dictates of faith.<sup>101</sup> Yoder offers some interesting and informative thoughts on Romans 13 and its place within the larger context of New Testament teachings.<sup>102</sup>

First, Yoder points out that neither Romans 13 nor the New Testament contains a systematic doctrine of the state,<sup>103</sup> nor is there any justification for assuming the centrality of Romans 13 among New Testament teachings about the state.<sup>104</sup> The New Testament speaks in many ways about the state, including “a very strong strand of Gospel teaching which sees secular government as the province of the sovereignty of Satan.”<sup>105</sup> When Jesus was tempted by Satan to worship him and receive all the kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:8-9/ Luke 4:5-7), Jesus never questioned whether the kingdoms were, in fact, Satan’s to give.<sup>106</sup> Then, of course, there is the view of Revelation 13 that the very same emperor who was the supreme government authority in the context of Romans 13 was a demonic power and was given his authority by Satan rather than by God.

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<sup>101</sup> John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1972), 193-95.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 193-214.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

Yoder indicates that in the larger context of Paul's own teachings, Paul makes three declarations about the power structures of human life: (1) they were created by God to serve a good purpose for the ordering of human life; (2) they have rebelled and are fallen, refusing the humility that would have kept them instruments of God's purpose and instead making overreaching claims for themselves; and (3) despite their fallen condition, God can still use them for good.<sup>107</sup> These power structures include not only political structures but also religious structures, moral structures, and intellectual structures.<sup>108</sup>

Romans 13:1-7 says that government serves God's purpose and is instituted by God, but the biblical witness strongly indicates *not perfectly or always*. Government may be in rebellion against God in its idolatrous claims for itself and in its abuses against people. Of course, as Yoder points out, God has used even idolatrous government for God's purposes, such as Assyria, Babylon, Cyrus of Persia, and Rome.<sup>109</sup> But in the larger perspective of the whole of the New Testament, Christians' relationship to the powers is always dialectical. They can neither reject nor unconditionally endorse them. Moreover, what Romans 13 affirms is that it is government as such that is instituted by God, and not any particular government. Government is a necessary instrument of God for ordering the life of people, as opposed to their descending into chaos and anarchy. But it is a false understanding of Romans 13 to see in it a "blank check" for governments and their laws, to believe the Bible gives unconditional endorsement to human laws and governing authorities, or to assume that governing authorities are

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

unambiguously good. Romans 13, after all, was written with reference to a pagan government that persecuted the church and commanded idolatry.

“Subjection” or “subordination” is not the same as endorsement or blind, unconditional obedience.

It is not by accident that the imperative of 13:1 is not literally one of *obedience*. . . What Paul calls for, however, is *subordination*. This verb is based upon the same root as the *ordering* of the powers of God. Subordination is significantly different from obedience.<sup>110</sup>

“Be subject” means submission to order and authority, as opposed to a posture of rebellion against the government or refusing to submit to any rule. To fail to be subject to authority, or to resist authority, is not an act of disobedience but is rebellion and anarchy. Being subject here does not mean obedience to every law and command the governing authorities give, regardless of the character of those laws. Consider Jesus’ dialectical relation to even the Mosaic law, the law of God, and his recognition of the limits of law, especially where human need and well-being are involved, as when he violated the Sabbath laws in order to meet human needs for healing, saying, “The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath.” (Mark 2:27). Another way of saying this might be that the law was made to serve the well-being of humanity, not humanity to serve the law in itself.

In Yoder’s reading of Romans 13, the government authorities are God’s servants *insofar* as they attend to rewarding the good and punishing the evil. It is not automatically *assumed* that this *is* the way government authority functions in all cases. Instead, government derives its

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 212, emphasis Yoder’s.

*legitimacy* from its role in upholding the good.<sup>111</sup> Interpretation of this text depends substantially on the participle *proskarterountes* in verse 6:

‘The authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.’ What is the grammatical construction of the participle ‘attending’ (*proskarterountes*)? Most translations consider it a simple further predication: ‘the authorities are ministers of God *and* they busy themselves with this very function (of meting out good to the good and evil to the evil).’ But this is from a grammatical viewpoint not the most likely meaning of such a participial construction. It is more likely that the participle represents an adverbial modifier of the previous predication. We should then read ‘they are ministers of God *to the extent* to which they busy themselves’ or ‘*when* they devote themselves’ to the assigned function. In the strictest sense we might take this adverbial modifier restrictively: ‘they are ministers of God *only to the extent to which* they carry out their function’; or we could take it more affirmatively: ‘they are ministers of God *by virtue of* their devoting themselves’ to it. In any case, whichever of these meanings be Paul’s intent, there are criteria whereby the functioning of government can be measured.<sup>112</sup>

In other words, Yoder argues that the text is not affirming that the government inevitably and always is serving God by upholding the good but instead that this defines the *legitimate* function of government and its service to God. It is a *criterion* rather than a *description*! If Yoder’s grammatical exegesis here is right, then *unjust* laws are *not* the legitimate function of government requiring obedience of its subjects. Compare with this verse 4, stating that governing authority is “God’s servant for your good” and “to execute wrath on the wrongdoer.” Such is its legitimate function—to seek the people’s well-being and prevent their being harmed by the wrongdoer.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 207-209.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 207-208, emphasis Yoder’s in all cases.

For Yoder, “subordination” to government falls under the larger picture of the Christian calling to “subordination” in all spheres of power and relationships.<sup>113</sup> Romans 13 is not a distinct endorsement of government or law or a call to unconditional obedience to the same. It says to accept government authority rather than denying that authority, acknowledging the legitimate role, function, and purpose of government to uphold the well-being of the people and contain evil. It is *not* a blank check or call to unconditional obedience or allegiance, which belongs only to God. Yoder further points out that verse 7 says, “Pay to all what is due them”, which is to be read in the context of verse 8: “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.” So what is due to the governing authority or to anyone else is to follow the dictates of love.

In the context of immigration policy and the question of the undocumented, it can be seen that the governing authorities and their role in preserving order, enacting the good, and protecting the people from harm have a legitimate purpose in establishing immigration laws and policies and in enforcing them. Yet, in accordance with Yoder’s exegesis of Romans 13, obedience to those laws is not unconditional. It is predicated upon their fulfilling the purpose of enacting the good and containing evil. In other words, they must be *just* laws. I have already pointed out two injustices inherent in our current immigration laws and a third in the manner in which they are enforced. It is unjust to uphold the contradiction of an economy that needs immigrant labor and seeks it out, while at the same time causing the laborers who respond to that need to live in constant fear of deportation, division of families, and in some cases dying in the desert trying to get here. Another injustice is the contradiction of seeking to integrate the

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 163-192.

economies of Mexico and the United States through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and in doing so generating economic activity that displaces workers in Mexico and leaves them jobless, while excluding from the free movement of the elements of production and trade one factor, labor, which denies those displaced workers the compensatory opportunity to procure the jobs they need through migration to their country's trading partner. The third injustice is in the way immigration law is enforced, placing virtually all of the burden of compliance on the workers, who are merely doing what they can to survive and struggling to make a living, and close to none of that burden on the employers, who are also in violation of the law but substantially without consequence to themselves. Justice does not prevail in our immigration laws. The good is not enacted, nor are all the wrongdoers punished. The government is not, in this case, fulfilling its legitimate purpose. Romans 13 does not apply here—at least, not in the manner in which it is typically invoked.

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As both Peridans and Edwards point out, the Bible and Christian theology do not tell Christians what immigration policy should be. Yet, it does make a difference what attitude toward the immigrant other and what theological resources one brings to the task of debating and formulating immigration policy. Part 3 of this dissertation, then, will be focused on resources from Christian faith and theology that inform our approach to the immigrant other—counter-narratives to the narrative of immigrants as a threat to our unity and identity as a people.

### **PART 3: A CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RESPONSE TO THE IMMIGRANT OTHER— COUNTER-NARRATIVES**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Near the end of Chapter 3, I highlighted an insight from Alasdair MacIntyre, with elaboration from a Christian theological standpoint by Stanley Hauerwas, that personal and collective identity are shaped and formed by narrative, as it is the narrative of a life or of a community that gives it integrity, uniting what would otherwise be disjointed fragments of existence. I also suggested that, directly or indirectly (to some extent both), the overarching narrative outlined in Jean Raspail's novel *The Camp of the Saints* is a narrative that in many ways shapes the immigration debate, forming and informing many people's hermeneutical lens through which they see immigrants—particularly Latino immigrants—as a threat to American national identity—if not to the entire continuation of “Western civilization.” The core of this narrative is that the dark-skinned, Third World immigrant “Other” is already in the process of overrunning the Western world (both Europe and the United States), threatening its demise, through the pervasive presence and alleged open-armed reception of Latino, Asian, and Muslim immigrants.

This can be seen in a more subtle and academically sophisticated form in Samuel Huntington's positing Latino immigrants and multiculturalism as threats to America's longstanding core culture as well as to its identification with, and its integral role in maintaining, Western civilization. And it can be seen in John Tanton's concerns about white Americans being out-bred by non-white immigrants from Latin America, whom he does not

believe to be capable of sustaining an advanced society. Then this narrative acquires its own mythological form in *The Camp of the Saints*.

What I want to propose here in Part 3 is that the Christian faith and Christian theology offer us some alternative narratives—counter-narratives to the one encapsulated in but not limited to Raspail’s lurid novel. I will examine some of these alternative narratives and their theological and ethical implications for the immigration debate, particularly in terms of what might be a Christian response to the immigrant other and whether or not that other is a threat to our collective identity as Americans and as proponents of Western civilization.

First, in Chapter 6, I will consider the Christian narrative of God’s reconciling work as the soteriological framework for our understanding of the Bible, our life with God, and our approach to the other. Next, in Chapter 7, I will elaborate the Christian narrative of a God whose very nature is defined by God’s preferential identification with, and demand of justice for, the poor, as captured by Latin American liberation theology’s preferential option for the poor. Finally, in Chapter 8, I will discuss the pervasive biblical theme of welcoming the stranger as a covenant command of God; a deeply rooted practice in the Ancient Near East, including Israel, and in the early Christian Church; and an essential component of life in grace. After examining some of the history and some distortions of the ancient practice of hospitality to the stranger, I will go on to suggest that for Christians, our response to the immigrant other may be shaped more substantially by the practice of radical hospitality (or its absence) than by our intellectual embrace of theological principles.

That which unites all of these counter-narratives from the Christian faith and Christian theology is that they are all expressions of God’s *agape*, which 1 John 4 tells us is the defining

characteristic for understanding who God is, as “God is love” (verses 8 and 16). This New Testament love that is the essential nature of God and is embodied in the Greek term *agape* is a self-giving, sacrificial, unconditional love that seeks the total well-being of the other—in God’s case, all of us, as we are all other than God. It is supremely embodied in the Christ who laid down his life for his followers and who commanded them to love one another as he had loved them, stating that this love would be the defining characteristic of his disciples (John 13:34-35; 15:12-13). God’s love manifests itself in God’s reconciling work in Christ, reconciling the world to Godself and giving the reconciled the message and ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19), breaking down the dividing walls of hostility and creating in Christ one new humanity in the place of two (or many) (Ephesians 2:11-22). God’s love is also seen for its gratuitous nature in God’s showing favoritism toward those who are not favored by others—the poor, the weak, the vulnerable, and the marginalized—in whose presence and circumstances the God of biblical faith is uniquely known. And God’s love is demonstrated in God’s covenantal expectation and command for God’s people to welcome one of the most marginalized categories of people—the “stranger”—the foreigner—the alien (immigrant) sojourning among God’s people (Leviticus 19:33-34), even as God’s presence and love are experienced in a particularly powerful and transforming way in the encounter between host and guest in a relationship of biblical hospitality.

In all of these theological trajectories, God’s love evokes a responsive love among God’s people, moving us to participate in God’s reconciling work, to embody God’s preferential love for the poor and the marginalized, and to fulfill God’s command to welcome the stranger. And in all of these embodiments of God’s *agape*, the other is received not as a threat but as a

bearer of gifts and an enhancement, rather than a diminishing, of our collective identity as a people.

## CHAPTER 6: SOTERIOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: GOD’S RECONCILING PURPOSE AND WORK

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ,  
and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. . .  
--2 Corinthians 5:18*

As a Master’s student at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, I took a course taught by Professor Theodore Weber called, “Theology and Ethics of Reconciliation.” I am indebted to Professor Weber for the new perspective that course gave me on a unifying theme for the whole of the Bible, the whole history of God’s dealings with humanity, and the whole of the Christian life. Many scholars have—I think rightly—seen God’s “salvation history” (*Heilsgeschichte*) as the overarching theme throughout the Scriptures and God’s dealings with humanity. The trouble is that “salvation” is a word like “love” that is very slippery, somewhat ambiguous, and subject to be invested with different meanings. Reconciliation is more fixed and concrete in its meaning. It is the restoration of a previously severed, or at least damaged, relationship. Following Professor Weber’s lead, I see God’s work of reconciliation—reconciling the world to Godself by restoring our relationship with God but also restoring our relationships with ourselves, with one another, and with the whole of the creation—restoring these relationships to their originally intended health, harmony, and wholeness—as what the Bible and the Christian faith are all about, insofar as one can harmonize the diverse voices and themes present in the Bible.

Reconciliation is a biblical term that comes from the Pauline and deuterio-Pauline theological expositions of the meaning of the gospel within the context of a Christianity transitioning from its Jewish origins to become a predominantly Gentile faith, and within the context of conflicts and divisions within local churches that were within Paul’s sphere of

influence. In Romans 5:1-11; 11:11-24; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21; Ephesians 2:11-22; and Colossians 1:15-23, reconciliation is described as being at the core of what God is doing in Christ—reconciling us to God, reconciling the world to God, reconciling Jew and Gentile to God and to each other in one body as one new humanity, and reconciling to Godself (or to Christ) all things, whether on earth or in heaven. Yet, certainly the theme of God working to restore broken relationships extends far beyond these few texts, even when the language of reconciliation is not specifically used.

In fact, in the Hebrew Bible and Christian Old Testament, the primary language is that of “covenant” and “righteousness,” which again are the language of rightly ordered relationships. There is also the theme of God’s *shalom* as a restoration of peace, harmony, and wholeness to the whole of the creation, including the animal kingdom as well as humans. In the Johannine corpus, there is the language of “abiding”—abiding in Christ, abiding in God, God and Christ abiding in the believer, abiding in Jesus’ love, etc. (John 15:1-11; 1 John 4:16); the language of loving one another (John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-21); and the language of oneness—oneness of Jesus and the Father and the appeal for oneness of the believers not only with Jesus and the Father but also with each other (John 17:11, 20-23, 26). Again, in each case, it is the language of relationships. Similarly, in the Synoptics, there is the centrality of the two poles of the Great Commandment, to love God with all of one’s being and to love other people as much as self (Mark 12:28-34 and parallels). Once again, the focus is on right relationships with God and people.

Some have expounded upon liberation as the primary theme for uniting and appropriating the biblical message, especially within the various liberation theologies. Indeed,

God's deliverance of the oppressed from their affliction is certainly a major biblical theme, from the story of God's deliverance of the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, to the prophetic declarations of God's deliverance of the poor and the vulnerable out of their bondage and God's judgment upon the powerful for their abuses against them, to Jesus' declaration that he had come to fulfill the prophecies about deliverance of the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed and to proclaim the Jubilee Year (Luke 4:16-21), in addition to the theme of Christ liberating us from the bondage of sin and death. There is much to be said about the power of this biblical theme for those who are victims of poverty, injustice, and oppression. Yet, I see liberation as a subtheme within the overarching theme of reconciliation, of the restoration of rightly ordered relationships, starting with our relationship with God. When relationships are rightly ordered, this will include liberation and justice, whereas liberation of the oppressed may stop short of restoring their relationship with the oppressors, so that reconciliation is the more comprehensive and inclusive theme. More fundamentally, liberation from bondage does not necessarily address the root problem of our alienation from God. Still, it is of utmost importance to include attention to the theme of God's liberation of the poor and the marginalized from their bondage as part of God's reconciling work.

### **The Brokenness of the Creation and the Reconciling Work of God:**

God originally created a good, beautiful, harmonious world. Genesis 1, after almost every act of creation, declares that "God saw that it was good" (1:4, 12, 18, 21, 25), and upon reviewing the whole of the creation, Genesis 1:31 sums up, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." But the brokenness of human sin, seeking to rise above the status of creature and usurp the role of the Creator, knowing good from evil (perhaps a

mythological expression of human presumption in arbitrarily establishing rules and codes of morality) (Genesis 3), resulted not only in humans' alienation from God but also from the land, from labor, from the animal kingdom, and from other humans (Genesis 3:14-19, 22-24; 4:8-12; 6:5-7). After that brokenness of humanity and of the creation had become a reality, the remainder of the Bible is the story of God's continual working to restore the harmony and wholeness, to fix the brokenness, to restore our relationship with God, with each other, and with the creation.

God's reconciling work begins with a series of covenants between God and certain people. The first covenant was with Noah (Genesis 9:8-17), though the only terms of this covenant are that God will never again destroy all living things with a flood. Nonetheless, this covenant is one of God's starting over with humanity and the creation, beginning with Noah and his family, as a part of God's reconciling work of restoring humanity to a right relationship with God and to right relationships with one another, after humanity had morally devolved to the point that "every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5) "and the earth was filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11).

The covenant that properly begins God's work of healing the damage caused by human sin is the covenant with Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-22). God began in that covenant setting apart a people who would live their lives in relation to God and be the instruments through which God would work for the restoration of the whole of humanity. Abraham and Sarah and their descendants would be blessed in order to be a blessing to all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:2-3). The covenant begins with God's promises (land, descendants, a great name, blessed to be a blessing) before God issues any commands and

requirements for an obedient response to God. Yet, the overall purpose of God is to set apart a people who will dwell in a restored relationship with God and will serve as God's instrument for the restoration (blessing) of other peoples (all the families of the earth).

The next significant covenant God makes is with the "nation" or people of Israel, a people whom God delivers out of slavery in Egypt and promises to give the land of Canaan. God "remembers" God's covenant with the patriarchs, hears the cries of the enslaved people of Israel, and promises them deliverance and a land of their own (Exodus 6:1-8), including use of the recurring covenant language, "I will take you as my people, and I will be your God" (Exodus 6:7):

God also spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am [YHWH]. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as [*El Shaddai*], but by my name [YHWH] I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they resided as aliens. I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the Israelites, 'I am [YHWH], and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am [YHWH] your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am [YHWH].'"<sup>1</sup> (Exodus 6:2-8)

*The Sub-narrative of the Conquest and the Over-arching Narrative of God's Reconciling Work:*

Here we are immediately faced with a problem. The land promised to the people of Israel is a land that already belongs to other peoples, the Canaanites and other indigenous

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<sup>1</sup> Text of NRSV emended by substituting the Hebrew names for God in brackets, with a transliteration of the tetragrammaton replacing "The LORD" and "*El Shaddai*" replacing "God Almighty."

peoples. A sub-narrative here is God's command to totally displace and destroy these indigenous peoples and take their land--a command to commit genocide:

When [YHWH] your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many nations before you--the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations mightier and more numerous than you--and when [YHWH] your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. Make no covenant with them and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for that would turn away your children from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of [YHWH] would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. But this is how you must deal with them: break down their altars, smash their pillars, hew down their sacred poles, and burn their idols with fire. For you are a people holy to [YHWH] your God; [YHWH] your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession. (Deuteronomy 7:1-6)

The book of Joshua describes the people of Israel carrying out this commandment by annihilating the people of Jericho and several other cities, with an impression of conquest of the whole land to be distributed among the tribes of Israel and obliteration of its native inhabitants (Joshua 6-12). At the conquest of Jericho the command to completely destroy all its inhabitants is given again: "The city and all that is in it shall be devoted to [YHWH] for destruction." (Joshua 6:17). And it is carried out: "Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys." (Joshua 6:21).

The phrase, "devoted to destruction," referred to by biblical scholars as the "ban," is a translation of the Hebrew word *cherem*, "which literally means something prohibited."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Michael David Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 206.

Referring to the spoils of war, it means that which is set apart for Yahweh as exclusively his, and therefore prohibited for any other use. It applies to all spoils, including animals and human beings, as well as inanimate objects.<sup>3</sup>

The Moabites, Israel's neighbors, also practiced the ban.<sup>4</sup> The reason stated in Deuteronomy 7 is to prevent the people of Israel from turning toward serving the gods of the other peoples in the land. However, this would not explain very well the destruction of animals and inanimate objects. Thus, some scholars have proposed that the ban was actually an effort to avoid contracting diseases carried by indigenous peoples, to which Israelites, as outsiders, did not have immunity.<sup>5</sup> "In any case, the ban seems to have been an ideal rarely if ever carried out."<sup>6</sup>

The last point is an important one, for the conquest as described in Joshua may not have ever happened--at least not in the way described, as it is contradicted both by the archaeological record and by the Bible itself. In fact, the archaeological record indicates that "the cities of Jericho, Ai and Gibeon were uninhabited at the end of the thirteenth century BCE, which is when a majority of scholars would place the time of Joshua. . ."<sup>7</sup> Moreover, "the first chapter of the book of Judges describes in detail how several of the tribes failed to drive out the inhabitants of the land, who thus lived alongside the Israelites."<sup>8</sup> Judges 3 states further, in a summary statement about the peoples of the land:

So the Israelites lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and they took their daughters as wives

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

for themselves, and their own daughters they gave to their sons; and they worshipped their gods. (Judges 3:5-6)

The book of Judges in general describes, not a united "nation" of Israel but loose, temporary confederations among the tribes in order to deal with local and occasional threats. Siegfried Herrmann sorts out, based on the varying biblical accounts, the settlement of the various tribes in the land as independent groups of people<sup>9</sup> and summarizes:

EVERYTHING THAT WE know indicates that the Israelite tribes which took possession of the cultivated land of Palestine from different points and at different times were not at first united or led and organized under a common leadership. Relations between them were loose; only a few of the tribes, perhaps the southern tribes round Judah or the central tribes in the hill-country of Ephraim, can have made closer contact, at least during the latter stages of their settlement.<sup>10</sup>

Michael Coogan describes the complex composition of the Israelite confederation of tribes, suggesting that one or more groups of Hebrew slaves escaped from Egypt, "attributed their escape to intervention on their behalf by the deity Yahweh," came to call themselves Israel, and once in Canaan "joined with other groups, some of whom were related by kinship and some not, to form a confederation."<sup>11</sup> Only during the monarchy would these tribal groups be formed together into a kind of national unity, in response to the Philistine threat,<sup>12</sup> and begin to pull together various strands of tradition from different tribal groups into one national narrative tracing back to the patriarchs, through the sojourn in and exodus from Egypt, through the journey to and conquest of Canaan.

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<sup>9</sup>Siegfried Herrmann, *A History of Israel in Old Testament Times*, Rev. and enl. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 86-105.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>11</sup> Coogan, 223.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 227.

So the book of Judges preserves traditions that indicate, rather than a conquest and extermination of indigenous peoples by a united people of Israel, something more like a mixing and merging of peoples in the land (with periodic wars and conquests among the various peoples and tribes at the local level), who eventually acquired a common identity as "Israel," though a unified worship of Yahweh, as opposed to the Canaanite deities, was never fully accomplished in the land--not even during the monarchy. Later, after the breakup of the national unity into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, the fall of the former to the Assyrians, who made the latter a vassal state, and eventually the fall of Judah to the Babylonians, the Deuteronomistic History (DTR) would interpret all of these cataclysmic events as Yahweh's punishment for the people worshipping Canaanite gods and/or blending the worship of Yahweh with elements of Canaanite worship.<sup>13</sup> Hence we have DTR's rewriting of Israel's history to include God's commandment of the ban and Joshua's faithful fulfillment of the commandment by exterminating the indigenous peoples of the land during the "conquest."

Still, historically accurate or not, the sub-narrative here of a God who commands the indiscriminate extermination of indigenous peoples in order to make room for another people and to prevent their intermingling is a theologically troublesome image of God, as well as a problematic paradigm for human expansionism and conquest. Even if the settlement of Israel in the land did not actually happen that way, the narrative itself has its own adverse impact. As

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 192.

Robert Allen Warrior points out, in his essay, "A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians,"<sup>14</sup>

The research of Old Testament scholars, however much it provides an answer to the historical question--the contribution of the indigenous people of Canaan to the formation and emergence of Israel as a nation--does not resolve the narrative problem. People who read the narratives read them as they are, not as scholars and experts would *like* them to be read and interpreted. History is no longer with us. The narrative remains.<sup>15</sup>

Warrior adds that the Canaanites have been the ignored voice in the texts focused on the liberation of Israel and their being given the land as a possession. Commentaries and other critical exegetical sources, along with theologies of liberation drawing upon the Exodus motif, "express little concern for the status of the indigenes and their rights as human beings and as nations. . . The leading into the land becomes just one more redemptive moment rather than a violation of innocent peoples' rights to land and self-determination."<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the narrative of the conquest of the Canaanites has been specifically used as a basis for the United States' displacement and extermination of Native Americans, in accordance with "America's self-image as a 'chosen people.'"<sup>17</sup> "Many Puritan preachers were fond of referring to Native Americans as Amelkites and Canaanites--in other words, people who, if they would not be converted, were worthy of annihilation."<sup>18</sup> I wonder to what extent this narrative has also been a basis for the displacement of Palestinians beginning in 1948, upon

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Allen Warrior, "A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 237. Emphasis is the author's.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

the reconstitution of the nation of Israel, and for Israel's domination of the Palestinian people since. Certainly in politics both in Israel and in the United States, the Bible has been cited as a foundation for a sense of divinely sanctioned entitlement of Israel to this land, without regard for the fact that the Palestinians were the occupants of the land before them, at least in modern times.

So how can people of biblical faith deal with this problematic narrative? In particular, how can I deal with its inconsistency with what I have identified as the larger, over-arching narrative of God's work of reconciling the whole world? First, it must be admitted that the Bible has many divergent voices in its sub-narratives and details, as it is the weaving together of many diverse traditions and sources. There is the earlier view of Yahweh as the tribal or national deity of Israel, fighting for Israel and conquering other peoples on its behalf, as reflected in the DTR narrative of the conquest of the land and of most of Israel's history as a nation (and as two kingdoms of Israel and Judah). This is to be contrasted with the later prophetic view, as particularly reflected in Second Isaiah (Isaiah 40-55), that Yahweh is the one true God over all the universe, along with a corollary different understanding of Israel's chosenness, that they were to be the instrument (light to the nations) of God's salvation being extended to the end of the earth (Isaiah 49:1-7)--in other words, to all peoples, even as the earlier promise to Abraham was that through him and his descendants all the families of the earth would be blessed. The book of Jonah seems also to be something of a critique of Israel's nationalism, a reminder that Yahweh loves even the enemies of Israel, the Assyrians of Ninevah, and is concerned for their well-being and salvation.

Then there is, on the one hand, the obsessive concern with Israel's purity, not mixing with other peoples, as reflected in both the DTR account of the whole history of Israel in the land and Ezra's fierce xenophobic reaction to the people of Judah intermarrying with "the peoples of the land" and "foreign women," physically abusing the men who had entered into these marriages and insisting that they separate themselves from their wives (Ezra 10:9-17; Nehemiah 13:23-31). This is to be contrasted, on the other hand, with the much friendlier attitude toward such intermarriages reflected in the book of Ruth, the Moabite woman who marries Israelite Boaz and becomes the great-grandmother of King David (Ruth 4:13-22), with strong indication in the text that this marriage was the right and necessary thing for Boaz to do, in accordance with the Mosaic law, as the next of kin (*go'el*) to Ruth's deceased first husband, who was also an Israelite (Ruth 3 and 4).

Narratives such as the annihilation of the Canaanites by Israel at God's command must be critiqued, not only in terms of their historical accuracy and their contradiction of other biblical narratives but also in terms of their inconsistency with the larger narrative of the Bible as a whole. John Wesley had a hermeneutical principle of interpreting individual parts of the Bible in the light of the "whole tenor of Scripture." I would offer a hermeneutical principle of seeing the whole of the Bible in the light of its over-arching narrative, God's work of reconciling the world, and critiquing the Bible's sub-narratives in terms of their consistency or inconsistency with that larger narrative. The sub-narratives cannot be ignored, because their impact is real. Rather, it is important that they be read critically by hearing the voices that are silenced in the text, such as the voices of the Canaanites and other indigenous peoples in the land, and by reading the texts from the perspective of marginalized groups today who can

identify with the Canaanites, such as Native Americans and other peoples impacted by colonialism.

This approach to the biblical text would bring up the whole question of the inspiration of Scripture, which is particularly difficult for someone who is an inerrantist, which I am not. My own understanding of the inspiration of Scripture is that it is the product of divine-human interaction, such that the written word is a human document, written by human beings, in the light of their encounter with the divine Word. Thus the Bible as a whole reflects the story of God's interactions with human beings, and the story as a whole is the Word of God, but the specific details and sub-narratives are also intermixed with human cultural beliefs, biases, and limitations in understanding and applying the divine Word. As Cheryl Anderson states in her book *Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies: The Need for Inclusive Biblical Interpretation*, in approaching various specific biblical texts, "obedience to the divine will must involve a discernment process that distinguishes between divine concern and human interest."<sup>19</sup> The idea of the ban certainly served the interests of the monarchy in Israel and Judah in their attempts to consolidate and centralize power and to give divine sanction to forcefully seizing the property of non-Israelite peoples, just as the use of these narratives served the interest of those in the United States who violently seized the property of Native Americans by exterminating them or driving them off the land.

I would follow Stanley Hauerwas in seeing the Bible as a conversation among different voices within a community that bases its life on God's story contained therein, a conversation which is ongoing in the community that holds the Bible to be an authoritative guide to its life.

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<sup>19</sup> Cheryl B. Anderson, *Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies: The Need for Inclusive Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 53.

The conversation goes on, and God's story is a truthful story, but it must be continually interpreted and reinterpreted.<sup>20</sup>

### *Covenant Relationships and Laws:*

The covenant between God and Israel includes specific terms defining relationships within the covenant partnership, parameters defining a right relationship with God and right relationships between and among God's people as parties to the covenant. The central core of the covenant is some variation on the pronouncement, "And you (they) will be my people, and I will be your (their) God." (Exodus 6:7; Deuteronomy 29:13; Jeremiah 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 32:38; Ezekiel 11:20; 14:11; 34:30-31; 37:23; Hosea 2:23). Beyond this general statement of the nature of the relationship, the specific terms of the covenant are laid out in the covenant legislation, centered in the "Ten Commandments" (literally, "words") (Exodus 20:1-17/Deuteronomy 5:6-22), but expanded to include case law dealing with various situations and other provisions extending through most of Exodus 19-31, Leviticus, and parts of Numbers, with much of it repeated in Deuteronomy.

The covenant and the commandments are grounded in God's acts of deliverance: "I am [YHWH] your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. . ." (Exodus 20:2/ Deuteronomy 5:6). God's deliverance then evokes a human response of obedience to the terms of the covenant, fulfilling God's expectations for a right relationship with God and right relationships with people and the creation. Obedience then brings further promises of blessings:

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<sup>20</sup> Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*, 59-64.

Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. (Exodus 19:5-6)

Therefore, observe diligently the commandment--the statutes, and the ordinances--that I am commanding you today. If you heed these ordinances, [YHWH] your God will maintain with you the covenant loyalty that he swore to your ancestors; he will love you, bless you, and multiply you; he will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock, in the land that he swore to your ancestors to give you. (Deuteronomy 7:11-13)

Here again, some of the details of the covenant legislation are troublesome. Women are regarded as the property of their father (before marriage) or their husband (after marriage), slavery is condoned, and capital punishment is prescribed for numerous perceived offenses less egregious than the murder of another human being, from blasphemy to adultery (even in the case of some married women who may be the innocent victim of a rape) to sexual intercourse between men (Leviticus 20:13). Even in the Ten Commandments, considered to be the core of the covenant legislation, both women and slaves are listed among the property not to be coveted—in fact, both listed after the house (Exodus 20:17),<sup>21</sup> and the commandment against adultery (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18) was considered to be a property crime against a woman's husband.

Because of the nature of marriage, adultery was not so much evidence of moral depravity as the violation of a husband's right to have sole sexual possession of his wife and to have the assurance that his children were his own.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The wife is listed before the house in Deuteronomy 5:21, and arguably, somewhat separate from the other property, though still, to covet or desire what belongs to one's neighbor is a property offense.

<sup>22</sup> Otto J. Baab, "Adultery," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 51.

Cheryl Anderson describes how “embedded within these laws are underlying values concerning women, the poor, and non-Israelites” that have marginalized these categories of persons and continue to marginalize them today.<sup>23</sup>

Women and their bodies were under the control of a man—either the father or the husband.<sup>24</sup> Rape was not considered a violation against the woman herself but instead either a crime against an unmarried woman’s father, to whom the monetary compensation of paying the bride-price was due, while the woman may then be forced to marry her rapist (Exodus 22:16-17; Deuteronomy 22:28-29);<sup>25</sup> or a crime against a married (or engaged) woman’s husband, in which case the offender must be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 22:23-27). Moreover, if a married woman was raped in a town, rather than in the open country, she also was to be stoned to death because she (presumably) did not cry out for help (Deuteronomy 22:23-24).<sup>26</sup> Women (along with their young children) were completely dependent upon a man for their livelihood. If divorced by the husband, a woman had no place to live and no means of support, unless she was fortunate enough to remarry. A widow was not allowed to inherit her husband’s estate, which was inherited by his sons, primarily (a double portion or two-thirds) the firstborn son (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). And if there was no son, the law of levirate marriage required that the late husband’s brother marry the widow to father sons in his name (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). If he refused (or presumably, if there was no brother to fulfill this law),

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<sup>23</sup>Anderson, 31-46.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 32-33.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 33-34.

the widow and her children would be destitute.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, a father could sell his daughter as a slave, and she would be a slave for life, rather than serving the six year period of a male Hebrew slave (Exodus 21:2,7), though the non-application of the six year limit to female slaves is contradicted by Deuteronomy 15:12.

Thus the covenant legislation treated women as somewhat less than full human beings, essentially as the property of the father and then the husband. Slaves, especially non-Israelite slaves, were likewise treated as less than human beings and as the property of their owners. In fact, the slave owner had full rights over his slaves and was not accountable for any maltreatment of them short of striking them such that they died immediately. If the slave owner should strike the slave, and the slave should live a day or two before dying, then “there is no punishment; for the slave is the owner’s property.” Moreover, even for the blow that leads to the immediate death of the slave, there is only indication that “the owner shall be punished,” with no specification of the nature or extent of said punishment. (Exodus 21:20-21). A slave struck by the owner so as to lose an eye or a tooth would be set free, with no indication of punishment of the owner, other than the loss of his slave (Exodus 21:26-27).<sup>28</sup> A male Israelite slave could only be retained as a slave for a period of six years, but if he should be given a wife by his master, then he was faced with a choice of either leaving his wife and their children behind, since they were the property of the master, or allowing himself to become a slave for life in order to remain with his wife and children (Exodus 21:2-6).<sup>29</sup> Moreover, there was no six year limit to the slavery of either female slaves (Exodus 21:7; contrast Deuteronomy

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

15:12) or non-Israelite slaves, who would remain slaves for life and could be inherited as property (Leviticus 25:44-46).

There is little or no ambiguity in the covenant legislation about the treatment of women and slaves as property, rather than full human beings. More ambiguous is the legislative response toward the poor and the foreigner. On the one hand, there are laws against abusing widows, orphans, and resident aliens and making some provision for the poor through leaving behind some of the produce of the harvest for them to glean (Exodus 22:22-24; Leviticus 19:9-10; Deuteronomy 24:17-22); charging the (Israelite) poor interest is forbidden (Exodus 22:25-27); and Israelites are commanded to “Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.” (Deuteronomy 15:7-11).<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the conditions that lead to poverty are somewhat ameliorated but not eliminated, slavery among fellow Israelites was limited to some degree but still allowed, widows were not allowed to inherit their husband’s property and therefore were often forced into destitution, and non-Israelites were not afforded any of the prohibitions or limitations upon the charging of interest, debt servitude, or lifelong slavery.<sup>31</sup>

I cannot entirely agree with Cheryl Anderson when she at least implies that there were no attempts in the laws to address the structural economic causes of poverty,<sup>32</sup> since there were at least the provisions of the sabbatical and jubilee years that every seventh (sabbatical) year (at least for Israelites) debts were to be cancelled and slaves set free, with abundant provision for their livelihood (Deuteronomy 15:1-2,12-18); and additionally every fiftieth (jubilee) year land was to be returned to the family that had originally owned it and had lost it

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 39-41.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 40.

due to hardship (Leviticus 25:8-24). Meager as these provisions may be in terms of economic restructuring, they do at least represent some attempt to correct injustices in an economic system in which some fell into debt and debt servitude, and some lost their land, by affording them a new beginning, a chance to start over; and had the sabbatical year and the jubilee year been implemented on a consistent basis, they no doubt would have represented the most significant downward redistribution of wealth the ancient world ever knew.

In regard specifically to foreigners or aliens residing among the Israelites, there are contradictions within the text itself. On the one hand, these resident aliens were not to be wronged or oppressed but to be loved as oneself and treated as the citizen, with the continual reminder that the Israelites themselves had been strangers and aliens in Egypt and therefore knew the heart of the alien (Exodus 22:21; 23:9; Leviticus 19:33-34; Deuteronomy 10:19). The most comprehensive text is Leviticus 19:33-34:

When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am [YHWH] your God.

This is in direct contradiction to the provisions of the law that allowed foreigners to be treated differently than Israelites, including the charging of interest and lifelong slavery, but especially the law of the ban, which called for the annihilation of non-Israelites in the land rather than allowing them to reside among Israelites.

Yet, for all their flaws and even internal contradictions, these covenant laws were a human attempt to implement the divine command of right relationships with God and between people. In fact, the covenant legislation set boundaries and restraints that ameliorated, even if not eliminating, violence and injustice. For example, the *lex talionis* or law of retaliation, “life

for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" (Exodus 21:23-24), was not so much a *commandment* to extract vengeance as a *restraint* of it, such that one does not seek the death of the other who maimed or the death of the whole family of the one who killed. "The community sets a limit on vengeance and thereby seeks to control violence. . . Thus the laws seek to de-escalate the violence and have it over and done with."<sup>33</sup> In other ways also, these laws were intended to set limits and restraints upon the injustices that existed within the culture in which the laws were embedded, as can be seen in the ambivalent legislation regarding the poor and the foreigner.

The laws remain, to a degree, a product of the culture and history in which they were created, a history and culture that were indeed shaped by a certain perspective and not entirely cognizant of alternative perspectives. The perspectives of the poor and the foreigner/ non-Israelite are at least partially represented, though there is little evidence that the perspective of women is represented at all. The marginalization of the poor and the foreigner can be critiqued from within the text, while the subordination and virtual non-personhood of women must be critiqued from beyond the text, though there are some New Testament resources for this critique, including Jesus' radical openness to and respectful treatment of women, in the earliest stages women having leadership roles in the church, and the early baptismal formula that in Christ there is "neither . . . male and female" (the gender distinction is relativized and is no longer socially significant), as all are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28).

The laws are part of the culture in which they arose and reflect in many ways the limited and limiting values of that culture. Therefore, it is right to subject these laws to intercultural

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<sup>33</sup> Walter Brueggemann, "The Book of Exodus: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 873.

and liberationist critiques. Moreover, they are to be critiqued from the standpoint of the whole tenor of Scripture and the larger biblical narrative of God's reconciling work and therefore can be seen as partially supporting that work of reconciliation and partially inhibiting it, as are even the best of human efforts (particularly within the limits of bondage to a particular cultural milieu).

Once again, the divine Word is filtered through and interpreted by human words and therefore must be continually interpreted and reinterpreted. The only way to resolve conflicts and contradictions within the text itself is to appeal to the larger narrative of God's work of reconciling the whole world, restoring right relationships between humanity and God and among human beings themselves. This is the *intent* even among the covenant laws, however inadequately that intent is enacted. In placing these laws within the larger context of God's reconciling work, the *intent* (the spirit of the law) must be given precedence over the details of the implementation (the letter of the law). Meanwhile also the perspectives that have been left out of or marginalized within the text need to be heard.

*Renewal—of the Covenant, the People, and the Land:*

The biblical story is a narrative in which God's people repeatedly fail to keep the terms of the covenant, in which accumulated injustices deplete the resources of the poorest of the people and even force them into the dependency of debt slavery, and in which not only the people but the land itself becomes exhausted through overuse and lack of rest. Therefore, provision is made for renewal of the covenant, of the people, and of the land itself.

Deuteronomy 30:1-20 makes provision for renewal of the covenant by the people, already assuming that they will fail to live up to its demands, as the Deuteronomist is writing from the

perspective of hindsight, looking back upon the people's failures to live up to the covenant and their consequentially being taken into exile, and promising that if the people return to YHWH, the God of the covenant, then they will be able to return to the land of their ancestors (Deuteronomy 30:1-5). This return to God also includes a return to observing all the terms of the covenant (Deuteronomy 30:8-10,16). After the entry into the promised land, Joshua led the people of Israel in a renewal of the covenant (Joshua 24:1-28). King Josiah, upon discovery of the book of the covenant in the temple, led the people of Judah in a renewal of the covenant (2 Kings 23:1-3). And after the return from the Babylonian Exile, the scribe and priest Ezra led the people in a renewal of the covenant (Nehemiah 8:1-10:39).

The Hebrew prophets were commissioned to carry God's message to the people, reminding them of the terms of the covenant and calling them to repentance, to a return to the God of the covenant and to the terms of the covenant. Then finally, amidst all the failures of the people to live up to the covenant, came the promise through the prophet Jeremiah of a new covenant, in which the God's *torah* (law/ instructions for living) would be internalized, written on the hearts of the people:

The days are surely coming, says [YHWH], when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt--a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says [YHWH]. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says [YHWH]: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know [YHWH],' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says [YHWH]; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

The New Testament and Christian theology would later declare this promised to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in the coming of the Holy Spirit, so that God's people henceforth live guided by

the indwelling Holy Spirit rather than the letter of the law (2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:6-13; cf. Romans 7:14-8:17).

Yet, the story of God's reconciling work among the people set apart to God recognizes not only a need to renew the covenant but also to renew the people themselves and the land itself, as the people become exhausted through their continuous labor, the land becomes exhausted and depleted through continuous agricultural usage, and some of the people are beaten down by poverty and by an economic system in which they lose their land, are forced into debt in order to survive, and in many cases are even reduced to debt slavery. So within the covenant God made provision for renewal of the people and of the land, for rest and for a new beginning, a chance to start over. Thus the Sabbath laws made provision for a weekly day of rest for the people, including the slaves, and even for the animals (Exodus 20:8-11; 23:12; Leviticus 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:12-15); the sabbatical years made provision for the renewal of the people and of the land, as every seventh year would be a time when debts are cancelled, slaves set free, and the land would not be cultivated in order to give it rest and the chance to renew itself (Exodus 23:1-11; Leviticus 25:1-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-18); and the jubilee or fiftieth year additionally required that the land would be returned to the family that originally owned it, offering to the poor whose hold on the land was tenuous a renewed economic security in the land and a chance to start over (Leviticus 25:8-24), along with other provisions for the redemption of land and of people from debt slavery (Leviticus 25:25-55).

*God's Shalom, the Messianic Reign, and the Day of YHWH:*

The Hebrew prophets not only reminded the people of their covenant with God and called them to repentance, but also proclaimed a vision of a new future, a vision of a coming

day of YHWH when God's judgment/justice would intervene in human affairs to confront idolatry and injustice; a vision of God's Messianic reign of justice, righteousness, and peace; and a vision of God's promised *shalom* as a state of total peace, harmony, and wholeness, from the cessation of all wars and the conversion of the instruments of war into tools for farming (Isaiah 2:4/ Micah 2:3) to the rendering harmless of previously predatory and dangerous animals (Isaiah 11:6-9). The general prophetic view was that things are in disarray now. God's people have violated the terms of the covenant, offending God and abusing people. Therefore the whole world has gone awry, from internal chaos and foreign aggression and domination to destruction and exile. But God has a plan to take charge of everything one day and make things right, a coming day of YHWH which would bring God's reign of righteousness, justice, and peace into being. This "Reign/Kingdom of God" will be accomplished through the reign of God's chosen deliverer and anointed ruler (Messiah), who would be the instrument of God's righteous reign and would come from the royal line of David.

These prophetic conceptions, the day of YHWH, the Messianic reign to come, and the vision of God's promised *shalom* are not always or entirely blended together in the prophetic writings. Yet, theologically they articulate together one vision of God's planned future, a future which will be a reign of justice (*mishpat*), righteousness (*tsedheq/tsedhaqah*), and peace (*shalom*). Some definition of these frequently occurring terms seems necessary at this point. "Justice" in the Hebrew Bible is the same as "judgment" (*mishpat*) and is the task of correcting abuses that occur within relationships as defined by the covenant, with special concern for reversing the marginalization and neglect of the most vulnerable members of society such as

the poor, the widow and orphan, and the “stranger”<sup>34</sup> (Hebrew *ger*, sojourner, the foreigner or alien from another people sojourning among God’s people<sup>35</sup>). “Righteousness” (*tsedheq* or *tsedhaqah*) means rightly living out the demands of relationships in accordance with God’s order as defined by the terms of the covenant.<sup>36</sup> For biblical faith the word “peace” is rooted in the Hebrew word *shalom*, a word that is much richer than the word “peace” as we use it today. A better translation is “wholeness,” in the sense of *total well-being*. As biblical scholar E.M. Good defines it, peace in the Old Testament is: “The state of wholeness possessed by persons or groups, which may be health, prosperity, security, or the spiritual completeness of covenant.”<sup>37</sup>

For the prophets, the day of YHWH would be a time of judgment for oppressors but also a time of justice, hope, and liberation for the oppressed. For the prophet Joel (chapter 2), the day of YHWH would be a terrifying day of God’s judgment but would also issue in a time of renewal and hope for the faithful, repentant remnant who answer the call of God. For Amos (5:18-27), the day of YHWH was not seen as something desirable, for it is “darkness, not light” (5:18) and includes God’s judgment upon religious ritual (festivals, solemn assemblies, animal

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<sup>34</sup> Interpretive summary based on biblical usage and consulting the following: Volkmar Hertrich, “The OT Term *Mishpat*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), especially 927-30; James L. Mays, “Justice: Perspectives from the Prophetic Tradition,” in *Prophecy in Israel: Search for an Identity*, ed. David L. Petersen, Issues in Religion and Theology (Philadelphia and London: Fortress Press; SPCK, 1987).

<sup>35</sup> Mauch, “Stranger.”

<sup>36</sup> Interpretive summary based on biblical usage and consulting the following: E. R. Achtemeier, “Righteousness in the OT,” *ibid.*; Gottlob Schrenk, “Δίκη, Δίκαιος, Δικαιοσύνη, Δικαίω, Δικαίωμα, Δικαίωσις, Δικαιοκρασία,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964).

<sup>37</sup> E. M. Good, “Peace in the OT,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et. al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 704.

sacrifices, songs) that is not accompanied by justice and righteousness, and upon idolatry, for which reason God would take the people into exile.

Yet, the prophetic vision of God's judgment to come is also accompanied by descriptions of God's deliverance to be enacted through the coming of God's anointed ruler (Messiah) from the line of David. Isaiah 9:1-7 describes how the coming of this Davidic "son" will be like a great light shining forth in the midst of a deep darkness. His advent will bring about joy, deliverance from oppression, an end to violence and war, and a reign of justice, righteousness, and peace. Likewise, Isaiah 11:1-9 describes how a descendant of David shall arise who is anointed with the spirit of YHWH, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, guidance and power, knowledge and fear of YHWH. He will not rule in normal human ways but with righteousness, "equity for the meek of the earth" (11:4), and faithfulness (*amenah*—"firmness, stability"/ trustworthiness in relationships<sup>38</sup>). And the peace (*shalom*) of this Messianic reign will extend even to the animal kingdom, such that there will be an end to all violence and destruction:

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of [YHWH] as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:6-9)

Similarly, in the Psalms and the writings of the Hebrew prophets, God's promised peace and salvation are intertwined in a vision of universal harmony that includes not only the absence of war but also the presence of righteousness, a harmlessness that extends even to the animal kingdom, and the fruitfulness of the land. Several biblical texts depict this harmonious

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<sup>38</sup> E. C. Blackman, "Faith, Faithfulness," *ibid.*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al. (1990), 222-23.

unity and wholeness that for the Hebrew prophets is encompassed in the word *shalom*, while John the Baptist and Jesus would later describe the same reality as the Reign of God, and Paul (as expressed in the Pauline and deutero-Pauline epistles) referred to God's plan to reconcile all things in Christ.

Psalm 85:8-13 uses images to depict the harmony that ensues through a convergence of the qualities and characteristics of the covenant relationship, as a demonstration of the peace (*shalom*) that God will speak to God's people. God's salvation (*yishah*--deliverance from oppression and life-denying circumstances, rooted in Israel's experience of God's deliverance out of slavery in Egypt<sup>39</sup>) is at hand. God's glory (*kabod*—visible, physical manifestation of God's presence, e.g., in fire at Mt. Sinai or in the cloud over the tabernacle containing the ark of the covenant<sup>40</sup>) will dwell in the land. Steadfast love (*chesed*—faithfulness to the covenant relationship<sup>41</sup>) and faithfulness (*amenah*—“firmness, stability”/ trustworthiness in relationships) will meet. Righteousness (*tsedheq*—fulfillment of the demands of the covenant relationship, whether with God or with people) and peace (*shalom*--“wholeness,” in the sense of *total well-being*) will “kiss each other.” Righteousness and faithfulness will converge on each other from above and below. Meanwhile, the land will be productive, God will provide good things, and God's righteousness will reign supreme.

Micah 4:1-3 (= Isaiah 2:2-4) describes a future in which all nations are united under one God, learning and living by the ways of God and dwelling in a worldwide unity and harmony without violence, hostility, and war:

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<sup>39</sup> Alan Richardson, "Salvation, Savior," *ibid.*, 169-70.

<sup>40</sup> G. Henton Davies, "Glory," *ibid.*, 401-02.

<sup>41</sup> E. M. Good, "Love in the OT," *ibid.* (1962).

He shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. . . (Micah 4:3 and almost identical in Isaiah 2:4)

Isaiah 65:17-25 offers an even more comprehensive vision and hope, including the promise of a new heaven and a new earth, in which there will be a restoration that puts the past completely behind; a joy in which there will be no more weeping nor cries of distress; and longevity of life with no infant mortality. The people will own what they build and plant rather than laboring for what belongs to someone else. The people and their descendants will be blessed by YHWH and experience the direct presence of God taking care of even unspoken needs. And again, there will be no more violence, as the wolf and the lamb feed together, the lion becomes a vegetarian rather than a predator, the serpent will be subdued, and there will be no more hurting or destroying. Finally, Ezekiel 34:25-31 echoes some of this description with a vision of a "covenant of peace" with animal life, such there will be no more fear of wild animals. The land will be fruitful and productive. There will be an end to oppression and violence, the people will dwell in safety and security, there will be no more hunger, and there will be the certain presence and providential care of God.

Of course, these texts mostly express an eschatological vision that will not be realized in its completeness until "the fullness of time" when God acts to completely replace the old with the new, and indeed it is the height of human hubris to ever believe that we can accomplish the Reign of God through our own efforts alone. Nevertheless, in the New Testament Jesus came proclaiming that the Reign of God is at hand (Mark 1:15), not in the sense of a "realized eschatology" in which the Reign of God has come in its fullness or can be "built" by human hands. Yet, neither is it entirely deferred to the end of time or confined to God acting alone.

Rather, the message of Jesus in the synoptic gospels especially is that the Reign of God is breaking into this world already (“at hand”), and hearers of that message are called to redirect their lives (“repent”) in accordance with that reality: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” (Mark 1:15) A passivity that merely waits for God to act, rather than participating in God’s reconciling and redeeming work in Christ, is *irresponsible*. It is a failure to *respond* to the gospel. Rather, as Jürgen Moltmann describes it, Scripture points us toward God’s promised future and at the same time calls us to live into that future, not only drawing hope from it but also allowing it to (re)shape the present.<sup>42</sup>

*Summary on God's Reconciling Work in the Old Testament, Transition to the New Testament:*

Although reconciliation as the theological theme of God's work of reconciling the world (in and through Christ) is a New Testament (and particularly Pauline/Deutero-Pauline) conception, I have attempted to show how it is a hermeneutical lens through which the whole of the Bible, as an account of God's redemptive dealings with humanity, can be seen and interpreted. God created a harmonious world that was disrupted by human sin, leading to a brokenness in our relationship with God, with one another, and with the creation. God has been at work to fix that brokenness, to restore harmony and wholeness to human relationships with God, with one another, and with the creation. That reconciling work of God began with a series of covenants, setting apart certain persons, a certain family, and a certain people/ nation to dwell in a restored relationship with God and one another, to be a family blessed in order to

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<sup>42</sup>Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

bless all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3), and to be a nation that would assume the role of God's servant people to be "a light to [all] nations, that [God's] salvation [reconciling work] may reach to the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6).

The covenant concept of a "chosen" people and the details of the terms of the covenant are not without their problematic aspects, as limited human beings attempted to realize God's covenant promises and live into the covenant relationship, bringing their own culturally-shaped interests and biases to the process and intermingling these with the divine Word of salvation/reconciliation. Thus there is need to critique some of these details in the light of the overarching narrative of God's work of reconciling the world. Moreover, the people proved themselves unable to live up to the terms of the covenant, requiring provision for covenant renewal and for renewal of the people and even of the earth through Sabbath, sabbatical years, and jubilee years; through the sending of prophets to remind them of their covenant obligations; and through the promise of a new covenant in which the terms of the covenant would be implanted in the hearts of the people rather than merely existing in written form.

The Hebrew prophets not only called the people back to the God of the covenant and the terms of the covenant but enunciated a vision of God's promised *shalom*, in conjunction with an anticipated Day of YHWH and Messianic Reign of God that would issue forth into a reign of justice, righteousness, and peace. The New Testament makes the claim that this Messianic Reign of God has arrived in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who came announcing that the Kingdom/Reign of God is at hand (Mark 1:15) and inaugurating a ministry of radical inclusion in which outsiders become insiders, the unclean become clean, Samaritans and Gentiles are welcomed, and even the lowest of people and the worst of sinners find a place

within God's Reign. Christian theology claims that the Reign of God has come in Jesus but not yet in its fullness, as the complete Messianic vision of God's *shalom* announced by the prophets has not yet been fully realized, so that the fullness of God's Reign awaits God's eschatological promises and time.

The New Testament and Christian theology also proclaim that in Christ, and in the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit, the promise of the new covenant has arrived, a covenant of the spirit rather than the letter of the law (2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:6-13; cf. Romans 7:14-8:17), in which God's indwelling Holy Spirit will guide followers of Jesus into all truth (John 14:25-26; 16:12-14). Moreover, Paul proclaims that in Christ God was reconciling the world, and the church has been commissioned as messengers and ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-20), as the ongoing instrument of God's reconciling work.

In the sections that follow, I will explore more deeply this theological concept of reconciliation by examining some key biblical texts in which it is a prominent theme, especially and in the most detail 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

### **Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:14-21:**

This classic statement by Paul of the Christian doctrine of reconciliation occurs within the broader context of Paul's theology as expressed in all of his existent writings, of his history of relations and correspondence with the church at Corinth, and the epistle of 2 Corinthians itself. Its more immediate context is dependent in part upon which school of thought one adopts concerning the possible existence within 2 Corinthians of fragments of more than one letter from Paul to that church, joined editorially after Paul into one epistle, and specifically how one might divide 2 Corinthians into separate fragments.

An extensive discussion of Pauline theology is beyond the scope of this limited exegesis, but elements thereof will filter into the discussion below. Of more direct concern at this point is the context of Paul's relations and correspondence with the church at Corinth generally, and this epistle in particular. Paul had apparently founded and established this church, beginning with his own converts to Christian faith (1 Cor. 3:6; 4:15; 2 Cor. 10:13-15), and he continued to take on himself the responsibility for pastoral oversight of the ongoing life of this church. Paul wrote at least four letters to the church at Corinth and visited Corinth at least three times. 1 Corinthians 5:9 refers to a misunderstood letter which dealt with issues concerning the Corinthian Christians needing to distance themselves from the sexually immoral. Later, upon hearing of dissension in the church and receiving questions from the church on various points, he wrote the canonical I Corinthians, sending it either with or ahead of Timothy (1 Cor. 16:10-11).

While Timothy was still in Corinth, a group of Jewish-Christian missionaries arrived and began to criticize Paul (2 Cor. 11:22-23), possibly becoming linked up with "Hellenistic-Jewish wandering preachers, who were convinced that their possession of the Spirit showed itself in their eloquence, their ecstatic experiences, and their power to work miracles,"<sup>43</sup> as suggested by some of Paul's apologetic in the epistle. Timothy returned to Ephesus with a negative report concerning the church, after which Paul made a "painful visit" and was wronged by someone there (2 Cor. 2:1-11; 7:12). The situation apparently worsened, so that Paul sent a painful, tearful letter (2 Cor. 1:23-2:4; 7:5-11) with Titus and then anxiously awaited an update from

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<sup>43</sup> Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "The Second Letter to the Corinthians," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), 817.

Titus. After receiving a favorable report from Titus, to the effect that Paul and the church were reconciled, Paul sent a letter joyfully acknowledging this and asking the church to forgive the person who had offended Paul on his second visit. This letter consisted of either all or part of the canonical 2 Corinthians. As apparently Romans was written from Corinth (Rom. 16:23; cf. 1 Cor. 1:14), Paul seems to have made a third visit to Corinth and to have been well received.<sup>44</sup>

Beyond this minimum of four letters, there are several theories concerning the possible composite nature of 2 Corinthians, as an editorial merging of more than one letter or fragment thereof. Many scholars agree that there are at least two different letters, with chapters 10-13 being part of a separate letter from chapters 1-9, as Paul's turn from the conciliatory tone ending the first nine chapters to the very harsh tone of chapters 10-13 is inexplicable. Many also see 6:14-7:1 as a later, non-Pauline interpolation, as it is exclusivist in a way uncharacteristic of Paul, it breaks up the obvious continuity between 6:13 and 7:2, and it certainly contradicts the whole tone and argument of its immediate context, in which Paul is seeking reconciliation within the church, quite in contrast to divisiveness. Beyond these areas of virtual consensus, there is much disparity of interpretation. Some see a whole letter in chapters 1-9 (minus 6:14-7:1). Others variously argue for the separation of 2:14-7:4 (minus 6:14-7:1) as a letter appealing for reconciliation of the church with Paul himself (possibly the tearful letter, though some see chapters 10-13 as that letter, and others believe that letter to be no longer existent), and 1:2-2:13; 7:5-16 as a letter celebrating that reconciliation as an accomplished fact and urging reconciliation with the person who had offended Paul during his

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<sup>44</sup> Chronology follows John T. Fitzgerald, "The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians: Introduction," in *The Harper Collins Study Bible*, ed. Wayne A. Meeks et. al. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 2164-66.

"painful visit." Still others separate chapters 8 and 9 as one or two separate letters dealing with the requested collection for the Jerusalem church.<sup>45</sup>

For the purpose of this exegesis, the position is taken that 2:14-7:4 (minus 6:14-7:1, which is here viewed as a non-Pauline interpolation for the reasons cited above) represents a separate letter in which Paul is defending his apostolic authority and his ministry among the Corinthians against accusations and criticisms and is seeking reconciliation with the Corinthian church. The tone of 1:2-2:13; 7:5-16 reflects a different situation, one in which this reconciliation has already transpired; and 7:5 is logically continuous with 2:13 as an ongoing narrative of Paul's travel itinerary and his anxiously anticipating and receiving the report from Titus.

Thus viewed, the context of 5:14-21 is narrowed to 2:14-6:13; 7:2-4, in which Paul defends his apostolic authority and ministry and seeks reconciliation with the Corinthian church. More immediate, still, is 2:14-6:10, Paul's argument in his own defense, which is interspersed at various points with theological grounding for that apologetic, one of which includes 5:14-21 itself. A still more immediate context is the contrast in 5:11-6:10 between Paul's opponents, who "boast in outward appearance and not in the heart" (5:12) and Paul himself, whose value judgments have been transformed and made new and different by his being "in Christ," so that his whole outlook on life is changed from a self-centered or human/worldly perspective to a Christ-centered perspective (and lifestyle) (5:14-16), oriented in terms of the love and death of Christ (5:14-15, 21), of the reconciliation effected by God in Christ (5:18-20), and of a self-commendation based on service in the midst of adversity (6:4-10),

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<sup>45</sup> J. Paul Sampley, "The Second Letter to the Corinthians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), Volume 11: 5-9.

rather than superior personal abilities, ecstatic experiences, or other superficial external conditions.

Verse 14 states that the love of Christ "urges us on" (NRSV), "compels us" (NIV), "controls us" (RSV), or "we are ruled by" (TEV). The NRSV's "urges us on" seems too weak, as the Greek phrase *συνέχει ημας* is more forceful. The word *συνέχει* is third person singular of *συνέχω*, which carries a root meaning of "to hold something together" so that it does not fall apart but hangs together, and includes connotations of "to enclose/ lock up," "to oppress/ overpower/ rule," or "to surround/ hem in."<sup>46</sup> According to Helmut Köster in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, in both 2 Corinthians 5:14 and Philippians 1:23 the phrase means "to be claimed, totally controlled" or "completely dominates."<sup>47</sup> "Christ's love claims him [Paul] in such a way that in relation to others he can no longer exist for himself--in contrast to his [boasting] opponents."<sup>48</sup> To wit, in verses 14-15 Paul is saying that he is not boasting in himself like his opponents, but instead he has come completely under the control, rule, and domination of Christ's love, since Christ died for all, so that all might live no longer for self but for him. Christ's love has become the driving and shaping force in his life, such that everything is now seen in a whole new perspective.

Verses 16 and 17 are each linked with verses 14-15 as consequences thereof, by the particle, *ὥστε*, "therefore." This love of Christ manifested in his death "for all" and resulting in the (metaphorical) death of all (to self), in the sense of living "no longer for themselves" but

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<sup>46</sup> Helmut Köster, "Συνέχο, Συνοχή," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 883.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

instead for Christ "who died and was raised for them" (cf. Galatians 2:20), is the foundation for the new viewpoint in verse 16 and the newness of the whole creation in Christ in verse 17.

That connection would also seem to inform the understanding of the distinction between the "human point of view" (literally, "according to the flesh") and the changed point of view in the framework of the "new creation" "in Christ." In the context of verses 14-15, as well as of Paul's discussion of the contrast between living "according to the flesh" and living "according to the Spirit" in Romans 8, the superseded way of "regarding"--valuing or esteeming<sup>49</sup> people and Christ would seem to be a self-centered perspective, which in view of verse 12 is particularly focused on (self-serving, superficial) outward appearances rather than on inward reality, such as Paul's opponents' reliance upon their own eloquence in speech and ecstatic experiences. Paul's self-commendation, on the other hand, is not based on self-exaltation but on suffering service in the midst of adversity (6:4-10), a life lived for Christ rather than for self (5:15).

This new perspective effected by Christ's death and the death to self resulting therefrom, is a part of one's participation in the new creation brought into being "in Christ" (verse 17). Craddock, Hayes, Holladay, and Tucker see Paul as describing much more than individual personal transformation here--more comprehensively describing "the Christ-event as a new beginning, when the universe is quite literally remade, re-ordered, reconstituted. . . . It becomes the moment when 'all things,' including time, history, and all that goes to make up life and the world as we know it, are created over again."<sup>50</sup> Our being "in Christ" is our participation subjectively in this reality of the new creation already accomplished through

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<sup>49</sup> Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, vol. 32A, The Anchor Bible Series (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984), 312.

<sup>50</sup> Fred B. Craddock et al., *Preaching through the Christian Year: Year C* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1994), 157.

Christ objectively in the whole created order, through our being part of the believing community, the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 8:12; 12:12). This fits with Victor Paul Furnish's explanation of Paul's use of κτίσις ("creation") as always referring to the creation in its entirety and the phrase καινή κτίσις ("new creation") as rooted in the apocalyptic Jewish concept of the new age, radically distinct from the old (an idea taken up into Jesus' understanding of the kingdom of God and into early Christian eschatology), so as to be much "more inclusive than the new being of individual believers."<sup>51</sup> This converges with the Christological assertion in Colossians 1:20 that "through him [Christ] God was pleased to reconcile all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross."

This re-creation of the entire order of things is God's doing (v. 18), and is defined in verses 18-19, in terms of its content and direction, as the reconciliation of the κόσμος. To understand "world" as the whole universe corresponds with the idea of the "new creation" in verse 17 but seemingly conflicts with its parallel objects (of reconciliation) of "us" in verse 18 and "them" in verse 19. However, Paul is citing and elaborating a traditional formula in verse 19ab, so that the "them" in the formula, which suggests that "world" means "humanity," may not reflect the whole span of Paul's use of the adapted phrase.<sup>52</sup> The "us" in verse 18 indicates that "we" are both the primary object and the secondary instrument of God's reconciling work.

In any case, Paul at least envisions the whole of humanity being reconciled to God by God through Christ. The traditional formulation equates this reconciliation with the forgiveness of sins, or justification (verse 19b, "not counting their trespasses against them"), but Paul's use

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<sup>51</sup> Furnish, 314-15.

<sup>52</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, 822; Furnish, 334.

of "reconcile" and "reconciliation" here and in Romans 5:6-11 expands the meaning to include God's restoration of sinful humanity from a state of enmity to one of restored relationship, as is inherent in the word itself. According to E. C. Blackman, the terms used here and in Romans 5:6-11 by Paul, καταλλάσσω, αποκαταλλάσσω, and καταλλαγή, have the meaning of "restoration of harmony between man and God."<sup>53</sup> Friedrich Büchsel, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, points out that the meaning of these same terms is more than justification alone, or the removal of guilt, as the terms have a root meaning in Greek usage as a technical term used in the overcoming of the separation and estrangement between married couples, and Paul uses the terms to describe the same overcoming of the estrangement between God and humanity, with God always as the "reconciler" and humanity always the "reconciled."<sup>54</sup> C. K. Barrett defines, "To reconcile is to end a relation of enmity, and to substitute for it one of peace and goodwill."<sup>55</sup> "Where God and humanity were once at a standoff, through Christ we now stand together with God, even becoming God's co-workers (2 Cor. 6:1)."<sup>56</sup>

Paul further expands the traditional formulation to include our being given the διακονίαν ("ministry"/ "service") of reconciliation and the λόγον ("word"/ "message" in NRSV)

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<sup>53</sup> E. C. Blackman, "Reconciliation, Reconcile," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 17.

<sup>54</sup> Friedrich Büchsel, "Αλλάσσω, Αντάλλαγμα, Απ-, Δι-, Καταλλάσσω, Καταλλαγή, Αποκατ-, Μεταλλάσσω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 254-58.

<sup>55</sup> C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), 175.

<sup>56</sup> Craddock et al., 158.

of reconciliation. Furnish identifies the "word of reconciliation" with the Gospel itself.<sup>57</sup> This commission would seem to concern the believer's reception or appropriation of, and proclamation of, the already established reality of God's reconciling work in Christ. The proclamation role is further defined by 5:20 in terms of our serving as messengers ("ambassadors for Christ," NRSV) through whom God makes God's appeal to receive the reconciliation God has effected in Christ. But Paul also interrelates God's reconciliation of us to Godself through Christ with our receiving from God the *διακονίαν* of reconciliation, a phrase which is action-oriented rather than proclamation-oriented, through the use of the word indicating servitude, so that it seems that our *participation* in the reconciling work of God is a corollary to, and inextricable from, our being reconciled to God.

Now, if one looks at verses 18-21 alone, the *διακονίαν* of reconciliation may be (and has been by some) interpreted as dealing exclusively with the believer's relationship with God-- as a task of working toward the reconciliation of persons to God but not necessarily a charge to work at reconciliation in inter-human relationships and/or reconciliation of the *κόσμος*. However, the distinction between the service-oriented *διακονίαν* of reconciliation (a "doing," rather than merely the "appeal" in the verses that follow) and the proclamation-oriented *λόγον* of reconciliation, seems to indicate that the former is distinguished from the task of announcing God's reconciliation of humanity to Godself in Christ and urging its acceptance, which is the nature of the latter role. There is a corresponding distinction between the verb tenses in verses 18 and 19, concerning the reconciliation of "us" and "the world" to God, respectively. In verse 18, Paul declares that God "reconciled [an accomplished work] us to himself through Christ." In

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<sup>57</sup> Furnish, 337.

verse 19, "in Christ God was reconciling [an ongoing work]<sup>58</sup> the world to himself." Thus, there is an ongoing work of reconciliation within the world, beyond the accomplished work in Christ, in which we are given participation through the *διακονίαν* of reconciliation.

Moreover, there are the larger contextual considerations within verses 14-21, and within the whole argument of 2:14-6:13; 7:2-4. The latter larger unit encompasses an urge to interpersonal reconciliation of the church with Paul himself. And within the scope of verses 14-21, there is the broad view of the new creation in Christ (verse 17), within which the believer is now controlled by the love of Christ and henceforth is drawn out of self-centeredness (verses 14-15), and within which other people are seen from the transformed perspective of the new creation in Christ (verse 16), as particularly defined by the reconciling work of God and our participation in it (verses 18-21). Thus, within this whole framework, that the *διακονίαν* of reconciliation includes participation in God's work of reconciling persons to one another, as well as to God, is at least implicit in Paul's argument, even if not explicit, particularly in light of the inseparability of one's loving God and loving "neighbor" within the Jewish tradition and the teaching of Jesus (cf. Mark 12:28-31 and parallels). (Of course, within the scope of Paul's self-defense, he is also defining his apostolic ministry in Corinth as a carrying out of this "ministry" and this "word" of reconciliation with which he has been commissioned by God.)

Verse 21 further elaborates the basis of God's reconciling work in terms of a pre-Pauline traditional Jewish-Christian formulation or a reworking thereof,<sup>59</sup> in accordance with a "substitutionary atonement" understanding of the sacrificial death of Christ, as Christ's taking

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<sup>58</sup> See Büchsel, 257.

<sup>59</sup> Furnish, 351.

our sins upon himself and accepting the penalty for our sins in our stead, in keeping with the description of the "Suffering Servant" of Deutero-Isaiah in Isaiah 53 (especially verses 5, 10-11).

Margaret E. Thrall discusses this verse in terms of the necessity, within a human relationship broken by a wrongdoing, for the offender to admit the wrongdoing and to voluntarily accept the consequences of the act, in order for reconciliation to take place. Since, however, humanity, as the offender in its broken relationship with God, was unable to do this, Christ, taking upon himself sinful human nature and humanity's sin, though without sin himself, has acted representatively for the whole of humanity in accepting those consequences, so that the broken relationship between humanity and God is repaired.<sup>60</sup>

Barrett draws out the parallelism in this verse between Christ's being "made sin" in order that we "might become God's righteousness," explaining that Christ has taken on our standpoint in relation with God on the basis of our sin, in order that we might take on his standpoint in relation with God on the basis of his righteousness--"righteousness" (*δικαιοσύνη*) here being equated with its forensic meaning of being "justified" (*δικαιωθέντες*), or "acquitted"/ forgiven/ freed from guilt, rather than being made morally righteous.<sup>61</sup> Thus, Paul has in view here Christ's justifying work rather than his sanctifying work, as the basis for (but not the sum total of) God's reconciliation of "us," and eventually the "world," to Godself. "The new creation of verse 17 and the righteousness of verse 21 are not synonymous; the latter is the ground of the former. The new relation to God ([imputed, rather

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<sup>60</sup> Margaret E. Thrall, *The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians* (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1965), 152-53.

<sup>61</sup> Barrett, 179-81.

than imparted] righteousness) is the basis of the new creation and its manifestation in renewed moral life; it is not itself the renewed moral life."<sup>62</sup>

*In view of the foregoing considerations, the following is offered as an interpretative paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 5:14-21:*

[In contrast to those attacking my apostolic authority and ministry among you on the basis of outward appearances, such as ecstatic spiritual experiences and eloquent speech, rather than the inward condition of the heart (v.12)], my ministry, and that of the apostles, is determined and conditioned by the love of Christ, as manifested in his self-sacrificing death for all people, with the result that all of us metaphorically "die" to self and therefore no longer live in such a way as to seek our own self-gain, but henceforth live for Christ, who died and was raised for our benefit, such that we owe our lives to him now. (cf. Galatians 2:20).

As a result of this alteration of our lives from being self-centered to being Christ-centered in response to the love of Christ made manifest in the Cross, our whole way of looking at other people is changed. In fact, the whole order of creation is transformed and made entirely new through this reconciling work of God in Christ. Within the scope of this personal reorientation (verses 14-15) and this cosmic reorientation (verse 17), all that is, is seen in a whole new light, including our valuations concerning other people (no longer in terms of superficial externals), in like manner to our transformed understanding of Christ himself. The basis of this new perspective and this new order of being is God's acting to reconcile us, and the whole world, to Godself, in and through Christ. In that reconciliation our guilt for our sins has been removed by virtue of Christ's taking on himself that guilt and its consequences on the

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 181.

Cross, so that we are forgiven and accepted by God as righteous, and our broken relationship with God has been repaired to a harmonious relationship by the person and work of Christ. A further consequence of this reconciling work of God in Christ is that God has commissioned us to proclaim this already accomplished reconciliation of humanity to God and urge its acceptance by all (We do plead with you to accept it!), and to participate in God's ongoing work of reconciling people to people, and of reconciling the whole creation to its originally intended harmony with God, on the basis and foundation of the reconciliation God has already accomplished in Christ.

*Some Theological Reflections on the Text:*

Extracted from its apologetic context of Paul's defense of his own authority and ministry, Paul's exposition of God's reconciling work in Christ and of God's charging the reconciled believer to not only proclaim the "good news"/"gospel" of this reconciliation to others but to actively participate in God's reconciling work in the world sheds much light on our view of God, on our view of other people, and on our whole way of being in the world. This is a picture of a God whose primary goal is to restore harmony and wholeness to the whole of the created order, and who will stop at nothing--will bear any cost, even the death of God's own Son--in pursuing that goal. This is quite in contrast with many popular theological images of God as a divine tyrant who rules arbitrarily and is ever prepared to wreak vengeance upon those who break the divine commandments, so as to offend the divine ego. This is instead a picture of a God whose nature is love, understood as seeking to bring about the best good of all the creation.

Furthermore, in seeking to restore the broken harmony within the created order, God seeks also to restore the divine image within the creatures, by implanting God's love (the love of Christ which controls us--5:14) within their hearts and by drawing the reconciled into participation in the work of reconciliation (the ministry of reconciliation--5:18). This vocation itself is a part of the reconciling work of God, which seeks harmony not only of creature with Creator but within the whole of the creation, which of course includes the harmony of humans with other humans, rooted in the same love which comes from God--as we, too, seek one another's best good and seek to restore the broken relationships that exist among humanity as a whole.

Paul has indicated that within this framework of God's reconciling work in Christ, everything is changed and takes on a whole new perspective--a whole new way of being (5:16-17)--a Christ-centered rather than (misleading, and in the end self-destructive) self-centered perspective and way of being. Thus, all human beings, all human relationships, and all things are to be subjected to this framework and seen in the light of God's reconciling work in Christ. And when this happens, healing of the brokenness begins to take place. Everything that is brought into this framework is transformed in its light and is brought into new possibilities for restoration, healing, harmony, and wholeness.

**Reconciliation Extended: Colossians 1:15-20 and Ephesians 2:11-22:**

I have interpreted 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 as an expanded view of God's reconciling work vis-a-vis the description in Romans 5:10 as reconciliation to God, in that the former includes the latter but extends the concept of reconciliation to include the reconciliation of the whole κόσμος and the commissioning of those reconciled to God, giving them the ministry of

participating in God's work of reconciling humans not only to God but to one another.

Colossians 1:20 proclaims a still larger vision, God's work of reconciling through Christ "all things, whether on earth, or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross."

Both the NRSV<sup>63</sup> and the NIV<sup>64</sup> state that God was pleased to reconcile all things "to himself" through Christ. However, Andrew Lincoln suggests that the εἰς αὐτόν ("to him") in verse 20 refers to Christ, rather than to God, in parallel with the earlier εἰς αὐτόν in verse 16, so that just as all things were created in him, through him, and for him, so in verses 19 and 20, there is a parallel in him, through him, and for/to him. In both cases Lincoln sees Christ as the *goal* of the creation and the reconciliation of all things, rather than the one to whom all things are reconciled.<sup>65</sup> He does not elaborate further on that distinction, but it seems that a possibility might be to say that the whole creation not only is to be put in a right relation with God in Christ but is to be brought into complete conformity to or harmony with Christ, to be ordered according to Christ as its central focal point. The inclusion of "all things, whether on earth or in heaven," paralleling in verse 16, "all things in heaven and on earth. . . , things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers," indicates that Christ is the agent and goal of both the creation and the reconciliation even of the cosmic powers, so that the readers need not concern themselves with appeasing those powers,<sup>66</sup> in accordance with Colossians' concern that readers not be taken captive by "philosophy" or "human tradition,

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<sup>63</sup> *New Revised Standard Version Bible*. Copyright ©1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

<sup>64</sup> *Holy Bible, New International Version*®. NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.

<sup>65</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Letter to the Colossians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 600.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 601.

according to the elemental spirits of the universe,” since in Christ dwells bodily the fullness of deity (2:8-9). As in Romans 5 and 2 Corinthians 5, Christ is the agent of reconciliation, and as in Romans 5 and at least implied in 2 Corinthians 5:21, his death on the cross is the means of reconciliation.

In Colossians, the focus is on the supremacy of Christ, and the reconciliation of all things to him. Ephesians apparently uses Colossians as a source,<sup>67</sup> given the numerous parallels between the two letters and the further development in Ephesians of ideas and phrases contained also in Colossians. However, Ephesians has a different focus, the more earthly matter of the reconciliation between humans—i.e., between human groups, specifically Jew and Gentile, though couched within the larger theme of unifying all things in Christ. Thus, Colossians 1:20, “. . . and through him [Christ] God was pleased to reconcile to himself [or to him, Christ] all things, whether on earth or in heaven. . . ,” becomes in Ephesians 1:9-10, “. . . he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” Here the “mystery” is the unification of all things in Christ, while in Colossians the mystery is Christ himself (1:27; 2:2; 4:3). But in Ephesians (3:3-6) the mystery is also specifically the inclusion of the Gentiles in the body (people of God) and in the promise (perhaps the covenantal promise made to Abraham but now a promise “in Christ Jesus through the gospel”).

The brief mention in Colossians of Christ “making peace through the blood of his cross” becomes a major theme in Ephesians. Christ is “our peace” (2:14) and “proclaimed peace to

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<sup>67</sup> Pheme Perkins, "The Letter to the Ephesians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 353-54.

you who were far off and peace to those who were near” (2:17), and Christ’s abolition of the law in order to make of the Jews and Gentiles one new humanity is a means of “thus making peace” (2:15). Readers are to make “every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:3). They are to be “ready to proclaim the gospel of peace” (6:15), and the writer pronounces, “Peace be to the whole community. . .” (6:23).

The specific manifestation of peace for Ephesians is peace between Jew and Gentile, as both groups are being reconciled by God “in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it” (2:16) in order that Christ “might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace” (2:15). Furthermore, as mentioned already, one explication of the “mystery” now revealed in Christ is the inclusion of the Gentiles as “fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (3:3-6). The writer stakes out the division that existed prior to the intervention of Christ, from the standpoint of the Jews, who were the ones to draw this distinction between Jew and Gentile. (The ones who do the naming are the ones who have the power over the relationship.) Ephesians is written to “you Gentiles by birth, called ‘the uncircumcision’ by those who are called ‘the circumcision’ [i.e., the Jews],” though the writer is quick to point out that this distinction concerns a mere physical act performed by human hands (2:11), rather than a divinely ordained distinction. From the standpoint of the Jews, the Gentiles were considered to be outsiders with no stake in God’s salvation. They were “aliens from the commonwealth [πολιτεία, ‘the body politic’]<sup>68</sup> of Israel” (2:12), in other words, not possessing

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 397.

citizenship rights.<sup>69</sup> They were also “strangers to the covenants of promise” (2:12), in other words outside the covenant people of God who inherited the promises made to Abraham and his descendants. Therefore the Gentiles were “without Christ,” without hope, and “without God in the world” (2:12), from the perspective of the Jews.

But now, through the intervention of Christ, those who “were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (2:13). Therefore, the Gentiles who are “in Christ” are “no longer strangers and aliens” but are “citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God” (2:19), as well as “fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise. . .” (3:6). The outsiders have become insiders, with full citizenship rights, and members of God’s family, though as Pheme Perkins points out, the phrase “citizens with the saints” seems to indicate that the Gentiles are not incorporated into Israel as citizens but rather into the new humanity that includes both Jews and Gentiles, particularly as “the saints” refers to “those who are Christian believers regardless of their origins,” and as the abolition of the law by Christ (2:15) has rendered the distinction between Jew and Gentile an invalid one, given that the primary marker of “the commonwealth of Israel” was its law (the *torah*).<sup>70</sup>

Unity is the overarching concern for the writer of Ephesians—the unity of Jew and Gentile in one new humanity (2:11-22); the unity of the church through “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” and its ground in “one body and one Spirit, . . . one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. . .” (4:3-6); and ultimately the unifying of all things in Christ (1:9-10). Throughout the letter comes the resounding call for

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 402.

unity and peace. Christ has broken down the dividing wall of hostility separating Jew and Gentile (2:14), united them into one new humanity (2:15), reconciled “both groups in one body through the cross” (2:16), and forged them together into a “holy temple,” “a dwelling place for God” (2:21-22).

The temple and place of God’s dwelling had been the Jerusalem temple, in a sense the property of the Jews, and with the holiest parts restricted to only the Jews. Ephesians envisions instead a spiritual temple uniting Jew and Gentile (at least Jewish and Gentile Christians, those who were “in Christ”), with the apostles and (Christian) prophets as the foundation and Christ as the cornerstone or keystone holding the whole structure together (2:20-22). In other words, now God’s dwelling is within this united new people of God through the breaking down of the barriers between Jew and Gentile in Christ. (Paul had already referred to Christian believers as God’s temple in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, in a context of seeking unity rather than division in the church at Corinth, and again to the church as the temple of God in 2 Corinthians 6:16.)

Of course, “most scholars agree that the letter [to the Ephesians] is pseudonymous”<sup>71</sup> and was not, in fact, written by Paul, for reasons of its lack of personal greetings typical of Paul’s letters, its references to the fact that the Ephesians do not know Paul (1:15; 3:2) even though Paul spent a significant amount of time in Ephesus, its differences in vocabulary and style from the undisputed letters of Paul, the absence of important Pauline emphases and the presence of ideas not found among Paul’s letters, and shifts in language and theology that develop Pauline ideas in new ways.<sup>72</sup> Paul’s authorship of Colossians is also highly disputed for

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 351.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 351-65.

some of the same reasons.<sup>73</sup> However, to conclude pseudonymity is “not to detract from the validity of [a biblical text’s] message or from its authority as part of the New Testament canon.”<sup>74</sup> Lincoln asserts, “Pseudonymity was, in fact, a literary device for passing on authoritative tradition.”<sup>75</sup> It was a device very commonly used in the Jewish Scriptures and continued by Christian writers. There was no notion of “intellectual property” or of plagiarism in the ancient literary context.<sup>76</sup> And whether or not these texts were written by Paul, they are part of the inherited corpus of Scripture recognized universally by Christians.

Moreover, both Colossians and Ephesians do appear to be “Pauline” in that they continue Pauline themes, even though they develop them in some new directions. They add their voice to a conversation begun by Paul. Colossians 1:20 expands Paul’s concept of God “reconciling the κόσμος “ in Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:19. And Ephesians 2:11-22 takes up a very Pauline theme, the inclusion and incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God on an equal basis with the Jews. In fact, Krister Stendahl has put forth a very convincing argument that the whole interpretive key to Paul’s theology, particularly in Romans, is not “justification by faith” (a secondary rather than primary emphasis) but is instead his concern for the inclusion of the Gentiles along with the Jews among God’s people.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, Paul saw his specific mission to be among the Gentiles (Romans 1:5,13; 15:15-18; Galatians 1:16) and called himself “an apostle to the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13). In fact, Paul’s argument in Romans 1-8 is that both

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<sup>73</sup> Lincoln, 577-83.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 582.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976).

Jew and Gentile have equal standing before God as sinners who can be saved only through faith in Christ, since the Gentiles sinned without knowledge of the law, and having the law did not enable the Jews to keep its commandments (especially Romans 2-3).

Yet, Paul never went so far as to say that Christ has abolished the law. Rather, “the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12). Still, Paul affirms that what Christ *has* abolished is the having or not having the law as a dividing line between Jew and Gentile, which seems to be the major thrust of Ephesians 2:15. Along this line, Paul affirms that Christians’ baptismal identity in Christ relativizes the social distinctions such as Jew and Gentile (Greek), slave and free, male and female, such that all are united as one in Christ (Galatians 3:27-28). At least for Jew and Gentile, this breaking down of the dividing wall and this unity in Christ are likewise affirmed by Ephesians 2:14-16.

So in the spirit of the writer of Ephesians and possibly Colossians, let me, as a theologian, enter into the conversation and develop this theme of reconciliation a bit further, though while remaining consistent with Paul, Ephesians, and Colossians. If all things are to be gathered up in Christ, and if Christ is the goal of the creation and the reconciliation of all things, including the thrones, dominions, rulers, and powers, then that very fact relativizes such distinctions as race, ethnicity, social class, nation, and even religion. (As Dietrich Bonhoeffer states, Christ’s Lordship over all the creation is a fact, whether or not it is recognized.<sup>78</sup>) In fact, there are many dividing walls of hostility that Christ has broken down or is in the process of breaking down, in order to create one new humanity, make peace, and reconcile all human groups in one body through the cross. If in our baptismal identity and unity in Christ there is no

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<sup>78</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, trans. Neville Horton Smith (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 281-87, 335-37.

longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female, then there is no longer Black and White, Anglo and Hispanic, the haves and the have-nots, “natives” and immigrants, us and them. As Isaiah 49:6 declares, “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth,” so it is too light a thing that the Christ in whom all things are being gathered up in unity should be the reconciler of Jew and Gentile only, breaking down that one dividing wall of hostility, but rather Christ is given as the reconciler of all humans and human groups, that God’s reconciliation may reach to the end of the earth.

#### **A Model of Reconciliation from Miroslav Volf:**

Miroslav Volf, in *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*,<sup>79</sup> offers a Christian theological perspective on the issues of identity, otherness, and reconciliation. His focus is particularly on reconciliation of those who are not only "other" to each other but have become hostile enemies, though the enmity itself is substantially rooted in the alterity. The background for Volf’s theological reflections on reconciliation is his context as a Croatian who has lived through the violence, animosity, and ethnic cleansing following the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, rendering Serbians and Croats bitter and hostile enemies locked in a vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence.

Volf describes the Christian life as one that is de-centered and re-centered with Christ as center, formed by our identity in the Crucified—an identity of self-giving love that breaks down dividing walls between people and subordinates the demands of justice to the “will to

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<sup>79</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

embrace,” as an expression of God’s forgiving and reconciling grace, in a life that is open to the other. Without the overarching framework of reconciliation and the will to embrace, justice-seeking and projects of liberation can be subjected to self-deception and self-righteousness that pose a barrier to relations with the other. Rather than seeing the other as a threat to the self’s identity, the self’s identity can be fluid, realizing that the embrace of the other will not leave self or other unchanged. Jesus placed emphasis upon repentance and forgiveness for both victims and perpetrators, the oppressed and the oppressors, in order to protect the hearts of the oppressed from the debilitating influence of hate, while also seeking to redeem the oppressor.

Self-giving love is the core of the Christian faith, following Jesus in the way of the cross.<sup>80</sup> Of course, this self-giving love is not a strategy that is guaranteed success in winning the heart of the other. The scandal of the cross is that all-too-often self-giving love does not bear positive fruit in the relationship with the other. Yet, the Christian believer takes hope in living by God’s promise of a redeemed world.<sup>81</sup> The will to embrace is unconditional and prior to judgment, which is to assert the primacy of grace for Christians. Truth must be spoken and justice must be done in order for full reconciliation to take place, but truth and justice are unavailable outside a prior will to embrace, to welcome the other.<sup>82</sup> (Martin Luther King, Jr., likewise stressed that love of enemy is an absolute necessity in order to prevent our destroying each other and the world around us,<sup>83</sup> and Hannah Arendt saw forgiveness as necessary in

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

order to interrupt the unending cycle of vengeance and counter-vengeance.<sup>84</sup>) Without a commitment to love of enemy and welcome of the other, we perpetually rationalize our lashing out at the other in the name of truth and justice. The wall that divides (Ephesians 2:14) is not difference but enmity. Christ removes enmity not through the imposition of a unifying will, law, or principle but through self-giving.<sup>85</sup>

The construction of the self is a dialogical process, so that the self includes the other as part of itself, as identity is formed in relation to the other. The dynamics of identity formation actually predispose the self toward exclusion, as the self asserts itself, seeking to defend its territory and its boundaries but, in a world of scarce goods, bumps up against the self-assertion of other selves and thus perceives the other as a threat to the self's own identity. The other is part of myself, but if the other is not how I want her or him to be, I cannot be who I want to be. Therefore, rather than reconfiguring my own identity in relation to who the other is, I seek to reshape who the other is in relation to who I want to be. This is how the self often slides into exclusion and violence against the other.<sup>86</sup> "The separation necessary to constitute and maintain a dynamic identity of the self in relation to the other slides into exclusion that seeks to affirm identity at the expense of the other."<sup>87</sup> Or alternately, I may passively allow myself to be

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<sup>83</sup> Martin Luther King, *Strength to Love*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 49-55.

<sup>84</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 240-41.

<sup>85</sup> Volf, 47.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-92,

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92.

excluded, as in this process of identity formation, identity can also be established “*by surrendering to the other.*”<sup>88</sup>

So are we doomed to violence and exclusion by the very process of formation of the self? Fortunately for Christians, this vicious cycle can be interrupted by “the Spirit of the crucified Messiah. . . The Spirit enters the citadel of the self, de-centers the self by fashioning it in the image of the self-giving Christ, and frees its will so it can resist the power of exclusion in the power of the Spirit of embrace.”<sup>89</sup> The self is de-centered and re-centered, crucified with Christ, who becomes its new center. The self is not dissolved but re-centered in Christ and resistant to other would-be centers. It is no longer a closed center but a center that is open to others, a center of self-giving love.<sup>90</sup>

For Christians, this ‘de-centered center’ of self-giving love—most firmly centered and most radically open—is the doorkeeper deciding about the fate of otherness at the doorstep of the self. From this center judgments about exclusion must be made and battles against exclusion fought. And with this kind of self, the opposition to exclusion is nothing but the flip side of the practice of embrace.<sup>91</sup>

One of the primary dividing walls that render people as “other” and often leads to exclusion is culture. The diversity of cultures is a major marker of human difference. Yet, as Volf argues, for Christians our allegiance to God relativizes cultural and particular loyalties.

Absolute loyalty is reserved for God alone.

. . . the ultimate allegiance of those whose father is Abraham can be only to the God of ‘all families of the earth,’ not to any particular country, culture, or family

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 92, emphasis the author’s.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 69-71.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 71.

with their local deities. The oneness of God implies God's universality, and universality entails transcendence with respect to any given culture.<sup>92</sup>

Within the Pauline universalism that characterizes the Christian faith, all cultures are de-sacralized (relativized), so that all have legitimacy in a wider family of cultures.<sup>93</sup> Christians are both immanent to a culture (belong to it) and transcendent (maintain a critical distance from it). They maintain a critical distance from culture because of their allegiance to God and to God's promised future uniting all cultures, which creates space in us to receive the other.<sup>94</sup> Other cultures are (and therefore immigrants from other cultures) not a threat to the purity of our own cultural identity but are a potential source of enrichment, as Christians engage in a critique of every culture [all standing under the judgment of God], including a judgment against evil in every culture. But that judgment begins with self and one's own culture.<sup>95</sup>

Thus a critical distance is necessary in order to critique both self and other, both our own culture and other cultures, though we also belong to a culture and are not a pure stranger, standing outside of culture. We do not cut all cultural ties but give ultimate allegiance to God and to God's promised future, in a kind of balance between universalism and attention to particularity.<sup>96</sup> In order to maintain a critical distance from which to judge our own culture and the ways it has "subverted our faith," there is a need for an ecumenical, multicultural Christian

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 49-51.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

community, a need to listen to other Christian voices from other cultures in order that the voice of our own culture does not drown out the voice of Christ.<sup>97</sup>

As Volf sees it, the problem is not differentiation but exclusion, so that he seeks to delineate a conceptual distinction between the two. He draws upon the Body of Christ image as a unity in differentiation, with a unity that is not an erasure of difference but a *community* of different but related bodies.<sup>98</sup> Non-exclusionary differentiation includes both separation and connection within a relationship of interdependence. It preserves boundaries between self and other, so that neither is violated, but does not turn those boundaries into barriers against the other.<sup>99</sup> In fact, failure to differentiate may itself be a form of exclusion, as there are two faces of exclusion: (1) “cutting the bonds that connect,” turning the other into an enemy to be driven away (expulsion) or a nonentity (abandonment); and (2) erasure of separation through assimilation or subjugation to the self.<sup>100</sup> (To this can be compared an insight from Tzvetan Todorov about the two alternatives which fail to recognize the otherness of the other: either to deny difference and posit sameness, as if the other were an imperfect version of the self, or to attempt to assimilate the other into a hierarchy of superior/inferior. A contrast to both of these alternatives is to see the other as a subject that is truly other but equal to the self, an equality in difference, or a difference in equality.<sup>101</sup>)

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 64-68.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>101</sup> Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, 42-43, 247-49.

Volf also draws a distinction between exclusion and judgment, with the possibility of both exclusionary and non-exclusionary judgments. Non-exclusionary judgment is able to recognize evil as evil (while not perceiving difference itself *as* evil), naming exclusion as an evil and differentiation as a positive good.<sup>102</sup> Again, the problem is not the exercise of judgment but is viewing the other as totally alien to the self and passing a judgment against the other with an intention to exclude.

Illustrative of these distinctions is the way Jesus approached differentiation and exercised judgment without exclusion. Volf describes Jesus' mission of renaming and remaking, renaming the innocent who were being victimized by a system of exclusion based on clean and unclean, abolishing that system, and remaking the truly guilty by changing their lives, forgiving and transforming them.<sup>103</sup>

By the double strategy of re-naming and re-making Jesus condemned the world of exclusion—a world in which the innocent are labeled evil and driven out and a world in which the guilty are not sought out and brought into the communion. Central to both strategies for fighting exclusion is the belief that the source of evil does not lie outside of a person, in impure things, but inside a person, in the impure heart (Mark 7:15).<sup>104</sup>

Here Volf sees as “a central aspect of sin” the “*pursuit of false purity*,” which he describes as “the kind of purity that wants the world cleansed of the other rather than the heart cleansed of the evil that drives people out by calling those who are clean ‘unclean’ and refusing to help make clean those who are unclean.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Volf, 67-68.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 72-73.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 74. Emphasis is the author's.

Consider the deadly logic of the ‘politics of purity.’ The blood must be pure: German blood alone should run through German veins, free from all nonAryan contamination. The territory must be pure: Serbian soil must belong to Serbs alone, cleansed of all nonSerbian intruders. The origins must be pure: we must go back to the pristine purity of our linguistic, religious, or cultural past, shake away the dirt of otherness collected on our march through history. . . The origin and the goal, the inside and the outside, everything must be pure: plurality and heterogeneity must give way to homogeneity and unity. One people, one culture, one language, one book, one goal; what does not fall under this all-encompassing ‘one’ is ambivalent, polluting, and dangerous. . . It must be removed. We want a pure world and push the ‘others’ out of our world; we want to be pure ourselves and eject ‘otherness’ from within ourselves. . . It is a dangerous program because it is a totalitarian program, governed by a logic that reduces, ejects, and segregates.<sup>106</sup>

We have seen this pursuit of false purity already in Chapters 2 and 3, as Huntington argued how Hispanic immigrants and multiculturalism are a threat to the purity of American culture as handed down by the Puritan settlers in the colonial period, and Tanton sought to maintain the purity of one language (English) and even delved into genetic purity through eugenics. These thinkers, and the countless number of people they have influenced, see immigrants and immigration as a kind of contamination of the people (or the culture) and the nation they consider to have previously been pure.

Volf delineates a typology of four types of exclusion: elimination (through removal or extermination), assimilation (obliterating otherness by making the other no longer other), domination (through conquest or political subjugation), and abandonment (distancing self from the other through a system of segregation or isolation).<sup>107</sup> Exclusionary practices are undergirded and maintained by a system of “exclusionary language and cognition.”<sup>108</sup> He

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

specifically cites as an example the Spaniards' characterization of the indigenous peoples of the Americas as inferior beings and less than human, which was the essential premise allowing the conquest and destruction,<sup>109</sup> as described in detail in Todorov's *The Conquest of America*.<sup>110</sup>

. . . others are dehumanized in order that they can be discriminated against, dominated, driven out, or destroyed. If they are outsiders, they are 'dirty,' 'lazy,' and 'morally unreliable'; if women, they are 'sluts' and 'bitches'; if minorities, they are 'parasites,' vermin,' and pernicious bacilli' . . . More insidiously, they insert the other into the universe of moral obligations in such a way that not only does exclusion become justified but necessary because not to exclude appears morally culpable. The rhetoric of the other's inhumanity obliges the self to practice inhumanity.<sup>111</sup>

In Chapter 2, I mentioned Alexandra Cuffel's description of how during the Middle Ages, such dehumanizing language and depiction of the religious other as not only morally threatening but even physically contagious was used in order to maintain boundaries of the religious purity of Christians, Jews, and Muslims against each other's faiths. After the Middle Ages, this system of dehumanization was continued in descriptions of the racial and ethnic other as well as the religious other.<sup>112</sup> Worth mention here again is the way the system of exclusion directed toward immigrants is undergirded by widespread images of immigrants as dirty, nasty, "vermin," and references to shooting undocumented immigrants like feral pigs, etc.

Volf argues that such "symbolic exclusion" distorts the other, not so much out of ignorance or a lack of knowledge about the other but as a "willful misconception" in which

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*.

<sup>111</sup> Volf, 76.

<sup>112</sup> Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic*.

“we *refuse* to know what is manifest and *choose* to know what serves our interests,”<sup>113</sup> in order to acquire possessions from and power over others.<sup>114</sup>

To achieve such ‘hegemonic centrality,’ we add conquest to conquest and possession to possession; we colonize the life-space of others and drive them out; we penetrate in order to exclude, and we exclude in order to control. . .<sup>115</sup>

Supporting this whole system of exclusion is what Volf calls “contrived innocence,” a self-deception and self-justification that blames others and perceives the self (or one’s own culture) as completely innocent.<sup>116</sup> (Arguments for American “exceptionalism” and against ever “apologizing for America” by acknowledging the flawed decisions and actions of its leaders fit this pattern.) He calls for a retrieval of the doctrine of original sin as a reminder of the non-innocence of all, even the victims of oppression, so that there is a need for forgiveness on all sides. In any case, more fundamental than assigning blame, which can be self-deceptive and self-righteous, is the work of reconciliation, the “economy of grace” and the “will to embrace.”<sup>117</sup>

It would be easy to sentimentalize Volf’s “will to embrace,” as if it were an easy dismissal of wrongs done and conditions of injustice. Instead, Volf is referring to an attitude of reconciliation, a desire and a will to restore relationships, to turn a relationship of enmity into a positive relationship, to turn enemies into friends. This cannot be an evasion of the hard work of justice but is instead a subordination of that work to the greater goal of reconciliation. In

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<sup>113</sup> Volf, 76.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 78-79.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-85.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 84-85.

other words, if the injustice is removed and even compensated for in some way, and the oppressor is punished, but the relationship is not healed, this still falls short of the goal of a renewed relationship. In reality, however, Volf insists, "There can be no justice without the will to embrace."<sup>118</sup>

My point was simple: to agree on justice you need to make space in yourself for the perspective of the other, and in order to make space you need to want to embrace the other. If you insist that others do not belong to you and you to them, that their perspective should not muddle yours, you will have your justice and they will have theirs; your justices will clash and there will be no justice *between* you. The knowledge of justice depends on the will to embrace. . . Embrace is part and parcel of the very *definition* of justice. I am not talking about soft mercy tampering [sic, tempering] harsh justice, but about love *shaping* the very content of justice.<sup>119</sup>

The prevailing idea of justice is the Greek understanding, to each his or her due, along with the notion of impartiality. The biblical view of justice is different. God demonstrates partiality in taking the side of the weak and the oppressed. God's justice treats people differently according to their specificity. Impartial justice only preserves a world constructed by past injustices. Yet, all acts of justice-making will tend to create additional injustices. A world of perfect justice is a world of love. In an unjust world there is no perfect justice.<sup>120</sup>

In a world of evil, however, we cannot dispense with an imperfect and therefore essentially unjust justice. The imperfect justice is the kind of necessary injustice without which people cannot be protected from violent incursions into their proper space. The weak, above all, need such protection. Hence they issue demands for justice whereas the powerful extol the justice of the order from which they benefit, as Aristotle observed (*The Politics*, 1318b). Unjust justice is therefore indispensable for satisfying the demands of love in an unjust world. It

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. Emphasis is the author's in all instances.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 220-23.

must be pursued relentlessly, above all for the sake of the oppressed. But this pursuit of justice must be situated in the context of love.<sup>121</sup>

Justice, in dealing with differences and particularity, must be guided by love or it will be distorted. Volf redefines justice as, “what is due to each person is to seek their good. . .”<sup>122</sup> If we are merely rational agents, then there may be no reason to subordinate justice to the will to embrace. But if we are children of God bound together in a community of love, “then there will be good reasons to let embrace—love—define what justice is.”<sup>123</sup>

Without the will to embrace, we fall into an exclusionary polarity of us vs. them.<sup>124</sup> In seeking to move from exclusion to embrace, Volf articulates a theological thesis that “God’s reception of hostile humanity into divine communion is a model for how human beings should relate to the other.”<sup>125</sup> The dual perspectives of Christian Scripture are: (1) the prophetic indictment of the mighty for abuses of the lowly; and (2) the evangelists and apostles address the lowly on how to live in hostile world as followers of the Crucified, demonstrating self-giving love combined with the struggle for truth and justice in the context of that love.<sup>126</sup> Volf elaborates on the ambiguities of liberation and the struggle for justice. The categories of “perpetrator,” “victim,” “oppression,” and “liberation,” while they are not dispensable, are complex and ambiguous in multi-ethnic conflicts, which are not a context of absolute good vs. absolute evil. What happens when the victims/oppressed defeat or conquer the oppressors? Is

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 223-24.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. 225.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 100-01.

injustice compensated with injustice? Is there merely a role reversal? Freedom is not the ultimate goal. Oppression-liberation is not the overarching schema to bring reconciliation and peace. (Perhaps something like King's "Beloved Community" would be a more comprehensive ideal.) Love and reconciliation rather than freedom is the ultimate goal, which is not to abandon the project of liberation but to insert it into the larger framework of reconciliation ("a theology of embrace").<sup>127</sup>

The "grand narratives" of modernity "speak of universal liberation, but they are all formulated from a *particular standpoint*."<sup>128</sup> Totalizing grand narratives and universalistic illusions lead to a totalitarian reign of terror that suppresses difference. "Universality" based on our own situated perspective becomes oppression. Yet, the postmodern deconstruction of grand narratives has its own risk of upholding an incommensurability of different cultures and of human differences generally that results in a Nietzschean vindication of the strong over the weak, with no overarching criteria of critique. Only God brings final reconciliation, but in a world of enmity theology seeks non-final, non-totalizing reconciliation as a framework for projects of liberation, guided by the vision of eschatological final reconciliation. In the meantime, liberation, reconciliation, and unity must always and repeatedly, continuously be negotiated and renegotiated.<sup>129</sup>

I will advocate here the struggle for *a nonfinal reconciliation based on a vision of reconciliation that cannot be undone*. I will argue that reconciliation with the other will succeed only if the self, guided by the narrative of the triune God, is

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 101-05.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 106. Emphasis is the author's.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 107-10.

ready to receive the other into itself and undertake a re-adjustment of its identity in light of the other's alterity.<sup>130</sup>

In order for reconciliation to take place, the self must be capable of taking the perspective of the other and must be open to being changed by the relationship with the other, to renegotiating its own identity within the context of that relationship rather than trying to force the other to change in order to avoid that self-transformation. (In regard to immigrants, this means that the receiving society must be open to changes in its cultural identity through the relationship with the immigrant other, even as the immigrant goes through corresponding changes in identity, rather than trying to enforce a one-way assimilation in which the immigrant other takes on the unaltered identity of those who are the primary shapers of the society.)

In order for reconciliation to take place, hatred must be removed. That is why Jesus demanded *both* liberation for the sinned-against/ the oppressed/ the captives *and* repentance, even for the victims as well as for the perpetrators/ oppressors. He called for repentance and forgiveness for the oppressed in order to cleanse their hearts of the debilitating hatred that perpetuates the cycle of violence and oppression.<sup>131</sup> Jesus' teachings had two prominent foci: (1) "You cannot serve God and wealth"; and (2) "Love your enemies." "Devotion to wealth and hatred of the enemy are sins of which the followers of Jesus must repent."<sup>132</sup> Envy and enmity reinforce the dominant order, even if only wanting to invert it. Repentance is a breaking of the hold of the dominant values and practices on the hearts of the oppressed and oppressor

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 110. Emphasis is the author's.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 111-15.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 115.

alike.<sup>133</sup> (Here I would compare Franz Fanon's urging of decolonizing countries not to imitate the brutal materialism of the colonizers.<sup>134</sup>) Repentance for the oppressed is a purifying of the souls of the victims from being shaped by the perpetrators. Repentance for the perpetrators/ oppressors is more than a change of heart but includes a superabundant restitution to offset the injustice.<sup>135</sup> Only pure hearts, cleansed by repentance, create social agents capable of authentic social transformation. That is why Jesus insisted on the need for repentance for both the oppressors and the oppressed.<sup>136</sup>

Jesus combines a deep commitment to seeing 'the oppressed go free' with an acute awareness that the oppressed—that *we!*—need repentance, a radical reorientation of basic attitudes and actions in response to God's coming salvation. 'Blessed are the poor' and 'Blessed are the pure' belong inseparably together (Matthew 5:3, 8). Without a 'politics of the pure heart' every politics of liberation will trip over its own feet. . ."<sup>137</sup>

In addition to the practice of repentance, reconciliation requires the practice of forgiveness. Forgiveness cannot always wait for perpetrators to repent, since all too often they do not, which leaves both victim and perpetrator "imprisoned in the automatism of mutual exclusion, unable to forgive or repent and united in a perverse communion of mutual hate."<sup>138</sup> They also become locked in an enslaving cycle of vengeance and counter-revenge, unless and

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>134</sup> Fanon and Philcox, *The Wretched of the Earth / Frantz Fanon; Translated from the French by Richard Philcox; Introductions by Jean-Paul Sartre and Homi K. Bhabha*, 235-39.

<sup>135</sup> Volf, 117.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 118-19.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 120.

until forgiveness breaks the cycle.<sup>139</sup> Ritual resolution of rage over injustice through the use of the imprecatory Psalms and prayers can open the hearts of the oppressed to forgiveness.<sup>140</sup>

Forgiveness opens up space for the other, so that healing and the embrace of reconciliation can become a possibility.

Under the foot of the cross we learn, however, that in a world of irreversible deeds and partisan judgments redemption from the passive suffering of victimization cannot happen without the active suffering of forgiveness.<sup>141</sup>

Forgiveness is the boundary between exclusion and embrace. It heals the wounds that the power-acts of exclusion have inflicted and breaks down the dividing wall of hostility.<sup>142</sup>

So forgiveness is a transitional state from exclusion to embrace. Yet, at the point of forgiveness the transition remains incomplete. At that point the distance between people remains, allowing them “either to go their separate ways in what is sometimes called ‘peace’ or to fall into each other’s arms and restore broken communion.”<sup>143</sup> For as long as the separation remains, there is no true peace. There is only coexistence or tolerance, “the absence of hostility sustained by the absence of contact,” whereas true “*peace is communion between former enemies.*”<sup>144</sup>

At the heart of the cross is Christ’s stance of not letting the other remain an enemy and of creating space in himself for the offender to come in. Read as the culmination of the larger narrative of God’s dealing with humanity, the cross says that despite its manifest enmity toward God humanity belongs to God. . . The

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 120-21.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 123-24.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 125-26.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 126. Emphasis is the author’s.

cross is the giving up of God's self in order not to give up on humanity; it is the consequence of God's desire to break the power of human enmity without violence and receive human beings into divine communion. . . . Forgiveness is therefore not the culmination of Christ's relation to the offending other; it is a passage leading to embrace. The arms of the crucified are open—a sign of a space in God's self and an invitation for the enemy to come in.<sup>145</sup>

Volf describes the patristic doctrine of the divine *perichoresis* of the Trinity as both the model and the location for our relations with one another and the overcoming of separation while maintaining boundaries. The persons of the Trinity indwell each other in an inseparable unity, in an eternal bond of love, yet remain distinct from one another, without merging or mixing. Still, their identities cannot be defined outside of their interrelationship.<sup>146</sup> The Father is not the Father without the Son; nor is the Son the Son without the Father. Without the Father and the Son as senders, the Spirit is not sent. On the cross humanity is drawn from enmity into the Trinity's mutual embrace of love.<sup>147</sup> "We, the others—we, the enemies—are embraced by the divine persons who love us with the same love with which they love each other and therefore make space for us within their own eternal embrace."<sup>148</sup>

In the Eucharist, we ritually enact both God's making space for us in Godself and inviting us in, and our making space for others in ourselves and inviting them in, including our enemies. We share not only in the broken body of Jesus but in "the multi-membered body of the church."<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 127-28.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 128-29.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 129-30.

In the Eucharist, then, we celebrate the giving of the self to the other and the receiving of the other into the self that the triune God has undertaken in the passion of Christ and that we are called and empowered to live such giving and receiving out in a conflict-ridden world.<sup>150</sup>

In obedience to the call 'to embrace each other' the Paschal mystery is lived out in the world. We who have been embraced by the outstretched arms of the crucified God open our arms even for the enemies—to make space in ourselves for them and invite them in—so that together we may rejoice in the eternal embrace of the triune God.<sup>151</sup>

Volf mentions a final “step” in the reconciliation process, forgetting the evil suffered, the healing of memory. This can occur only after justice has been done and after the transformation of the perpetrator. Since “we must remember wrongdoings in order to be safe in an unsafe world,” this may be possible only in the eschaton. Yet, what matters is a willingness ultimately to forget the wrong. The implication of this final step for this-world reconciliation is that we can be guided now by a vision and desire for a time of full reconciliation without the memory of wrongs done. Only if we have this hope can we remember rightly and be open to the offending other. Only if this final step is a reality in heaven will we not be reliving the hell of the wrongs suffered.<sup>152</sup>

Volf uses the act of a physical embrace as a metaphor for the embrace of reconciliation.<sup>153</sup> First, there is the opening of the arms, the invitation to embrace, to welcome the other. Second, there is the waiting, since this is an invitation and not an invasion. The embrace cannot be forced upon the other. Third, there is the closing of the arms in a soft

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-40.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-47.

touch, with gentleness, such that the boundaries of self and other must be preserved and neither of the two denied, though both will be transformed through the encounter. This includes the “ability *not* to understand the other,”<sup>154</sup> in order to preserve the other’s alterity, in other words, not to try to understand the other on one’s own terms. This is the emergence of the other as a question. We must admit that much of what we “know” about the other is wrong, is shaped by our own biases and prejudices, as well as our own limited experiences. Then fourthly and finally, there is the opening the arms again, since this is not a merging or erasure of boundaries. The integrity of the other and the self must be preserved even while the presence of the other enriches the self and leaves traces. One must let go of the other in order to continue the “negotiation of difference which can never produce a final settlement.”<sup>155</sup>

Volf identifies four features characteristic of a successful embrace.<sup>156</sup> “The first is the *fluidity of identities*.”<sup>157</sup> We live out variations in our identity in the different social roles we play, and our identities change as we venture “out of our home,” and the “things we encounter ‘outside’ become a part of the ‘inside.’”<sup>158</sup> In order to embrace the other, I must be open to having my identity reshaped through the encounter, as the other becomes part of myself. I am who I am in relation to the other. The second feature is “the *nonsymmetry* of the relationship.”<sup>159</sup> My movement toward the other is not determined or limited by the other’s

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 145-47.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 145. Emphasis is the author’s.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. Emphasis is the author’s.

movement toward me. I must be willing to take a step further: “‘One step more’ toward the neighbor, and the first step—maybe even the second and the third—toward the enemy!”<sup>160</sup> To embrace the other requires self-giving and self-sacrifice, modeled on Christ’s self-giving and self-sacrifice. Third is “the *underdetermination of the outcome*.”<sup>161</sup>

Given the structural element of waiting, nothing can guarantee that embrace will take place. . . . And once the embrace has taken place, nothing can guarantee a particular outcome. Given the structural element of gentleness, we can never know in advance how the reshaping of the self and the other will take place in embrace. . . . Only one outcome is not possible: a genuine embrace cannot leave both or either completely unchanged.<sup>162</sup>

Then fourthly and finally there is an element of risk and vulnerability in the openness and movement toward embrace. I cannot know in advance how my efforts at reconciliation will be received.

I open my arms, make a movement of the self toward the other, the enemy, and do not know whether I will be misunderstood, despised, even violated or whether my action will be appreciated, supported, and reciprocated.<sup>163</sup>

Volf draws upon Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) as a metaphor for the contrast between exclusion and embrace.<sup>164</sup> I will mention a few of his major points here. In the father’s embrace of the younger son, we can see that acceptance was not based on moral performance but was unconditional.<sup>165</sup> “Confession *followed* acceptance” but was still

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<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 147. Emphasis is the author’s.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 156-65.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

necessary, as the younger son's identity was being reconstructed.<sup>166</sup> Then there is the father's encounter with the older son and his desire to exclude his younger brother. The older son follows the logic of rules, which cannot take account of complexity and ambiguity. It either includes or excludes based on the rules.<sup>167</sup>

Obsession with the rules—not bad rules, but salutary rules!—encourages self-righteousness and the demonization of others. To make the rules stick, one must reduce moral ambiguity and the complexity of social agents and their interaction. Insistence on observance of the rules fosters polarities where none are to be found and heightens them where they do exist. As a result, one is either completely 'in' (if no rule was broken) or completely 'out' (if a rule has been broken).<sup>168</sup>

For the father, on the other hand, relationship has priority over rules. The relationship is not grounded in moral performance but in unconditional love and acceptance.<sup>169</sup> The father in the parable "is guided by indestructible love and supported by a flexible order."<sup>170</sup>

The world of fixed rules and stable identities is the world of the older brother. The father destabilizes this world—and draws his older son's anger upon himself. The father's most basic commitment is not to rules and given identities but to his sons whose lives are too complex to be regulated by fixed rules and whose identities are too dynamic to be defined once for all. Yet he does not give up the rules and the order. Guided by the indestructible love which makes space in the self for others in their alterity, which invites the others who have transgressed to return, which creates hospitable conditions for their confession, and rejoices over their presence, the father keeps re-configuring the order without destroying it so as to maintain it as an order of embrace rather than exclusion.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 160. Emphasis is the author's.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 161-63.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 162-63.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 164-65.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

These last points about the logic of “fixed rules and stable identities” has relevance for the whole issue of how we as Christians respond to undocumented immigrants who crossed the border illegally. Violation of immigration law in crossing the border without proper authorization is certainly a serious matter not to be taken lightly. Yet, to allow that one act to be determinative of our entire relationship with undocumented immigrants, many of whom are otherwise law abiding residents in our communities, seems to be an inversion of the priority of relationships over rules that not only characterized the father in the parable but was demonstrated by Jesus himself in his controversial acts of healing on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6), violating the rules about ritual purity (Mark 7:1-5, 14-23), having table fellowship with societal rejects (Mark 2:15-17), and showing mercy to the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 7:53-8:11).

### **Conclusion:**

God’s vision—God’s plan and purpose, as revealed in Scripture, not merely for humanity but for the entire creation—is that of a unity and harmony far beyond the reconciliation of the diversity of humanity but certainly including it. The world remains (often bitterly) divided along the lines of race and ethnicity, nationality, language and culture. Sadly, that is true even among people who claim the name of Jesus Christ and are part of his church. On the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the barriers of language and culture that divide people were broken down, and people of many different languages and ethnic groups were united into one family of faith. Still, that work of the Spirit remains incomplete.

The border between the United States and Mexico has become a dividing wall of hostility—in some places, a literal dividing wall, which many Americans would like to see

enlarged rather than torn down—in other places, a figurative wall that nonetheless is maintained with military force and violence. At a deeper level than the physical or virtual wall of the border, there is the wall of hostility that exists in the hearts of many and their attitudes toward the immigrant strangers dwelling among them. God’s vision calls for the breaking down of the dividing walls of hostility, in order to create one new humanity—one family of faith, in which all are citizens and none are strangers and aliens. God’s plan to reunite the human family in Christ does not necessarily tell us all we need to know about what our immigration policy should be. It is a complex issue, and there are many practical dimensions of it to be explored and debated. Nevertheless, this vision does have a lot to say about how Christians should frame this issue and offers a larger, more comprehensive perspective within which to view the direction in which our policies are leading. At the very least, it expresses the resounding judgment of the God revealed in Christ and biblical faith against much of the rhetoric and the attitudes of hostility that tend to shape the immigration debate.

Yet, what I especially wish to emphasize here is how the overarching biblical story of God’s work of reconciling the world (restoring us all to right relationships with God, self, each other, and the whole creation; breaking down dividing walls between people and peoples; and bringing unity and harmony in the place of division and discord) stands as a contrast narrative to the narrative of the immigrant other as a threat to our collective identity as Americans. One vision frames the entire debate over immigration in terms of a narrative that perceives immigrants as a threat to our American national identity, an invasion from beyond our borders that must be stopped, lest our national heritage and Western civilization itself should be in peril of being lost. The racial and cultural other is a threat that can only destroy our own cultural

identity. The biblical narrative instead envisions a coming together of diverse peoples into one new humanity, a restoration of God's originally intended unity and harmony among the created order, which includes humanity in all its cultural and linguistic (and perceived racial<sup>172</sup>) diversity. One vision seeks to maintain separateness, or else to destroy cultural distinctiveness through assimilation of the other into a predetermined and presumably unalterable cultural form. The biblical narrative instead seeks a harmonious blending together of diverse elements whose fundamental identity is found now in Christ, rather than in any one cultural expression.

Even as Jew and Gentile are melded together into one new humanity without either Gentile becoming Jew or vice versa, overcoming what, from a biblical standpoint, is the greatest dividing wall of hostility, so also the variegated diversity of peoples in this world are to be brought into the one new humanity, without losing their individuality or the cultural particularity that characterizes a limited part of their identity. In reconciliation, self (including collective self) and other will enter into an embrace in which personal and social boundaries are respected but in which both parties to the embrace will be changed.

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<sup>172</sup> Here see my critique of race as a category for defining human difference in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 7: PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR AS INTEGRAL TO CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL IDENTITY

*To know God is to do justice, is to be in solidarity with the poor person. . . Hence, for the Bible, there is no authentic worship of God without solidarity with the poor.”<sup>1</sup>*

—Gustavo Gutierrez

The “preferential option for the poor” is one of the central dimensions of the theological trajectory known as Latin American liberation theology. In fact, according to Gustavo Gutierrez, the centrality of the poor, along with a particular theological method and a concern for evangelization, form the enduring core of this way of understanding Christian faith.<sup>2</sup> The option for the poor is an insight, orientation, and commitment that, in one sense, is a distinctive contribution of Latin American liberation theology. Yet, in another sense, it has deep biblical and theological roots, as well as historical antecedents. In other words, it was not so much an “invention” as a recovery of an essential aspect of Christian faith that had historically been lost, forgotten, or at best peripheral in the mainstream theological traditions of the church.

### **Biblical Roots:**

The biblical ground of the option for the poor begins with the centrality of the Exodus narrative in defining who the God of the Bible is.

If there is a single passage that encapsulates the liberation themes of the Bible, it is the exodus story, describing a God who takes sides, intervening to free the poor and oppressed.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 51.

<sup>2</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Option for the Poor," in *Mysterium Liberationis : Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), 235.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

This God is known primarily as the God who heard the cry of a group of slaves in Egypt and acted decisively for their deliverance (liberation) (Exodus 1-15, especially 1:8-14; 2:23-25; 3:7-10). This act of God formed the identity of the nation of Israel as a people and bonded them together in covenant with the God who had liberated them from slavery. The identity of this God would henceforth be centrally defined by this act of deliverance, as commemorated in the Passover celebration (Exodus 12). This is the God who chose a group of slaves to be God's own people and brought them forth out of their bondage and into freedom, forging them into a great nation defined by a covenantal relationship with God and each other (Deuteronomy 26).

The covenant itself carried obligations defining what kind of people Israel would become—obligations not only toward God but toward one another, and in particular, toward the weakest, most vulnerable members of society, as again and again they were reminded that they were a people who knew oppression in Egypt and should therefore be compassionate toward the plight of marginalized people among them, including the poor, the foreigners sojourning among them, the debtors, the aged, and those left vulnerable by the loss of family members upon whom they were dependent (i.e., widows and orphans).

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 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 19:9-10)

When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:33-34)

You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry; my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword. . . (Exodus 22:22-24)

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. (Deuteronomy 24:17-18)

The landless peasants gleaning in the fields, the uprooted and wandering foreigner living among the people without a permanent home or family connections to sustain them, the widow and the orphan who lacked social status and power in a patriarchal society that made women and children dependent upon adult male providers and protectors—these were among the most vulnerable people in ancient Israel, unable to survive without the assistance of those with more power and resources, and within the covenant bond, they were therefore considered by the God who formed Israel as a people in covenant relationship with God and one another, and who commissioned the Hebrew prophets, to be a responsibility of the entire community.

Moreover, the covenant legislation included the command in Leviticus 25 to observe every fiftieth year as a “jubilee year,” when the land would be allowed to rest from being planted, debts would be cancelled, slaves set free, and land lost by a family due to poverty returned to that family. (“The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants.”—Leviticus 25:23) This was to offer an opportunity for God's renewal of the land and of the people—giving both a fresh start, unencumbered by the burdens of the past, and to reverse the effects of accumulated injustices and exhaustion.

The Hebrew prophets made one of their most prominent and persistent themes pronouncing God's judgment upon violations of these covenant obligations toward the poor and the vulnerable, a theme echoed in many of the Psalms.

Thus says the LORD: For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals—they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and push the afflicted out of the way. . . (Amos 2:4-7)

Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be your spoil, and that you may make the orphans your prey! What will you do on the day of punishment, in the calamity that will come from far away? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth, so as not to crouch among the prisoners or fall among the slain? For all this his [God's] anger has not turned away; his hand is stretched out still. (Isaiah 10:1-4)

The context for the pronouncements of the eighth century BCE prophets Amos and Isaiah, along with Micah, who expresses similar themes, is described in detail by Marvin L. Chaney in his essay, "Bitter Bounty: The Dynamics of Political Economy Critiqued by the Eighth-Century Prophets."<sup>4</sup> To briefly summarize, with the formation of the monarchy, David established Israel's aristocracy by awarding large land holdings in the plains of Israel to his military leaders who had made his conquests possible. Meanwhile, in the hill country, villages of peasant farmers continued their subsistence farming of a diversity of crops both to feed themselves and to hedge against uncertainties in individual crop performance, along with the grazing of sheep, goats, and cattle on fallow fields not suitable for cultivation. By the eighth century, these peasant farmers were increasingly under pressure from the monarchy's taxation structure to divert land from subsistence farming to the cash crops of oil, wine vineyards, and wheat, within an economy increasingly driven by the large estate owners who were mostly urban dwellers and who generated a huge demand for these exportable agricultural products which they could trade for a variety of imported luxury items.

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<sup>4</sup> Marvin L. Chaney, "Bitter Bounty: The Dynamics of Political Economy Critiqued by the Eighth-Century Prophets," in *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics*, ed. Norman K. Gottwald and Richard A. Horsley, The Bible & Liberation Series (Maryknoll, N.Y.; London: Orbis Books; SPCK, 1993).

Peasant farmers lost their capacity to hedge against crop failures and were forced to take out loans at high interest rates from moneylenders, with their land as collateral. Foreclosure on their land consolidated larger and larger estates for the wealthy aristocracy, while separating peasant farmers from their land, forcing them into the role of wage-laborers on the large estates, and forcing them to purchase their own food products from the marketplace at prices they could not afford on their meager wages. Thus their debts grew and pushed many of them into debt-slavery. Rather than stopping these foreclosures based on illegal levels of usurious interest, corrupted courts controlled by the landed aristocracy upheld these practices. Meanwhile, the destitution of the peasant farmers, wage-laborers, and debt-slaves formed a striking contrast with the opulence mounting in the cities based on the international trade of oil, wine, and wheat for a variety of luxury items desired by the wealthy.<sup>5</sup> (This scenario is strikingly similar to the ramifications for the poor farmers of the Third World due to the economic restructuring associated with globalization, as described in Chapter 1.)

What Chaney describes is the background not only for the eighth century prophets but, considering that the covenant legislation was put into its final form during the Babylonian Exile, well after the time of Amos, Isaiah, and Micah, and without a doubt influenced by their prophetic pronouncements on the nature and demands of Yahweh, this socioeconomic history and Yahweh's response to it likely gave significant shape to the entire conception of Israel's God in the biblical tradition. Amos himself was by vocation a peasant farmer, and his specific accusations against the wealthy urban dwellers correspond closely with the economic developments described by Chaney. Moreover, the idea of the Jubilee Year (Leviticus 25) as an

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

opportunity for renewal of the land and the people makes perfect sense as a correction of this pattern of undermining the agricultural system of crop rotation in subsistence farming, forcing families off their land, and forcing the poor into debt and then debt-slavery.

Without fulfilling the obligation of justice toward the poor, these same prophets declared that even the people's worship was considered tainted and unacceptable to God, for the sacrificial system mischaracterized the God of Israel as more concerned about religious ritual than about the lives of the poor.

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. . . Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:21-24)<sup>6</sup>

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; . . . Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them. When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. (Isaiah 1:11, 14-17)

For the God revealed through the prophets, acceptable worship and justice for the poor must be integrated as two sides of one reality. As Gustavo Gutierrez puts it, "To know God is to do justice, is to be in solidarity with the poor person. . . Hence, for the Bible, there is no authentic worship of God without solidarity with the poor."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See definitions of "justice" and "righteousness" as described in Chapter 6.

<sup>7</sup> Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, 51. González

To know God is to do justice. This is the message directed particularly at the centers of power and authority, as when Jeremiah proclaims to the king God's standard for good government, which is about justice for the poor rather than self-aggrandizement:

Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice; who makes his neighbors work for nothing, and does not give them their wages; who says, 'I will build myself a spacious house with large upper rooms,' and who cuts out windows for it, paneling it with cedar, and painting it with vermilion. Are you a king because you compete in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? says the LORD. But your eyes and heart are only on your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence. (Jeremiah 22:13-17)

Likewise, the Psalmist paints a portrait of the ideal king, who gives justice to the poor:

Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son. May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor. . . [plea for long life, peace and prosperity, extensive dominion and military success to this king because:] For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight. (Psalm 72:1-4, 12-14)

In the New Testament, even before Jesus was born, in a time when the Jewish people had become the victims of the brutality of Roman imperial rule combined with the religious oppression of a priestly caste that profited from collaborating with Roman rule while hegemonizing the spiritual life of the people, his mother Mary sang of the Messianic hope of God's deliverance from this oppression, announcing some of the same reversals of the fortunes of the high and mighty and the downcast and lowly that would be prominent in Jesus' own teachings:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. . . He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.  
(Luke 1:46-48, 51-53)

Jesus himself, born into a poor carpenter's family under the lowliest of circumstances, began his ministry by announcing the liberating mission for which he had been anointed by God's Spirit and sent into the world, echoing the words of Isaiah (61:1-2), a scripture text he declared to be fulfilled in his ministry (Luke 4:18-21):

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19)

"The year of the Lord's favor" is a specific reference to the Jubilee Year (Leviticus 25) with its promise of the cancellation of debts, freeing of slaves, and return of land to the family that originally owned it—described by John Howard Yoder in *The Politics of Jesus* as "the time when the inequities accumulated through the years are to be crossed off and all God's people will begin again at the same point."<sup>8</sup> Yoder also states that "Jesus' concept of the coming kingdom was borrowed extensively from the prophetic understanding of the jubilee year."<sup>9</sup>

The place of Leviticus 25 in the Bible kept alive the vision of an age when economic life would start over from scratch; and the testimony of Isaiah 61 demonstrates its fruitfulness as a vision of the coming renewal.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout his ministry, Jesus consistently identified himself with the poor, the outcasts, the marginalized, and the victims, for which he was frequently criticized by the

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<sup>8</sup> Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, 36.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 37-38.

religious leaders. In the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 6:20-23), Jesus proclaimed that the Reign of God belongs to the poor (Luke 6:20) or the “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3) and blessed the “meek,” the hungry, the mournful, and the persecuted. The reversals of fortune he declared in those blessings (and Luke’s accompanying “woes” in Luke 6:24-26) are echoed in many of Jesus’ parables and in his frequent refrain about how the last will be first, and the first will be last (Matthew 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30; etc.). For all the traditional ecclesiastical and theological claims about how Jesus was “nonpolitical,” Jesus seems to have systematically declared that a central sign of the coming Reign of God was the dismantling of a hierarchical ordering of society, as typified by a series of reversals of the social status and power that currently characterized the social order. Then finally, in his description of the “last judgment” in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus so identified himself with the least and lowliest of people in need--society’s weakest and most vulnerable members--those lacking in the basic necessities of life (food, drink, and clothing), the foreigner (“stranger,” *xenos*, from which we get the word “xenophobia,” fear of the “other”--a word used for the one who is “foreign” or “alien”),<sup>11</sup> those beaten down to the point of exhaustion or removed from sight altogether (the sick and the imprisoned)--that he declared these to be the very embodiment of his own presence among the people and proclaimed that how we respond to these most vulnerable of people will be the basis of that final judgment.

Just as Jesus made his place among the marginalized, Paul also declares God’s choice of the lowly and despised of this world:

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<sup>11</sup> Gustav Stählin, “Ξένος, Ξενία, Ξενίζω, Ξενοδοχέω, Φιλοξενία, Φιλόξενος,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967).

Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. (I Corinthians 1:26-29)

James likewise affirms God's choice of the poor as heirs of God's Reign, in rebuking those in the church who would dishonor the poor and show favoritism toward the wealthy, while also echoing the prophets in integrating justice for the poor and religious practice:

Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you? (James 2:5-7)

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (James 1:27)

All of these biblical texts portray a God who is the defender of the poor and the weak, who takes sides with the oppressed, who demands of God's people that they practice justice toward the poor, and who especially chooses the lowly as the instruments of God's salvation, rather than the high and the mighty. Faith in this God is best demonstrated through joining in God's work of liberating the oppressed, bringing good news and justice to the poor, and lifting up the lowly, rather than primarily through religious rituals disconnected from acts of love and justice.

### **Historical Antecedents:**

The church has always had its advocates for the poor. The early church, as recorded in Acts (2:44-45; 4:32-37; 6:1-4), held property in common and made daily distribution of food to

meet the needs of the widows and others who lacked. Paul, during his missionary journeys, took up a collection for the poor in the Jerusalem church (2 Corinthians 8-9). James railed against the mistreatment of the poor in the church (2:1-7) and insisted that a so-called faith that ignores or dismisses the needs of the poor has no salvific value at all (2:14-19). Then throughout the history of the church there have been the preaching of church leaders like John Chrysostom, urging the wealthy to share out of their abundance with the poor; Francis of Assisi's renunciation of his own wealth to identify with and advocate for the poor; the voluntary poverty and ministry of the friars; John Wesley's advocacy of the poor and the neglected in his preaching and his ministry to the factory workers and prisoners in 18<sup>th</sup> century England, as well as his vigorous denunciation of the evil of slavery<sup>12</sup>; and Mother Teresa's ministry among the poorest of the poor in Calcutta, India, in whom she saw the face of Jesus "in His distressing disguise"<sup>13</sup>; among many other examples. Yet, the poor had never been at the center of the church's mainstream of theological reflection—at least not after the New Testament period.

Something of a turning point was reached in Catholic social teaching with the issuance in 1891 of Pope Leo XIII's social encyclical "on capital and labor," entitled *Rerum Novarum*.<sup>14</sup> Gerald Twomey states that "Pope Leo XIII presaged the 'preferential option for the poor'" in

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<sup>12</sup> See especially John Wesley, "Thoughts Upon Slavery," in *The Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007; reprint, Third Edition).

<sup>13</sup> Mother Teresa, Becky Benenate, and Joseph Durepos, *No Greater Love*, Large Print Edition ed. (New York: Walker and Company, 1997), 68.

<sup>14</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1891), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15051891\\_rerum-novarum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html).

this papal encyclical.<sup>15</sup> In discussing the interaction between the church and the state over the rights of workers, Leo finds that, “As regards the State, the interests of all, whether high or low, are equal.”<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, he goes on to say:

Rights must be religiously respected wherever they exist, and it is the duty of the public authority to prevent and to punish injury, and to protect every one in the possession of his own. *Still, when there is question of defending the rights of individuals, the poor and badly off have a claim to especial consideration.* The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State. And it is for this reason that wage-earners, since they mostly belong in the mass of the needy, should be specially cared for and protected by the government.<sup>17</sup>

Then, after Pope John XXIII had called for the ecumenical council that became Vatican II, in a statement one month before the meeting of the Council he called for a “church of the poor”:

In his broadcast delivered on September 11, 1962, one month prior to the opening of the Council, Pope John sought to present to the Church ‘a further luminous point: confronted with the underdeveloped countries, the Church presents herself as what she is, and wants to be, as the Church of all, and particularly, as the Church of the poor. . . [in order to redress] the miseries of social life that cry out for vengeance in the sight of God.’<sup>18</sup>

According to Gutierrez, Pope John’s “intuition had strong repercussions on Medellín, as well as on the life of the Latin American church, especially by way of the base church communities.”<sup>19</sup>

Pope John sought a real transformation of the church through the Second Vatican Council and

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<sup>15</sup> Gerald S. Twomey, *The "Preferential Option for the Poor" in Catholic Social Thought from John XXIII to John Paul II*, Roman Catholic Studies V. 22 (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 5.

<sup>16</sup> Pope Leo XIII, 33.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 37, emphasis mine.

<sup>18</sup> Twomey, 60.

<sup>19</sup> Gutiérrez, “Option for the Poor,” 244.

“gave it the task of opening the Church to the world, of finding an appropriate theological language, and of bearing witness to a Church both *of* and *for* the poor.”<sup>20</sup> The influence of Pope John is reflected in “the themes and outlook of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, promulgated in December, 1965.”<sup>21</sup> Pope John called the Catholic Church in a new direction, to be on the side of the poor. He did not live to see his vision through in the Council; nevertheless his successor Pope Paul VI to a large extent shared his vision and continued his direction of leadership over the Council and the church.<sup>22</sup>

In his closing address at the final session of the Council, Pope Paul VI stated that “the turn toward the service of humanity” was not a “turning away from God, but instead, required a turning toward God” and that, “In the poor, Christians recognized the face of Christ, the face of God...”<sup>23</sup> Some statements from Vatican II did indicate a change of perspective that was embraced within the Latin American Church as a change of direction in the church. *Lumen Gentium* (no. 8) included the statement that:

. . . the Church recognizes in those who are poor and suffer, the image of her poor and suffering founder. She does all in her power to relieve their need and in them she strives to serve Christ.<sup>24</sup>

*Gaudium et Spes* included the statement:

The Church . . . does not rest its hopes on privileges offered to it by civil authorities; indeed, it will even give up the exercise of certain legitimately acquired rights in situations where it has been established that their use calls in

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<sup>20</sup> Twomey, 69. Emphasis is the author's.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 72-75, 77-121.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 104.

question the sincerity of its witness, or where new circumstances require a different arrangement (no. 76).<sup>25</sup>

Twomey states that: "This passage was greeted by many in the Church of Latin America as an invitation to adopt a very different posture—to distance itself from the comfortable embrace of the ruling elites, and to challenge structural injustice."<sup>26</sup>

Yet, despite its noble statements about the church's service of Christ in the poor and calling for a change of direction, Vatican II fell short of actually implementing institutional changes in the church that might give concrete reality to its stated ideals. Gustavo Gutiérrez sums up both the Council's shortcomings and the potential that lay in its aftermath:

John XXIII gave the Council the task of opening the Church to the world, finding an appropriate theological language, and bearing witness to a Church for the poor. After it had overcome its initial difficulties, the Church fulfilled the first of these two demands. . . The third task given by John XXIII to the Council barely appears in its texts. . . However, many Christians have recently been becoming more and more aware that if the Church wants to be faithful to the God of Jesus Christ, it has to rethink itself *from below*, from the position of the poor of this world, the exploited classes, the despised races, the marginal cultures. . . Gradually people are realizing that in the last resort it is not a question of the Church being poor, but of the poor of this world being the People of God, the disturbing witness to the God who sets free.<sup>27</sup>

Still, its shortcomings notwithstanding, perhaps what was accomplished by Vatican II was to offer theological and ecclesial cover for currents of thought and action that were already underway in Latin America. From the time of the Spanish and Portuguese conquest of the land and indigenous peoples of the Americas, the Catholic Church had been allied with the imperial regime and had been granted a privileged position within the colonial social system, wielding

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Poor in the Church," in Norbert Greinbacher and Alois Müller, eds., *The Poor and the Church* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), 12-13; as cited in Twomey, 106-07. Emphasis is that of the author.

significant cultural authority, controlling education, and occupying a privileged economic position.<sup>28</sup> That alliance with Spain and Portugal created a distrust toward the church among ruling elites of the new republics following the political independence of most Latin American countries attained during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Church leaders reacted “by strengthening their ties with those groups who were sympathetic to the traditional alliance: conservative parties, landowners, and the old aristocracy.”<sup>29</sup>

The Catholic Church increasingly found itself, in the first decades of the twentieth century, unsuccessfully competing for the allegiances of the people against secular unions, left-wing political groups, African-derived spiritualist cults, and newly arrived Protestant churches.<sup>30</sup>

Events such as the 1959 socialist revolution of Fidel Castro in Cuba and the 1964 military coup in Brazil, the latter of which brought to power a very oppressive regime trained in counterinsurgency and torture, led many young people in Latin America to become increasingly attracted to Marxism and disenchanted with both “democratic capitalism” and the “new Christendom” strategy of the Catholic Church.<sup>31</sup>

Within the church itself, new prophetic voices emerged, such as Dom Hélder Camera, a bishop from Rio de Janeiro who “denounced the poverty and violence of capitalism, called for the conscientization, or ‘consciousness-raising,’ of the poor (based on Paulo Freire’s literacy training method), and raised the possibility of a move toward socialism.”<sup>32</sup> He organized the

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<sup>28</sup> Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology : Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 11-12.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

National Conference of Brazilian Bishops in 1952 and the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) in 1955. He had been active at Vatican II, during which he organized a group of fifteen bishops from Africa, Latin America, and Asia, which publicized “A Message to the People of the Third World,” declaring that “the peoples of the Third World are the proletariat of today’s humanity,” that “the gospel demands the first, radical revolution,” that “wealth must be shared by all,” “that the wealthy wage a ‘class warfare’ against the workers,” and that “true socialism is Christianity integrally lived.”<sup>33</sup> In some sense, Vatican II had paved the way for such alternative visions of the role of Christian faith in society.

Under the leadership of Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, and progressive European theologians, Vatican II altered the official Church teachings on the nature of the Church and the value of secular historical progress, opening the door for a fundamental rethinking of the Christian faith and its place in the modern world. Whereas the New Christendom strategy tried to ‘christianize’ and control society, Vatican II affirmed the more humble ‘pilgrim’ status of the Church, journeying alongside the rest of humankind. Furthermore, Vatican II recognized evidence of God’s work in—and therefore the value of—‘secular historical progress.’<sup>34</sup>

### **Medellín, Puebla, and the “Option for the Poor” as Catholic Teaching:**

Popes Leo XIII, John XXIII, and Paul VI had initiated a process of the Catholic Church reevaluating its mission and renewing its commitment toward the poor. Vatican II reflected that shift of emphasis and yet fell short of implementing structural changes that would follow through on the commitments it outlined. It was in Latin America that a theological and ecclesial commitment would take root in a deeper way, as the poor began to make their own voices

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 17.

heard and to become agents of their own liberation, rather than recipients of the paternalistic charity of others, a “historical event” Gutiérrez describes as “the irruption of the poor,”<sup>35</sup> “which read from the standpoint of faith, also represents an irruption of God into our lives.”<sup>36</sup> In terms of an official ecclesiastical endorsement and distillation of the theological revisioning that was happening in Latin America, the key events were the Second and Third General Conferences of the Latin American Bishops (CELAM) in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, and in Puebla, Mexico, in 1979, respectively. Twomey sums up the impact of these two conferences as follows:

The kernel seeds of the ‘preferential option for the poor’ were implicitly planted at the Latin American bishops’ conference at Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, and explicitly formulated at their next meeting at Puebla, Mexico, in 1979.

The ‘preferential option for the poor’ subsequently appeared in documents of the authentic papal magisterium, such as the later social encyclicals of John Paul II: *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1988) and *Centesimus Annus* (1991). This progression framed the backdrop of a renewed commitment by the Church to look upon society from the viewpoint of the materially poor, the weak, and the marginalized and lend support to the struggle aimed towards their integral liberation.<sup>37</sup>

#### *Medellín:*

Christian Smith recounts that “130 bishops, representing the more than 600 bishops of every country in Latin America,” met in Medellín, with a purpose of applying Vatican II to Latin America, as embodied in the title of the meeting, “The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council.” “The final documents of

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<sup>35</sup> Gutiérrez, “Option for the Poor,” 235.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>37</sup> Twomey, 12.

Medellín...became the Magna Carta of a whole new approach to the mission of the Church.”<sup>38</sup>

As Gregory Baum points out, the bishops at Medellín did not share the optimism of Vatican II’s *Gaudium et spes* about the capacity of welfare capitalism to produce in their continent the prosperity it had accomplished in Western industrialized nations.

They looked at the existing capitalist system not from the centre, where it produced great wealth but from the margin, where it undermined the subsistence economy on which ordinary people depended and destabilized the social relations that sustained their cultural and religious identity.<sup>39</sup>

Yet, while calling the church to a commitment to “radical social change toward ‘authentic liberation’,” the bishops at Medellín condemned both “liberal capitalism” and “the Marxist system,” devoting the church to a “solidarity with the poor” which “gives preference to the poorest and most needy sectors.”<sup>40</sup>

. . . the Medellín documents marked a radical departure from the rhetoric and strategy of an institution which, for centuries, had justified the killing of native peoples, provided a religious legitimation for an authoritarian, hierarchical social system, and aligned itself with conservative power elites. The hierarchies of Colombia and Argentina objected to the Medellín conclusions. Despite this, because of the ratifying vote of the representing bishops, Medellín was made the official statement and position of the Latin American Church.<sup>41</sup>

Within the Medellín document itself,<sup>42</sup> the section on “Justicia,” declares that the misery which marginalizes masses of the people of Latin America “es una injusticia que clama al cielo

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<sup>38</sup> Smith, 18.

<sup>39</sup> Gregory Baum, *Amazing Church: A Catholic Theologian Remembers a Half-Century of Change* (Toronto, Ont.; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Novalis; Orbis Books, 2005), 54.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, 19.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano, II Conferencia General Del Episcopado Latinoamericano, (Medellín, Colombia: BIBLIOTECA ELECTRÓNICA CRISTIANA -BEC- VE MULTIMEDIOS™, 1968), <http://multimedios.org/docs/d000273/>.

[is an injustice that cries out to heaven].”<sup>43</sup> Following the Hebrew prophets, the bishops identified poverty as the result of injustice, and they assigned blame for this outcome:

Nos referimos aquí, particularmente, a las consecuencias que entraña para nuestros países su dependencia de un centro de poder económico, en torno al cual gravitan. De allí resulta que nuestras naciones, con frecuencia, no son dueñas de sus bienes ni de sus decisiones económicas. [We refer here, particularly, to the consequences that involve for our countries their dependence on a center of economic power, around which they gravitate. From there it results that our nations, frequently, are not owners of their goods nor of their economic decisions.]<sup>44</sup>

Queremos subrayar que los principales culpables de la dependencia económica de nuestros países son aquellas fuerzas que, inspiradas en el lucro sin freno, conducen a la dictadura económica y al «imperialismo internacional del dinero» condenado por Pío XI en la *Quadragesimo anno* y por Pablo VI en la *Populorum progressio*. [We want to underline that the principal blame for the economic dependence of our countries is on those forces which, inspired by limitless profit, produce the economic dictatorship and the “international imperialism of money” condemned by Pius XI in the *Quadragesimo anno* and by Paul VI in the *Populorum progressio*.]<sup>45</sup>

Yet, the bishops at Medellín did not stop with denouncing the injustices of the capitalist system but went on to call for major changes in the church itself—especially in its clergy and hierarchical structures—and to commit themselves to a concrete solidarity with the poor and their advocates. The section entitled, “LA POBREZA DE LA IGLESIA [THE POVERTY OF THE CHURCH],”<sup>46</sup> discusses how, in the midst of the poverty and injustice experienced by the majority of the people of Latin America, the people have felt that their cries for justice have fallen on deaf ears within a church hierarchy that is rich and is allied with the rich. The bishops

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., Conclusiones, 1.1. All translations in brackets henceforth are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 2.8.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 2.9.e.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 14.

argue that the wealth of the clergy is more an appearance than a reality. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the people do not feel as if their bishops and church leaders really identify with them, their problems, and their anguish.<sup>47</sup>

The statement distinguishes three kinds of poverty: (1) actual deprivation of the world's goods, which the prophets denounced as contrary to God's will and the result of injustice and sin; (2) spiritual poverty, which is an openness to God, a dependence upon God for all things, and a subordination of worldly goods to the goods of the Kingdom; and (3) poverty as a voluntary commitment of love, joining the poor in their need, as a witness to the evil of poverty and to spiritual freedom as regards worldly goods, and following the example of Christ, who took on the sinful human condition and entered into our poverty in order to save us.<sup>48</sup> Of course, while all in the church are called to live an "evangelical poverty," not all have the same vocation as regards these three types of poverty. Nevertheless, the church and its bishops, priests, religious, and laity are called to solidarity with those who suffer and to embody and inspire a shift from attachment to selfish possession of the world's goods to an economy and power structure that works for the benefit of the community.<sup>49</sup> Then there is the paragraph that especially serves as precursor to the "preferential option for the poor" as developed at Puebla:

El particular mandato del Señor de «evangelizar a los pobres» debe llevarnos a una distribución de los esfuerzos y del personal apostólico *que dé preferencia efectiva a los sectores más pobres y necesitados y a los segregados por cualquier causa*, alentando y acelerando las iniciativas y estudios que con ese fin ya se hacen. [The particular mandate of the Lord to 'evangelize the poor' ought to

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 14.1-3.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 14.4.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 14.6-7.

lead us to a distribution of efforts and of apostolic personnel *that gives effective preference to the sectors most poor and needy and to those marginalized by whatever cause, aiding and accelerating the initiatives and studies that are already being done toward that end.*<sup>50</sup>

The solidarity with the poor which the bishops expressed includes their being accessible to the poor, making their own the struggles and problems of the poor, denouncing injustice and oppression, dialoguing with the groups responsible for the intolerable situation of the poor to make them aware of their obligations, giving support to advocates for the poor and not listening to those trying to undermine their work, and joining efforts with other entities to empower the poor to be able to help themselves.<sup>51</sup> Yet, perhaps most significant was the bishops' commitment to change their own lifestyle and to effect structural changes in the administration of the church in order to realize greater solidarity with the poor.

Deseamos que nuestra habitación y estilo de vida sean modestos; nuestro vestir, sencillo; nuestras obras e instituciones, funcionales, sin aparato ni ostentación. [We desire that our dwelling and lifestyle be modest; our clothing simple; our works and institutions functional, without pomp or ostentation.]

Pedimos a sacerdotes y fieles que nos den un tratamiento que convenga a nuestra misión de padres y pastores, pues deseamos renunciar a títulos honoríficos propios de otra época. [We request of the priests and the faithful that they treat us in a way that accords with our mission as fathers and pastors, hence we desire to renounce honorific titles appropriate to another epoch.]<sup>52</sup>

The bishops pledged to seek alternative ways to raise funds that do not involve charging fees in connection with the sacraments and to entrust administration of diocesan and parish property to competent laypersons, to be put to better use for the good of the whole

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 14.9, emphasis mine.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 14.9-11.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 14.12.

community.<sup>53</sup> They also offered their encouragement and support to the priests and religious communities in their calling to live and work among the poor, detaching themselves from material goods and sharing with the poor, including the establishment of parish funds to provide for these priests' own needs.<sup>54</sup> The bishops anticipated that the witness of such "evangelical poverty" would inspire others among the people of God toward a necessary conversion from an individualistic mentality to a social sense and concern for the common good, a change of perspective that must be incorporated into the Christian education of children and youth as fundamental to the Christian life.<sup>55</sup> Finally, the Medellín statement envisioned a Church that is not driven by earthly ambition and does not undermine its credibility through temporal ties but instead seeks to be a humble servant of all people in their problems and afflictions, embodying the poverty of Christ and carrying on his work.<sup>56</sup>

*Puebla:*

Medellín gave official ecclesiastical support to a new theology that was emerging—the theology of liberation. "What Medellín introduced, liberation theology cultivated, elaborated, and systematized."<sup>57</sup> After the publication in 1971 of Gustavo Gutiérrez's book, *A Theology of Liberation*,<sup>58</sup> "a wave of works on liberation theology was published."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 14.13.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 14.15-16.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 14.17.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 14.18.

<sup>57</sup> Smith, 21.

<sup>58</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973).

These writings began to overturn traditional theology and to reformulate Christian theology from the viewpoint of the liberation of the poor. This new body of theological work provided a reasoned justification for the liberation theology movement.<sup>60</sup>

Meanwhile, there were reactions among government officials, who accused the church of tolerating “Marxist infiltration” and “red priests,” while even some of the bishops who had signed the Medellín documents backed away from the commitments voiced therein. The bishops elected a more conservative leadership that sought to reverse the effects of Medellín, as CELAM gathered for its third general conference at Puebla, Mexico, in 1979. The outcome was not a clear victory for either the conservative leaders or liberation theologians, but the final document did contain “numerous statements reflecting the language and philosophy of liberation theology,” including the “preferential option for the poor.”<sup>61</sup>

The Puebla document<sup>62</sup> contains an entire chapter on the “Opción Preferencial por los Pobres [Preferential Option for the Poor].”<sup>63</sup> The bishops at Puebla saw themselves as reaffirming and building upon the position taken at Medellín, while also correcting misunderstandings of Medellín and assessing the church’s response to its challenge.

Afirmamos la necesidad de conversión de toda la Iglesia para una opción preferencial por los pobres, con miras a su liberación integral. [We affirm the necessity for conversion of the whole church toward a preferential option for the poor, with visions of their holistic liberation.]<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Smith, 21.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 21-24.

<sup>62</sup> Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano, Documento De Puebla, (Puebla, Mexico: BIBLIOTECA ELECTRÓNICA CRISTIANA -BEC- VE MULTIMEDIOS™, 1979), <http://multimedios.org/docs/d000363/>.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., Cuarta Parte, Capítulo I.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 1.1.1134.

In assessing what the church has and has not done since Medellín to respond to the reality that the great majority of Latin Americans continue to live in extreme poverty and misery, the bishops describe mixed results. Some bishops, priests, religious, and laity have made a profound commitment to the poor. Meanwhile, the poor, with the support of the church, have begun to organize themselves to reclaim their rights. Many in the church have faced persecution for making a prophetic denunciation of injustices. All of this has produced tensions and conflicts within and outside the church, as advocates for the poor were frequently accused of being dangerous Marxists. Not all of the Latin American Church has shown sufficient commitment to and solidarity with the poor.<sup>65</sup>

Su servicio exige, en efecto, una conversión y purificación constantes, en todos los cristianos, para el logro de una identificación cada día más plena con Cristo pobre y con los pobres. [Their service demands, in effect, a constant conversion and purification, among all Christians, toward the attainment of a more complete identification every day with a poor Christ and with the poor.]<sup>66</sup>

The bishops at Puebla rooted the preferential option for the poor in the incarnation, stating that Christ demonstrated the ultimate expression of poverty by so indentifying with humanity in solidarity that he became one of them, assuming their situation—in his birth, his life, and especially his suffering and death. Thus, the church's commitment to evangelism mirrors that of Jesus in being a commitment to those most in need.<sup>67</sup>

Por esta sola razón, los pobres merecen una atención preferencial, cualquiera que sea la situación moral o personal en que se encuentren. Hechos a imagen y semejanza de Dios, para ser sus hijos, esta imagen está ensombrecida y aun escarnecida. Por eso Dios toma su defensa y los ama. Es así como los pobres son

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 1.1.1135-40.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 1.1.1140.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 1.2.1141.

los primeros destinatarios de la misión y su evangelización es por excelencia señal y prueba de la misión de Jesús. [For this reason, the poor deserve a preferential attention, whatever be the moral or personal situation in which they are found. Made in the image and likeness of God, in order to be his children, this image is darkened and even mocked. For this reason God takes their defense and loves them. It is as such that the poor are the primary recipients of the mission and their evangelization is the sign and proof par excellence of the mission of Jesus.]<sup>68</sup>

Thus service toward the poor becomes the privileged, though not exclusive, means through which we follow Christ.<sup>69</sup>

The church's primary mission, the bishops go on to say, is the holistic evangelism that brings people to know themselves as children of God, frees them from injustice, and develops the whole person. The church is beginning to discover the evangelizing potential of the poor themselves, especially through the base communities, as they challenge the church and call it to conversion, actualizing in their own lives the evangelical values of solidarity, service, simplicity, and readiness to accept the gift of God.<sup>70</sup>

Puebla reaffirmed Medellín's distinction between poverty as material deprivation, from which we ought to free ourselves, and "evangelical poverty," which is an attitude toward material goods that uses them but does not absolutize them or yield to the temptations of greed and pride, instead maintaining an open confidence in God's provision, combined with a simple, sober, and austere life, using the world's goods for the good of the Kingdom and

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 1.2.1142.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 1.2.1145.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 1.2.1145, 1147.

allowing the abundance of some to remedy the needs of others. This evangelical poverty is a challenge to materialism and opens the doors to alternatives to a consumerist society.<sup>71</sup>

The Puebla document states that the objective of the preferential option for the poor is to proclaim Christ as the Savior who illuminates their dignity, helps them in their efforts toward liberation from all deficiencies, and brings them into communion with God and one another, through a life of evangelical poverty.<sup>72</sup> This option should also confront the scandalous reality of economic inequality in Latin America and help construct a just and free society characterized by human dignity and familial unity (*fraternidad*, literally, “brotherhood”).<sup>73</sup> This will require not only a change in social, political, and economic structures but also a change of personal and social mentality toward the ideal of a human life of dignity and happiness—in effect, a conversion.<sup>74</sup> This evangelical poverty as both a commitment to solidarity with the poor and rejection of the oppressive situation of their lives frees the poor from individualism and the seduction of the false ideals of consumerism, while at the same time the witness of a poor church also evangelizes the rich whose hearts are bound by riches, converting them and freeing them from that slavery and from selfishness.<sup>75</sup>

Of course, as at Medellín, the bishops at Puebla recognized that these objectives would require structural changes in the church itself and a conversion in the lives of its members, especially among the clergy. This includes a more austere life that depends more upon the

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 1.2.1148-52.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 1.3.1153.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 1.3.1154.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 1.3.1155.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 1.3.1156.

power and grace of God than on “having more” and secular power.<sup>76</sup> The documents also call for concrete actions to condemn as anti-evangelical the extreme poverty afflicting so many in Latin America, to know and denounce the *causes* of that poverty, to work together with other churches and people of good will in the cause of uprooting poverty and creating a more just and loving society, to support the aspirations of workers and farmers toward making decisions about their own lives and future and empower them in their own struggle to overcome (injustice), to defend their right to form organizations that promote their interests and contribute to the common good, and to respect and value indigenous cultures.<sup>77</sup> Then the bishops conclude:

Con su amor preferencial, pero no exclusivo por los pobres, la Iglesia presente en Medellín, como dijo el Santo Padre, fue una llamada a la esperanza hacia metas más cristianas y más humanas. La III Conferencia Episcopal de Puebla quiere mantener viva esa llamada y abrir nuevos horizontes a la esperanza. [With its preferential, but not exclusive, love for the poor, the church present in Medellín, as stated the Holy Father, was a call to the hope of more Christian and more human goals. The Third Episcopal Conference of Puebla wants to keep alive that call and to open new horizons to hope.]<sup>78</sup>

Gregory Baum sums up a twofold dimension reflected in the Puebla document—a cognitive dimension of *seeing with* the poor and a dimension of *loving action* on behalf of the poor, the constant interaction of these two dimensions constituting a liberating “praxis” in which critical social analysis and solidarity with the victims inform efforts to transform oppressive structures:<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 1.3.1157-58.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 1.3.1159-64.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 1.3.1165.

<sup>79</sup> Baum, 57-58.

The preferential option as described in this chapter implies a double commitment: it has i) a hermeneutic dimension demanding that we read society and the sacred texts from the perspective of the poor and ii) a caritative dimension demanding that we extend our solidarity to the struggle of the poor for greater justice.<sup>80</sup>

### *Evolution of the "Option for the Poor" in Subsequent Statements*

The themes from Medellín, Puebla, and liberation theology soon spread beyond Latin America, influencing Catholic social teaching more broadly. Pope John Paul II and several conferences of bishops in Latin America, the United States, and Canada have issued statements endorsing the "option for the poor" as part of the social teaching of the Catholic Church, though not without some modifications and qualifications that have had the effect of weakening it as a radical theological critique of the oppressive ordering of a global society centered around the false god of the market rather than the God of biblical faith. The Vatican has also been quick to dismiss the more radical social implications in terms of confronting structural injustices as "Marxism" and therefore as unacceptable to the church hierarchy.

These deviations from Puebla's elaboration of the option are characteristic of the problematic transformations of the "preferential option for the poor" as it became further and further removed and divorced from its original context in Latin America, and particularly when it "crossed the border" into the United States and became part of the discourse of Catholic bishops in the U.S., as described by Carmen Marie Nanko.<sup>81</sup> Nanko tells how the option has increasingly been taken over by the church hierarchy rather than the poor in Latin America,

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>81</sup> Carmen Marie Nanko, "Justice Crosses the Border: The Preferential Option for the Poor in the United States," in *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice*, ed. Maria Pilar Aquino, Daisy L. Machado, and Jeanette Rodríguez (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

further marginalizing the poor and denying them agency in their own liberation.<sup>82</sup> The poor have been referred to in the third person in church statements, the option cast in adversarial terms rather than in terms of solidarity and community, creating a dichotomy of “us” and “them,”<sup>83</sup> and the failure to recognize and engage the majority in the U.S. who exist “in the middle,” between the extremes of the rich and the poor which are so rigidly experienced in Latin America itself, has undermined the option’s transformative power.<sup>84</sup>

Moreover, the definition of “the poor” has been expanded and simultaneously watered down to include “cultural and spiritual poverty,” so as to nullify it as a meaningful distinction. Meanwhile, there has been a shift from an ethic of justice to an ethic of compassion and charity.<sup>85</sup> To some extent, the dilution of the option began even at Puebla itself, with its seemingly apologetic inclusion alongside the “opción preferencial por los jóvenes [preferential option for youth].” Though the youth are certainly also a worthy “preference,” one might ask, “Which preference gets preference?” Moreover, a “preference” for youth does not have quite the same extensive biblical grounding as God’s preference toward the poor.

### **What, Then, Is the Preferential Option for the Poor?**

Having examined some of the biblical and historical background of the “preferential option for the poor,” it is important to try to define just what, in the midst of all these streams of thought and action, is the meaning of this theological and ecclesial commitment forged in

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 186.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 187-89.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 189-90.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 188-91.

the fires of the struggle for liberation in Latin American. This option certainly delineates something more than mere Christian charity and good will and a privileged “us” patronizingly salving our conscience through a sharing out of our abundance with a “less fortunate” “them.”

The first, and perhaps most important, point is that the preferential option for the poor is primarily a theological, rather than social, claim upon the church. Gustavo Gutiérrez refers to it as “a theocentric option.”<sup>86</sup>

The ultimate reason for a commitment to the poor and oppressed does not lie in the social analysis that we employ, or in our human compassion, or in the direct experience we may have of poverty. All of these are valid reasons and surely play an important role in our commitment. But as Christians, we base that commitment fundamentally on the God of our faith. It is a theocentric, prophetic option we make, one which strikes its roots deep in the gratuity of God’s love and is demanded by that love.<sup>87</sup>

Gutiérrez points out that “preferential” does not mean exclusive but “obviously precludes exclusivity; it simply points to who ought to be the first—not the only—objects of our solidarity.”<sup>88</sup> Likewise, the word “option” does not mean that this commitment is “optional” for Christians, “any more than the love we owe every human being, without exception, is optional,” but instead means that it is “the free commitment of a decision.”<sup>89</sup> In other words, it requires a decision and a commitment. It will not happen without intentionality. Yet, the reason for this choice—this option—this preference—is that it mirrors and responds to God’s gratuitous “preference for the weakest and most oppressed,” a reversal of the social order in which “the last shall be first and the first shall be last,” which is “a clear lesson concerning the

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<sup>86</sup> Gutiérrez, “Option for the Poor,” 239-41.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

core of the biblical message: the gratuity of God's love."<sup>90</sup> God's love and justice differ from our ordinary, narrow understandings of love and justice, as God favors those not historically and socially favored.<sup>91</sup>

The biblical preference for simple folk springs not from a regard for their supposed moral and spiritual dispositions, but from their human frailty and from the contempt to which they are subjected.<sup>92</sup>

The rich "have already received their consolation."<sup>93</sup> Therefore, God's Reign especially belongs to those "who live in conditions of weakness and oppression," to "the despised," to those "relegated to the status of the inconsequential," to those who are "of no value in the eyes of society."<sup>94</sup> Jesus invites the uninvited and came "not for the sake of the righteous, but for sinners; not for the sake of the healthy, but for the sick (cf. Mark 2:17)."<sup>95</sup>

Roberto S. Goizueta, however, makes the point that the theological claim of the preferential option for the poor is not merely that the biblical God favors the poor and that therefore Christians ought to do likewise. Rather, the theological claim of the option is "that the God of Jesus Christ is revealed in a privileged, preferential way among the poor and marginalized peoples of the world—a notion at the very heart of the gospel itself."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 241-44.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 242-43.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>96</sup> Roberto S. Goizueta, "Knowing the God of the Poor: The Preferential Option for the Poor," in *Opting for the Margins: Postmodernity and Liberation in Christian Theology*, ed. Joerg Rieger, Aar Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 143.

More specifically, the claim that, in the person of the crucified and risen Christ, God is preferentially identified with the victims of history transforms the preferential option for the poor from an ethical imperative into the privileged *locus theologicus* of all Christian theology. . . Unless we place ourselves alongside the poor, unless we look at reality through their eyes, we are unable to see, recognize, or worship the God who walks with the poor. Conversely, if we lack such a practical solidarity with the poor, the 'god' in whom we believe and whom we worship will necessarily be a false god, an idol of our own making.<sup>97</sup>

In short, the option for the poor is not merely a consequence or even a concomitant of Christian faith; it is, at bottom, a condition of the possibility of Christian faith. And *that* is the assertion which, whether implicit or explicit, so many First World Christians find threatening.<sup>98</sup>

Ultimately, then, the preferential option for the poor represents a call to conversion. To make an option for the poor is to allow ourselves to be transformed by the same God who accompanies the poor.<sup>99</sup>

These statements summarize a perspective shared by many liberation theologians and at least implicit in the documents from Medellín and Puebla: that God demonstrates a special, preferential, and gratuitous love toward the poor that is not conditional upon any assessment of their moral standing and that reverses the social order by favoring those historically and socially not favored; that God is uniquely and especially present in the poor; that the poor have a privileged theological perspective for knowing the God revealed in the Bible and especially in the crucified and risen Jesus; and that we must live in solidarity with the poor and learn to read the Bible and do theology from the perspective of the poor if we are to know the God of biblical faith at all. For most of Christian history, the Bible has been read, and theology written, from a standpoint of privilege, and the result has been a history of conquest, oppression, and injustice. To do theology from the standpoint of the poor and the marginalized peoples of the world is a

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 144. Emphasis is the author's.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 145. Emphasis is the author's.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 154.

corrective to that distorted reading—and one that is consistent with the character of the God revealed in the Bible and in Jesus.

Certainly the preferential option for the poor will include but will extend beyond the sharing of material goods with those in need of them. As Gutiérrez elaborates, it will include the denunciation of poverty as the result of sin and injustice, drawing upon the extensive biblical witness.<sup>100</sup> It will include the witness of voluntary Christian poverty as advocated at Medellín and Puebla, in solidarity with the poor and as a protest against poverty.<sup>101</sup> It will include a prophetic witness that goes beyond speaking about the harsh realities of poverty to a critical analysis of the *causes* of poverty,<sup>102</sup> which “inevitably means speaking of social injustice and socioeconomic structures that oppress the weak,” though this also means encountering resistance.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, it means embracing the reality of the “irruption of the poor” as “an irruption of God into our lives,” and supporting the poor in the work of their own liberation, as they “gradually become active agents of their own destiny.”<sup>104</sup>

While much reflection on the option for the poor focuses on the church as an agent working toward the salvation of the poor, Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino also focus on the option as a means through which the poor become instruments of the church’s own salvation. Ellacuría mentions the widely recognized problem of the institutionalization of the church. While the institutional nature of the church is a necessity, “That institutionality must be

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<sup>100</sup> Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 293-96.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 300-01.

<sup>102</sup> Gutiérrez, “Option for the Poor,” 237-39.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 235-36.

subordinated to the deeper nature of the church as a continuation of the work of Jesus.”<sup>105</sup> As “the evangelical *base* of the Kingdom of God,” the poor are the church’s protection against “excessive institutionalization and attachment to the world.”<sup>106</sup>

The ultimate reason why the institutional church can oppress its own children is not so much its institutional nature, but its lack of dedication to the people of greatest need, in following what Jesus was and did. Consequently, it can only resist worldliness by placing itself at the service of the poorest and those of greatest need; and having resisted worldliness, it will no longer fall into all the defects that come naturally to an organization and power closed in on itself.<sup>107</sup>

In other words, the only way for the church to avoid the temptations of power and worldliness that beset any human institution is by maintaining its theological orientation toward and focus upon being the servant of “the least of these”—those at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Similarly, Sobrino describes a twofold aspect to the option for the poor that includes both the more commonly understood dimension of “what the Church must do for the poor” and the less common understanding of “what the poor can do for the Church—and more radically, for the society. . .”<sup>108</sup> Sobrino declares that the poor not only are central to the mission of the church, because they are central to a biblical understanding of a God who is partial—who takes sides—and is the defender of the poor and the oppressed. The poor are also central to the unfolding of the mystery of God and to the salvation of the non-poor. As “crucified people,” the poor bear a resemblance to the crucified Christ and fulfill the role of the

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<sup>105</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, “The Church of the Poor, Historical Sacrament of Liberation,” in *Mysterium Liberationis : Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), 557.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. Emphasis is that of the author.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 557-58.

<sup>108</sup> Jon Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor : Prophetic-Utopian Essays* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2007), 19.

“suffering servant of Yahweh” in Isaiah 53, bringing salvation to others through their own suffering.<sup>109</sup> The poor counter the dominant, destructive, dehumanizing “civilization of wealth,” revolving around material accumulation and consumerism, with a more humanizing “civilization of poverty,” with a new axis and a different set of values, such as compassion and solidarity.<sup>110</sup> The poor move the church toward conversion, “a step toward salvation.”<sup>111</sup>

In this process, it is important to start with a working definition of who “the poor” are. For Sobrino, the most basic definition of the poor is economic: those whose very survival is at risk, and who therefore cannot take life for granted. Yet, the “depth and diversity of the poor” also includes others who are marginalized, voiceless, excluded, and ignored, including women, indigenous peoples, African-Americans, and others (certainly including the immigrant other).<sup>112</sup>

In an effort to synthesize, perhaps we can say that the poor are *the deprived and oppressed, with respect to the material basics of human life; they are those who have no voice, no freedom, no dignity; they are those who have no name, no existence.*<sup>113</sup>

Sobrino depicts a world that is “gravely ill,” with large majorities of its people living constantly under the threat of death, and with the simultaneous existence of extreme poverty and unprecedented wealth. It is a world of unspeakable cruelty. Globalization’s promise of “progress” is offered by the “civilization of wealth” as a solution. Yet, it creates more victims and even dehumanizes its proponents, so that it not only cannot save the poor but cannot even

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 3-8.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 9-17.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 22-25.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 26. Emphasis is the author's.

save the wealthy and powerful. Salvation must come from somewhere else—from the poor and the victims.<sup>114</sup> The poor and the victims bring salvation through their will to survive against the threat of death and by maintaining hope against all hope, unleashing solidarity, redeeming violence by suffering and struggling against it from within (e.g., Gandhi, M.L. King, Romero), and revealing the mystery of God.<sup>115</sup>

In a similar vein, German Gutiérrez considers the option for the poor to be at the foundation of an “ethic of life” for humanity as a whole.<sup>116</sup> He describes in great detail the disastrous impact of globalization on Latin America (paralleling other parts of the so-called “Third World”) and how the “functional ethic” of the market resolves itself into an “ethic of a gang of robbers,” as the legal system built around the market derives its legitimacy, not from ethical principles but from the power that has the ability to enforce it.<sup>117</sup> Gutiérrez contrasts this with an “ethic of life” and of the “common good,”<sup>118</sup> which is “raised up out of the excluded and oppressed majorities of the whole world” and seeks “the construction of a new international order that will make it possible for all human beings, nations, peoples, and cultures to live and to share their life.”<sup>119</sup> In such an ethic, “human life is the criterion over

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., chapter 3.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> German Gutiérrez, “Ethic of Life and Option for the Poor,” in *Latin American Liberation Theology : The Next Generation*, ed. Ivan Petrella (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005).

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 75-86.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 86-89.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 87.

every institution, norm, action, or policy.”<sup>120</sup> At the heart of this ethic of life will always be liberation theology’s “option for the poor” and its “option for the God of life.”<sup>121</sup>

The strategy of globalization has also accelerated the globalization of poverty and extreme poverty and has aggravated the threats hovering over the life of all human beings. The option for the poor has now become the foundation of the option for human life itself, and it is increasingly understood in the framework of a logic of the common good, of this struggle for a society where all human beings will have a place as human beings, all human worlds as cultures in terms of ways of living.<sup>122</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

The preferential option for the poor is not only at the core of liberation theology but at the core of the Christian faith. Although Latin American liberation theologians and the poor struggling for their own liberation in Latin America deserve much credit for formulating in a systematic way and as an integrated Christian praxis this central commitment of the church, the preferential option for the poor has deep biblical roots, going all the way back to the Exodus narrative, has a long historical background in the life of the church, and expresses something profoundly embedded in prophetic biblical faith, as revealed by the God of the covenant, embodied in Jesus the Christ, and shaped by the Holy Spirit. Although the ecclesial documents embodying this option have arisen primarily within the Roman Catholic Church, it is a truth and a commitment that belongs to all of Christ’s Church. Although the struggle for liberation of the poor has made specific political, social, and economic commitments in the past that have been finite, limited, and fallible applications of the option for the poor, including a commitment to

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 91-92.

socialism as an economic system, the option must be continually translated into new social contexts and new economic and political commitments that remain true to its prophetic heart, while at the same time adapting to a changing world. No single social cause, political objective, or economic system will exhaust its demands and its possibilities.

Certainly one application of the truth of the preferential option for the poor is in how we view and respond to the immigrant other as one of God's poor. Indeed, the narrative of a God who takes sides with the poor, the weak, and the marginalized of this world and who is to be found especially among these, is a significant alternative to the narrative which sees immigrants as a threat to our identity as a people. Immigrants certainly are among the most marginalized people of our society—especially undocumented immigrants from Latin America. They are mostly economically poor; have experienced being uprooted from their families, familiar surroundings, and traditional way of life; and continue to experience discrimination, rejection, and ostracism within our society. As such, they are among the recipients of the gratuity of the love of the God who favors the poor and the weak, the ostracized and marginalized, those not historically or socially favored. Thus for Christians immigrants, along with others of God's poor and marginalized, are the "preferential" first but not the only object of our solidarity.

Demonstrating that solidarity will include denunciation of their poverty and marginalization as the result of sin and injustice, which includes honest discourse about the impact of globalization on Third World peoples--restructuring their economies, displacing their workers, and forcing many of them (deeper) into poverty, as described in Chapter 1. An openness to allow the migration of laborers would be partially corrective, rather than

multiplying the first sin by adding the additional sin of closing off their only avenue of escape from the consequences of globalization's economic restructuring and displacements. Such an honesty and openness would at least make a move toward eliminating the oppressive contradiction of economic integration that allows market forces to distribute the free flow of all the factors of production (goods, services, capital, and information) *except* labor.

Then if we take seriously the theological assertion that the poor and the marginalized are a privileged locus for knowing the God of biblical faith—that in order to know and be in the presence of God we have to place ourselves among the poor and read the Bible and do theology from their perspective, then the immigrant other needs to be embraced and sought out rather than rejected and excluded. The immigrant other is not a threat to our identity but is instead a gift to be received—the gift of one who can bring us closer to God. The immigrant other offers the gift of a corrective to the theology of conquest, oppression, and injustice—the usual theology done from the standpoint of privilege. The immigrant other is the victim of that theology (of a long history of conquest, colonialism, and the subjugation of indigenous peoples), the suffering servant whose suffering can be redemptive for others, through the gift of a theology from the standpoint of the poor and the victims of this world, a presence and a theology that can help undo and heal some of the injustices of the past.

Another way that the immigrant other, as a representative of the poor, of another culture, and of another way of life, comes as a gift to our own culture can be seen in Sobrino's elaboration of the "civilization of poverty" confronting the "civilization of wealth" with a different set of values. The poor counter the dominant, destructive, dehumanizing "civilization of wealth," revolving around material accumulation and consumerism, with a more humanizing

“civilization of poverty,” with a new axis and a different set of values, such as compassion and solidarity.<sup>123</sup> Sobrino here is somewhat subject to the critique of stereotyping and essentializing the poor, even if in a way that is intended to be positive. Yet, there is something about living in a survival mode that gives one a different perspective on what is important in life and what is essential to life. A life in poverty compels a life of simplicity. Moreover, coming from outside the competitiveness of the market, along with the interdependence necessitated by life at the subsistence level—these tend to generate a sense of solidarity that runs counter to the excessive individualism that pervades our market-driven society.

Of course, this “civilization of poverty” may be precisely what Samuel Huntington and others fear about the wave of Third World immigrants entering into the United States and Europe—that they might reproduce here the poverty from which they have come. Yet, the historical record does not show this, as impoverished immigrants not only change but are changed by the culture into which they are injected, and they have historically enhanced rather than detracted from the affluence of the nation. Moreover, an adaptation of Sobrino’s thought here might be to see the civilization of poverty not as *replacing* the civilization of wealth but as *critiquing* it, as a counterpoint, an antithesis, leading to a creative synthesis that incorporates elements of both the civilization of wealth and the civilization of poverty so as to humanize the former and to elevate the latter.

Remembering Victor Turner’s “liminal persons,”<sup>124</sup> the immigrant other injects a creative dissonance into the receiving society that enables it to adapt and to continue to thrive,

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<sup>123</sup> Sobrino, 9-17.

<sup>124</sup> Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, 94-113.

rather than stagnating, and immigrants are in a unique, privileged place for seeing in new ways, as they exist in a transitional state straddling two cultures and two (or more) languages. As Walter Mignolo points out in reference to the colonial context, there is this “colonial difference” generated by the fact that the colonized, unlike the colonizers, must live in two cultures simultaneously, their own and that of the colonizer.<sup>125</sup> They are forced to know and exist in the latter, even as they naturally continue to know and exist in the former, while the colonizers only exist in their own culture. This same reality is true of immigrants in their transition to living in another culture. They continue to know their own culture, while learning the culture into which they are migrating, while the non-migrants in that receiving culture only exist within it. In other words, immigrants become bicultural as well as bilingual. Thus they can be received, not as a threat to the receiving culture, but as a gift that expands our ways of seeing and being, a source of creative liminality and an infusion of new life and vitality.

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<sup>125</sup> Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, 9-10.

**CHAPTER 8: TO WELCOME THE STRANGER:  
HOSPITALITY AS A CHRISTIAN PRACTICE AND DEFINING VIRTUE**

*I was a stranger, and you welcomed me. . . Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these. . . , you did it to me.*

*--Jesus in Matthew 25:35, 40*

**Biblical Command to, and Integral Practice of, a Covenant People:**

The command, practice, and covenantal expectation that God’s people welcome the strangers sojourning in their midst is a pervasive and central theme throughout the Christian Bible. The Hebrew Bible and Christian Old Testament certainly demonstrates a variety of attitudes toward “foreigners”—those not belonging to the covenant community of Israel (from the callous annihilation given divine sanction in Joshua, to the xenophobic hostility reflected in Ezra and Nehemiah, to the more welcoming attitude in Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Ruth). Yet, arguably the predominant and most enduring view is that of a covenant obligation to extend hospitality to the strangers sojourning among God’s people, rooted in Ancient Near Eastern custom and stated emphatically as a command of God in Exodus 22:21 and 23:9; Leviticus 19:33-34; and Deuteronomy 10:19. The most comprehensive among these is Leviticus 19:33-34:

When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

The Hebrew term used here for “alien” is *ger*, meaning “sojourner.” The idea is basically an immigrant, someone from another land and people sojourning among the people of Israel.<sup>1</sup> Of course, this command comes from the same chapter and context as the “second great

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<sup>1</sup> Mauch, “Stranger.”

commandment” quoted by Jesus in Mark 12:31/ Matthew 22:39 from Leviticus 19:18, “. . . you shall love your neighbor as yourself. . .”

This same command and expectation of welcoming and demonstrating love toward the sojourner lies behind such New Testament texts as Romans 12:13, urging hospitality to strangers as a Christian ethical obligation, grounded in the transformation wrought by a life in grace, and Hebrews 13:2, which sees hospitality to strangers as an extension of Christians’ obligation of mutual love and invites recollection of how Abraham, in Genesis 18, had unknowingly entertained “angels” while exercising such hospitality. In both of these texts (as well as in I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; and I Peter 4:9), “stranger” is built into the word for hospitality itself, a declined form of the Greek word *philoxenia*, a word which is literally a combination of the words *phileo*, the love for those closest to one, and *xenos*, foreigner (see below)—implying etymologically an extension of the love one has for family and friends toward the foreigner as well.<sup>2</sup>

However, the preeminent Christian text on hospitality to the stranger is Matthew 25:35, in which Jesus states that when we welcome the stranger, we are actually welcoming him, while in the larger context of Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus makes such actions toward “the least of these” the very criteria for the final judgment of all the nations. The Greek term for “stranger” in Matthew 25:35 is *xenos* (from which we get the word “xenophobia,” fear of the “other”)—a word used for the one who is “foreign” or “alien.” It is not a direct translation of *ger*, but in a

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<sup>2</sup> Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 31.

New Testament context certainly evokes the images of hospitality to the stranger harkening back to the covenant obligation expressed in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>3</sup>

So to welcome the “stranger”—the “alien”—the “sojourner”—the foreigner—the immigrant is, for persons of biblical faith, an emphatic command of God that is integral to the covenant relationship, a command taken up by the New Testament as a Christian moral obligation and as part of what it means to live out a life in grace characterized by mutual love, and a criterion of the final judgment, with the understanding that when we do or do not welcome the foreigner, we are welcoming Jesus—or not. For those who claim the name of Jesus and claim to live in continuity with the biblical witness, there would hardly seem to be a more emphatic and definitive expression of how we are to receive and relate to the immigrants sojourning among us.

### **The Historical Practice of Hospitality to Strangers: Biblical Roots:**

Christine Pohl, in *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Practice*,<sup>4</sup> describes the history of the Judeo-Christian practice of hospitality, from biblical roots through early Christian practice, through transformations during the medieval period, after the church evolved from a persecuted sect to an imperial religion, through a substantial loss of hospitality as a vital Christian practice during the modern period, as the word itself underwent transformations in its meaning. Pohl also investigates communities of hospitality today that have kept this tradition alive amidst its near disappearance. In the midst of this history, she describes transformations in the nature and practice of hospitality, the diversity of its

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<sup>3</sup> Stählin, "Ἐένος, Ξενία, Ξενίζω, Ξενοδοχέω, Φιλοξενία, Φιλόξενος."

<sup>4</sup> Pohl, *op. cit.*

expressions, and the commonalities among communities of hospitality, ancient and contemporary.

For ancient Israel and the tradition of the Hebrew Bible, hospitality was an expression of the covenant life of the people in relation to God and in relation to each other before God, as well as an expression of God's greater hospitality toward the undeserving, while the New Testament and early church regarded hospitality to strangers "as a fundamental expression of the gospel."<sup>5</sup> Strangers in the Ancient Near East (ANE) were a vulnerable people, cut off from ties to land, family, and community and dependent upon the welcome and provision of those among whom they sojourned. Thus, welcoming traveling strangers and making provision for their need for lodging, food, drink, etc., was a common expectation throughout the ANE, though Israel was distinctive in that welcoming the stranger was codified as part of its covenant legislation,<sup>6</sup> expressed as God's command to love and welcome the *ger* (foreigner sojourning among the people) and not to oppress such persons, grounded in the historical memory of how Israel itself knew the heart of the sojourner from its past experience of being an oppressed stranger in Egypt (Leviticus 19:33-34, with parallels in Exodus and Deuteronomy).

In fact, part of Israel's self-identity was to consider themselves strangers sojourning in a land that belonged to God (Leviticus 25:33)—both dependent upon God for welcome and provision and answerable to God for its own treatment of aliens and strangers.<sup>7</sup> The people of Israel saw themselves therefore as "strangers welcoming strangers."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

Embedded within the covenant between God and Israel was Israel's identity as an alien and its related responsibility to sojourners and strangers. . . . When Israel finally inherited the promised land after its sojourn in Egypt, God reminded the people that the land belonged to the Lord and that 'you are strangers and sojourners with me' (Lev. 25:23). [This is the context for the Jubilee Year in Leviticus 25.] They were to view themselves as aliens in their own land, for God owned the land and they were to be its stewards and caretakers, living in it by God's permission and grace.<sup>9</sup>

There are also many biblical images of God as a gracious and generous host,<sup>10</sup> not the least of which is the latter half of the popular 23rd Psalm.

The Hebrew Bible contains many stories of hospitality to strangers,<sup>11</sup> including the Genesis stories of Abraham and Sarah welcoming the three mysterious visitors, who turned out to be messengers from God (Genesis 18/ allusion in Hebrews 13:2), while receiving a blessing from them in the announcement of the birth of Isaac; Lot's welcome and effort to protect the angelic visitors against the hostility of the people of Sodom (Genesis 19), with the situation reversed as the visitors instead protected Lot and his family; the widow of Zarephath welcoming Elijah and sharing out of her limited resources, which were replenished through the intervention of her guest (1 Kings 17-18); and the Shunamite woman welcoming Elisha and receiving the blessing of her guest restoring her son from death to life (2 Kings 4). A common theme in these stories is that the guests bless the hosts in some way and also connect them in a special way with God.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 27-29.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 23-27.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 26.

Acts of hospitality and inhospitality in the biblical narratives tended to reveal and reflect the underlying good or evil of a person or community. Frequently these acts demonstrated covenantal loyalty to the God of Israel or to God's chosen representatives.<sup>13</sup>

The contrast between hospitality and inhospitality in Genesis 19 [Lot, the angels, and the men of Sodom] and Judges 19 [the Levite and the concubine, their host in the Benjaminite territory, and the men of the town] highlights the utter lawlessness and degradation of the communities.<sup>14</sup>

Pohl describes how, in welcoming the stranger in ancient Israel, there was an overlap between public and private space, along with social and personal responsibility, as the stranger was usually met at the town gate and only subsequently received within the household. Hospitality was also supported communally by the covenant legislation and more public provisions, such as leaving the gleanings in the fields and offering a portion of the tithes of the harvest to strangers and others in need.<sup>15</sup>

As Luke Bretherton describes in his book *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity*,<sup>16</sup> there is an ambiguity in the Hebrew Bible's witness to the practice of hospitality. On the one hand, God's command to demonstrate hospitality toward the stranger is strongly attested in the covenant theology as best described in Leviticus 19:33-34, in which God issues the command to welcome and love the sojourner as oneself (parallel to the Leviticus 19:18 command to love one's neighbor as oneself), rather than oppressing the sojourner, grounded both in God's covenant command and in the historical experience of Israel as having

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 40-41.

<sup>16</sup> Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity* (Aldershot, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2006), 128-35.

been sojourners in Egypt. This practice is likewise attested in numerous biblical examples and models of hospitality to strangers, including those mentioned above. To some extent, these forms of the practice of hospitality were embedded in the cultural context of the Ancient Near East and its codes of behavior, in recognition of the vulnerability of those disconnected from homeland, family, and property and therefore dependent upon the generosity of those among whom they journeyed. However, there are also the contrasting examples of the exclusion and annihilation perpetrated and presumably commanded by God against the Canaanites as Israel was occupying the promised land, as well as the xenophobic rejection of intermarriage and intermixing between Jews and foreigners as demonstrated by Ezra and Nehemiah, in the context of a concern with preserving the holiness and purity of Israel, protecting the people from pollution through contact with other peoples who were not parties to the covenant relationship with God and therefore did not belong to God's people.

Yet, there is no ambiguity in Jesus' teachings and practice, as he consistently welcomed and had meals with the outcasts and the marginalized of society—tax collectors and people shunned for their known sins, Samaritans and Gentiles, the poor and lepers, the demon-possessed, etc. Jesus also redefined the concepts of purity and holiness and, in Bretherton's explanation, inverted holiness and hospitality by defining hospitality toward the excluded *as holiness*, while demonstrating another inversion in the contrast between the pure and the impure and the direction of "infection," such that it is not the impure who "infect" the pure but vice versa.<sup>17</sup> Jesus excluded no one (his initial reaction to the Syrophenician [Mark 7:24-30] or Canaanite [Matthew 15:21-28] woman notwithstanding, as his final response to her was not

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

one of exclusion). The only ones excluded were those who excluded themselves by their refusal to respond to the invitation he offered. These themes of radical hospitality, including a shift in hospitality from the Greek and Roman system of reciprocity within the client-patron relationship, in which social advantage was sought through exchanges of welcome between elites, to an invitation and blessing instead extended to the most marginalized of the community who could offer nothing in return, were also embodied in a cycle of parables about the messianic banquet in Luke 14 (with some parallels in Matthew).<sup>18</sup>

Pohl points out that Jesus is portrayed in the gospels both as a gracious host who welcomed children and prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners, to the annoyance of those with more social standing, but also as himself a vulnerable guest and needy stranger—not welcomed by his home (John 1:11/ Luke 4), a homeless infant, a child refugee, an adult with no place to lay his head, and a despised convict.<sup>19</sup> Jesus also gave to Christians a standard of hospitality that was distinct from Greek and Roman practices based on reciprocity, which were apparently also prevalent in first century Jewish table fellowship,<sup>20</sup> as in Luke 14, he both taught the disciples to invite to their table the most vulnerable people who could not return the favor, rather than those who could, and told a parable of the great banquet in which the host's invitation was rejected by the guests of high social standing, after which the host extended the invitation to the poor, the crippled, and the same vulnerable categories of people Jesus said to invite. Moreover, in his description of the final judgment scene in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus identified the stranger (*xenos*, "foreigner") and other marginalized people in need with himself,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 132-35.

<sup>19</sup> Pohl, 16-17.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

stating that in welcoming and responding to such people, those judged were welcoming and responding to Jesus himself.<sup>21</sup>

Sharing meals with the stranger was an important aspect of biblical hospitality. In the teachings and practice of Jesus, the presence of God's Kingdom was prefigured, revealed, and reflected in the context of shared meals.<sup>22</sup> This is dramatized in the feeding of the 5,000 and the ensuing discourse on the bread of life and the living water in John 6-7, in the Last Supper and its ongoing celebration in the Eucharist, and in the Emmaus Road experience (Luke 24:13-35), in which Jesus is present as a stranger, welcomed as a guest, and then made known in the breaking of the bread.<sup>23</sup>

#### **The Historical Practice of Hospitality: Transformations from the Early Church to Today:**

As Pohl describes, the early church took seriously these teachings and practices of Jesus, and lived out a Christian hospitality that was distinguished from its surrounding culture by being extended to the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society rather than to persons who could reciprocate.<sup>24</sup> Again, Pohl points out the overlap between public and private spheres, household and church, as the church became God's household (*oikos*) and believers a family to one another. People of diverse social statuses and ethnicities gathered together at the same table for shared meals, which was a transformative practice of subverting

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 20-23.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>24</sup> Pohl, 16-17.

the usual social distinctions among people in favor of a different identity in Christ, one in which those distinctions were relativized (cf. Galatians 3:28).<sup>25</sup>

Local Christian communities shared meals together as part of the regular church practice—an important location for hospitality. These agape meals provided a setting for a communal response to the needs of the poor for food while simultaneously reinforcing a distinct Christian identity . . . these meals were intended to reflect transformed relationships in which worldly status distinctions were transcended, if not disregarded, and formerly alienated persons could view themselves as brothers and sisters at God’s table.<sup>26</sup>

Among early Christians, there was the expectation that both host and guest would be transformed through the hospitality relationship and that both would be blessed through the practice, in a mutuality of giving and receiving in which physical and spiritual needs were met. Guests within the asymmetrical relationship were nonetheless afforded respect, and their equal value and dignity was recognized.<sup>27</sup> Hospitality was considered to be a sacrament of God’s love.<sup>28</sup> “Part of the mystery is that while concrete acts of love are costly, they nourish and heal both giver and recipient.”<sup>29</sup>

Strangers, in the strict sense, are those who are disconnected from basic relationships that give persons a secure place in the world. . . In hospitality, the stranger is welcomed into a safe, personal, and comfortable place, a place of respect and acceptance and friendship. Even if only briefly, the stranger is included in a life-giving and life-sustaining network of relations. . . Acts of hospitality participate in and reflect God’s greater hospitality and therefore hold some connection to the divine, to holy ground.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 41-43.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 13.

The early church's practice of hospitality to strangers in need set it apart from its surrounding cultural milieu and gave expression to its character as a universal community.

Noted as exceptional by Christians and non-Christians alike, offering care to strangers became one of the distinguishing marks of the authenticity of the Christian gospel and of the church. Writings from the first five centuries demonstrate the importance of hospitality in defining the church as a universal community, in denying the significance of the status boundaries and distinctions of the larger society, in recognizing the value of every person, and in providing practical care for the poor, stranger, and sick.<sup>31</sup>

Yet, this ancient Christian practice has virtually disappeared as it was known in the early church. Some factors contributing to that disappearance include the development of institutional forms of hospitality through hospitals, hospices, and hostels, which moved hospitality out of the personal and community context of homes and churches into a more anonymous and professionalized setting, while at the same time hospitality as a personal welcome in homes “became primarily associated with attempts to gain power and influence,” as in Greek and Roman contexts in antiquity. Meanwhile, over the centuries the household itself changed to a smaller and more private sphere, no longer the center of economic activity, and “[t]he structure of the church and its relation to the state and to social welfare also changed over the centuries.”<sup>32</sup> “By the eighteenth century, hospitality was viewed by many as an antiquated practice, out of step with busy commercial society, a relic from an earlier time.”<sup>33</sup>

Hospitality began to change in the fourth and fifth centuries, as the church transitioned from a persecuted sect to the religion of the Roman Empire. The church inherited new resources and new responsibilities, as it developed institutions of care in order to respond to

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

the scale of need—hospitals, hospices, hostels, etc. At the same time, this tended to depersonalize hospitality, to move it away from the church as a transformative assembling of diverse peoples for shared meals around a common table, and to remove the face-to-face personal contact in hospitality for most Christians.<sup>34</sup> The problem in the separation of hospitality from the community to institutional care is that the poor, the stranger, and persons in need became hidden from view and forgotten, through the loss of a face-to-face encounter. This undermined the possibility for transformative encounters of giving and receiving, along with the loss of a single table for diverse peoples, thus diminishing the respect, dignity, and recognition of the vulnerable.<sup>35</sup>

Household hospitality was reduced primarily to the homes of the bishops and lay aristocrats and evolved during the Middle Ages into extravagant entertaining of wealthy and powerful guests of high status, while serving those of low social status, if at all, at separate tables, offering coarser foods, and typically at the gate rather than in the household itself.<sup>36</sup>

By the end of the Middle Ages, two trajectories of hospitality—hospitality as material care for strangers and the local poor and hospitality as personal welcome and entertainment—had developed along largely separate tracks. In the diversity of institutions, in the loss of the worshiping community as a significant site for hospitality, and in the differentiation of care among recipients, the socially transformative potential of hospitality was lost.<sup>37</sup>

Protestant Reformers criticized the extravagance of bishops' hospitality toward honored guests but tended to relegate hospitality toward people in need to private acts of generosity in

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 43-47.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 67, 78-79.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 34-35, 48-51.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 51.

homes (with no expectation of a transformative encounter) or to civic leaders.<sup>38</sup> Hospitality was basically reduced to the charity of hosts as an act of obedience to God and response to human need, but with no expectation of encounters with God or blessings to the host and no sense of equality between host and guest. Henceforth the public sphere would become increasingly secularized (detached from any Christian roots) and the domestic sphere privatized (households smaller, more intimate, less willing to receive strangers), as “. . . the understanding of hospitality as a significant dimension of church practice nearly disappeared.”<sup>39</sup> Worst of all among the Reformers was Luther’s problematic use of guest-host language in his denunciation of the Jews as “guests” of their German “host” to be expelled, thus standing the notion of hospitality on its head and rendering guest-host language problematic for defining societal membership.<sup>40</sup> Wesley and the early Methodists in 18<sup>th</sup> Century recovered some of the transformative practices of hospitality through small group meetings and homes for widows, the sick, and children, once again offering shared meals that brought together different sorts of people and creating spaces “in which participants transcended some of their social differences,” but they did not call this “hospitality,” as the word had already lost its Christian meaning.<sup>41</sup>

Nineteenth century benevolence organizations—inner city missions and migrant ministries—were not congregation-based, and there was no real connection between providers

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 51-56.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 80-81.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 55.

and recipients of care.<sup>42</sup> Hospitality became largely a commercial enterprise of inns to provide shelter and food for travelers, while hospitality toward people in need was increasingly "bureaucratized in social services provided by benevolence organizations and the state. And in the churches, hospitality had little moral, spiritual, and physical significance."<sup>43</sup> By the modern period, as households ceased being the center of economic activity and became smaller and more private, fewer were willing to welcome strangers into their homes, where both host and guest would be vulnerable in such a private sphere.<sup>44</sup> Since about the 18<sup>th</sup> century the word hospitality has lost its original meaning, now primarily considered either the practice of entertaining friends and people like ourselves in our homes or the hospitality industry selling comfort through hotels and restaurants.<sup>45</sup>

Pohl states that for the early church, hospitality was a transformative practice that challenged, rather than reinforcing, "prevailing social arrangements" within a hierarchically ordered society. Christian hospitality as practiced in early church "had a subversive, countercultural, dimension."<sup>46</sup>

Especially when the larger society disregards or dishonors certain persons, small acts of respect and welcome are potent far beyond themselves. They point to a different system of valuing and an alternate model of relationships.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 56-58.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Thus, “hospitality that welcomes ‘the least’ and recognizes their equal value can be an act of resistance and defiance, a challenge to the values and expectations of the larger community.”<sup>48</sup>

The church has proclaimed the equality of all people and the relativization of social distinctions in Christ (Galatians 3:28), but it has not always lived out those ideals in practice.

When in the context of guest/host relations or in the gathered church this ascribed equality was given flesh, it provided a compelling vision and, at times, challenged prevailing social arrangements. It was often in the context of shared meals that social boundaries were redrawn or reshaped. . .<sup>49</sup>

The most transformative practices of Christian hospitality occurred in the overlap between the personal space of the home and the institutional space of the church, as the house church (and later the monastery) was the place where a diversity of people gathered around one table of fellowship, community was created, and the social distinctions among them became insignificant. When, after the patristic period, hospitality moved out of the church and into institutional settings and the home of the bishop, it lost its transformative nature and tended to reinforce, rather than challenging, prevailing social arrangements.<sup>50</sup>

Christian hospitality has been more transformational when exercised “from the margins,” “when the hosts were themselves marginal to their larger society.”<sup>51</sup> This was the situation of the early church as a persecuted minority, practitioners of monasticism, and early Methodists before they, too, moved within a generation from being a marginalized people

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 106.

toward social respectability and left their poor neighbors behind.<sup>52</sup> As the church moved from marginality to being influential, hospitality shifted from transcending social distinctions to reinforcing them.<sup>53</sup> With the shift in the location of hospitality away from church to small private homes, the roles for guests and hosts were more sharply defined.<sup>54</sup> A recovery of hospitality in its original form will necessitate a reconnecting of household and church, perhaps joining households together to form small communities as a base for hospitality. Contemporary communities of hospitality have restructured their households in ways that resemble pre-modern households. Meanwhile, there is still a necessary role for the government and large institutions to offer structural supports for poor people and those disconnected from home and family.<sup>55</sup>

Still, despite the substantial eclipse of hospitality as it was practiced in biblical times and in the early church, there are communities of hospitality that continue this practice today and are a witness both to an ancient and valuable Christian tradition and to its power for the transformation of its practitioners as well as those whom they serve. Some of these explored by Pohl include Benedictine monasteries, where this tradition and practice have continued faithfully over the centuries, the Catholic Worker movement shaped by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, and the L'Arche communities founded by Jean Vanier, among others.<sup>56</sup> Pohl identifies

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

important commonalities among these communities of hospitality and their ancient counterparts:

The practice of hospitality almost always includes eating meals together. Sustained hospitality requires a light hold on material possessions and a commitment to a simplified lifestyle. The most potent setting for hospitality is in the overlap of private and public space; hospitality flourishes at the intersection of the personal, intimate characteristics of the home and the transforming expectations of the church. Practitioners view hospitality as a sacred practice and find God is specially present in guest/host relationships. There is a mutual blessing in hospitality; practitioners consistently comment that they receive more than they give. Almost all insist that the demands of hospitality can only be met by persons sustained by a strong life of prayer and times of solitude.<sup>57</sup>

Again, Pohl stresses the marginality of these contemporary communities of hospitality, both in the sense of their existence outside of the mainstream of society and in the very different values by which they live:

These hospitality communities embody a decidedly different set of values; their view of possessions and attitudes toward position and work differ from those of the larger culture. They explicitly distance themselves from contemporary emphases on efficiency, measurable results, and bureaucratic organization. Their lives together are intentionally less individualistic, materialistic, and task-driven than most in our society. In allying themselves with needy strangers, they come face-to-face with the limits of a 'problem-solving' or a 'success' orientation. In situations of severe disability, terminal illness, or overwhelming need, the problem cannot necessarily be 'solved.' But practitioners understand the crucial ministry of presence: it may not fix a problem but it provides relationships which open up a new kind of healing and hope.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 112.

## **Other Reflections on the Nature and Practice of Hospitality—and its Distortions:**

Amy Oden, in *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity*,<sup>59</sup> has assembled a collection of texts describing and prescribing the practice and virtue of hospitality in its many expressions within the early history of Christianity. Though she stresses the immense diversity among the teachings and practices of hospitality among Christians, she also offers some general conclusions about how Christians have understood and practiced hospitality. Hospitality is minimally defined as welcoming the stranger and attending to the physical, social, and spiritual needs of both the stranger and the host.<sup>60</sup> Hospitality is:

. . . not so much a singular act of welcome as it is a way, an orientation that attends to otherness, listening and learning, valuing and honoring. The hospitable one looks for God’s redemptive presence in the other, confident it is there, if one only has eyes to see and ears to hear. Hospitality, then, is always a spiritual discipline of opening one’s own life to God’s life and revelation.<sup>61</sup>

Hospitality is “a particular moral stance” and a “participation in the life of God.”<sup>62</sup> It involves for those who participate a “de-centering of perspective,” as hospitality “shifts the frame of reference from self to other to relationship,” which results in *metanoia*, turning or “repentance.”<sup>63</sup> Likewise, through the practice of hospitality communities also experience a de-centering of perspective and “become more aware of the structural inequalities that exist in and around them and repent.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Amy Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

Hospitality “was not simply a matter of private virtue. It was embedded in community and a sign of God’s presence in that community, and so was an embodiment of a biblical ethic.”<sup>65</sup> Christian hospitality was not merely a matter of private goodness but was instead grounded “within a larger spiritual economy, the *oikos* or household of God. . .”<sup>66</sup>

Early Christians describe with amazement the possibilities of transformation of host, of guest, of community, even of creation, when hospitality is shared. No one is left unchanged. Further, God’s gracious movement gives an orientation of spirit that accompanies hospitality so that all participants know themselves to be operating within and for God’s life. This orientation of spirit focuses the Christian life on the crucial role of presence, both ours and God’s, in hospitality. At its heart, the spiritual power of hospitality rests in simple presence. Hospitality, then, is a spiritual discipline that directs our attention to God’s life, opens our hearts to participating in that life through presence and humility, and transforms our lives toward holiness and abundance. Seen this way, hospitality is the opportunity to give our life away in order to gain it, to lose it in order to find it.<sup>67</sup>

Christian hospitality drew upon precedents from the ancient Hebrews and Old Testament teachings and models, as well as the expressions of hospitality embodied in Greek and Roman culture, along with the Gospels’ portrayal of Jesus’ teachings and embodiment of hospitality, most vividly expressed in Matthew 25 and Luke 14, but also embodied in Jesus’ presence in the bread and the wine of the Eucharist.<sup>68</sup> While Christian hospitality was directed to several categories of people, including the sick and injured, the poor and hungry, travelers

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 16-19.

and pilgrims, widows and orphans, slaves and prisoners,<sup>69</sup> what all these categories of people have in common is that “they are all vulnerable populations. They exist on the margins, both socially and economically. They can easily be ignored and seldom bring status or financial gain to those who reach out to them.”<sup>70</sup> Within the “economy of hospitality,” the host both gives and receives, as “God’s grace gifts both host and guest.”<sup>71</sup> There is “a dynamic tension among having, giving, and receiving.”<sup>72</sup>

The inevitable asymmetry of relationship between host and guest does not prevent due honor and respect. Hospitality requires that the host recognize both the need and the full humanity of the stranger. There is a respectful balance in successful hospitality that neither denigrates the guest’s neediness nor denies it. The other is fully honored as a child of God, while at the same time, genuine needs are addressed.<sup>73</sup>

Elizabeth Newman, in *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers*,<sup>74</sup> seeks to differentiate Christian hospitality as a vital practice for Christian living from distortions of hospitality that are prevalent in our culture, based on its predominant assumptions and ideologies, as particularly shaped by modernity’s image of the autonomous individual as a sovereign Self and the ideology of the market. Within our cultural context, hospitality has been reduced to a sentimental and superficial politeness and niceness that often is unable to speak the truth, corresponding to a distorted picture of God as a “therapeutic nice guy who asks only

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 19-26.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Elizabeth Newman, *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers*, The Christian Practice of Everyday Life (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2007).

that we be nice too” and meets our needs, without making any real demands upon our lives.<sup>75</sup>

Another distortion is to relegate hospitality to the privacy of our homes and to entertaining people who are much like ourselves, while putting up false appearances that conceal who we really are in order to impress those we entertain, which parallels a privatization of religion generally as a “religion of civility”<sup>76</sup> that seeks to be inoffensive and to demonstrate tolerance.

A third distortion is to turn hospitality into an industry that sells a comfortable lifestyle to consumers, in order to fulfill their desires. A final distortion is “the equation of hospitality with inclusivity and diversity,”<sup>77</sup> which “ends up underwriting a consumeristic and aesthetic way of life” by providing us “with a vast array of choices, as does the market.”<sup>78</sup>

Inclusivity and diversity are deceptive in that they sound a lot like Christian inclusion of the excluded, but a key difference is that Jesus’ inclusion of people was not without expectations but is framed by larger commitments that enable his followers “to discern which differences are truly good and therefore ‘gifts’ and which are more reflective of our fallen world.”<sup>79</sup> Instead, hospitality as inclusivity and diversity reduces life to a matter of unlimited and unchallenged personal choice and personal freedom. In the end, diversity is deceptively offered within conformity to “the rule of the market” and a “homogenizing consumption.”<sup>80</sup>

For the fiction by which the global market commends itself to us and encourages our participation in it is that the human self is purely a consumer. We can

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 33.

conclude that the global market deeply forms a hospitality defined in terms of 'pluralism,' 'inclusivity,' and 'diversity.' In fact, it serves the market for us to think of hospitality in this way. To practice a hospitality of pluralism and diversity is to become a better consumer, rather than a more faithful participant in receiving and giving the love and grace of God.<sup>81</sup>

Newman sees in all of these distortions of hospitality a reflection of the "homelessness" or loss of "place" as a feature of late modernity—a lack of rootedness, driven by "[a]bstract market forces rather than communal concern. . ." <sup>82</sup>

In our late modern epoch, however, we can see that a self stripped of context, a 'universal self,' is at the mercy of global economic and political forces beyond its control. . . With no concrete place of orientation, hospitality will be subject to the whims of the dominant economic and political forces.<sup>83</sup>

The modern self has a prevailing sense of emptiness and fragmentation, which it tries to remedy by consumption, and which causes it not to believe that it has something to give or offer in hospitality, while also being unable to receive, since consuming is different from receiving, as an act of desperation rather than gratitude.<sup>84</sup> She sees this modern homelessness as a form of gnosticism, seeking salvation by an escape from the emptiness and fragmentation of life in the world through knowledge of an "uncreated self" that is free from nature, time, history, community, and other selves.<sup>85</sup>

By contrast, for Christians, "salvation and freedom reside in God's acting in history, in the people of Israel, Jesus Christ, and the church, for the sake of the world. To the extent that

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 37-38.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 38-39.

we allow ourselves to be bound to this history, this story, our fragmentation and modern homelessness are overcome.”<sup>86</sup> This makes the church absolutely necessary as the orienting “place” or “home” for Christians—not the church as a specific location but as the Body of Christ whose location in time and space is not fixed, since the church is a people on pilgrimage, receiving God’s hospitality as a “movable feast.”<sup>87</sup> Christian hospitality is not our achievement but is God’s gift, even as our lives are a gift of God and not a personal achievement.<sup>88</sup>

Therefore, Newman describes worship as hospitality,<sup>89</sup> as a participation in God’s hospitality, in the communion of God’s triune life, a life which is shared in hospitality with the world. In order to receive worship as hospitality, though, it is necessary to overcome ways in which worship itself is distorted, paralleling the distortions in hospitality. Worship is often sentimentalized as a “collection of individuals” gathering together to “get our needs met.”<sup>90</sup> This is a market image of worship that reduces it to one more manifestation of a consumer culture, marketed also as entertainment, which turns worshipers into spectators rather than participants. Like hospitality, worship is also reduced to inclusivity, to the extent that there is a loss of distinction between the church and the world.<sup>91</sup> This inclusivity is reduced to an “equality by default” which basically means that differences are merely personal choices that allow me to be and do what I want, as the sovereign Self, free from being bound by any norms

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 41-69.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 43.

and traditions. This is very different from a Christian view of equality that does not deny differences and does not assume that all differences are equally acceptable.<sup>92</sup>

The substantive equality of Christianity says that humans are equal because they are created in God's image and share the same condition, which is sin. . . . At the same time there is a recognition of differences. . . . In equality by default, however, we are alike simply because we are free to be different and [all differences are considered to be of equal worth].<sup>93</sup>

Overcoming these distortions of worship is a challenge for Christians, particularly in the context of worship being reduced to an activity of one hour per week, rather than a reality that fills and shapes the whole of life. Yet, the first thing to remember is that worship is God's gift rather than our achievement, the gift of God's triune communion.<sup>94</sup> Worship is "not about us"<sup>95</sup> but is God's act and a participation in God's life and God's hospitality that draws us into communion with the triune God. In worship we discover that, as part of the church, the Body of Christ, we are more than individuals, and we continue to be the church wherever we are—not only when we assemble for set times of worship.<sup>96</sup> We are part of something greater than ourselves—the *koinonia* (communion, fellowship, participation) in Christ and in the Holy Spirit.<sup>97</sup> We are bound together into a unity as God's *oikos* or household, "the dwelling place of God in the Spirit," which is not merely something private and apolitical, since God's *oikonomia*

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 44-45.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 50.

breaks down the distinction of *oikos* and *polis*.<sup>98</sup> As the *oikos* of Christian hospitality, the church is not an “amorphous friendly, feel-good existence” of infinite openness that allows people to be and do whatever they want but is a life that embodies God’s hospitality and challenges us to live out God’s love—a life defined by the *kerygma* (the message of Christ) and peculiar *practices* (especially the breaking of bread).<sup>99</sup> Importantly, the *oikos* of God is pure gift, in contrast to the modern self that seeks to earn and secure its own place. We do not create the church or ourselves but receive both as God’s gift.<sup>100</sup> The *oikos* of Christian hospitality draws us into a drama that is much larger than ourselves, God’s drama of creating and redeeming the world in Christ.<sup>101</sup>

Christian worship is God’s hospitality in which we are allowed to participate, and other times and expressions of hospitality in our lives flow out of that orienting hospitality. It is a “strange” hospitality in its dependence upon a “strange God,” meaning “that God is not easily domesticated or reduced to something we can manage or control. The winds of the Spirit blow where they will. Worship ought to train us not to try to control God but to receive from God, no matter how strange or terrifying God might seem.”<sup>102</sup> God remains a *mystery*, not merely in the sense of being “unknown” but in the recognition of “the inexhaustible love of God that can never be ‘used up.’”<sup>103</sup> Worship orients our lives to our dependence upon God and to live out

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 50-52.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

of God's promises and God's abundance rather than our society's images of scarcity.<sup>104</sup> In worship we also recognize that we are not only the church but we are also the world, sharing the sins of the world. "It is through the church, however, that we learn rightly to see and name the world, both in its goodness as God's creation and in its sin."<sup>105</sup>

The specific practices of liturgical hospitality in worship also form habits that make us a hospitable people.<sup>106</sup> Worship has both rules to follow and room for improvisation and is characterized by an atmosphere of joy and celebration, rather than somberness and tragedy, as we engage in an exchange of gifts, receiving from God and giving ourselves, our gifts, our needs, our wealth and our poverty to God in response.<sup>107</sup>

Worship enables us to embody the fact that our lives, the church, and the created world are gifts from God; we ourselves are totally dependent on the giving and receiving love of God. This dependence is not bad news, our culture's emphasis on independence to the contrary. Rather, such communion is the way we become more fully the body of Christ. Such liturgical hospitality is marked by joy and gratitude, one might even say celebration.<sup>108</sup>

Worship forms our habits of hospitality by enacting them bodily through the gestures and habits of worship, so that we "remember in our bodies" in a deeper way than remembering merely in our heads.<sup>109</sup> "Worship, then, is ordered so that we are bodily trained to receive from and give to God."<sup>110</sup> Passing the peace trains us to offer hospitality by touching others we do

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 61-64.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 59-61.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 62-63.

not know and may not find attractive, when we might have a tendency to avoid them instead.<sup>111</sup> Singing hymns trains us to receive the gift of song and offer God our gifts of gratitude and praise, training us in a life of gratitude, while also incorporating hymns of lament, so that this hospitality is not a “smiley face” type that ignores pain and suffering but is instead one that places these within a larger narrative of God’s overcoming death and suffering.<sup>112</sup> Hymn-singing also unites us as *one body*, as we learn mutual submission to one another, through uniting our voices and adjusting them to the voices of others into a harmony rather than discord, one in which all participate and none drowns out the others, and the weaker and stronger voices blend together into one beautiful whole.<sup>113</sup> Finally, prayer reminds us of our dependence on God and one another and forms us in deep gratitude. These practices in worship form us in God’s hospitality, as we then can draw others to share in the hospitality into which God has allowed us to participate.

Newman also emphasizes that our faithful practice of Christian hospitality in the world will be focused primarily on small things that “our society will tend to regard as of little consequence.” She states that contemporary practitioners of faithful hospitality “emphasize the importance of the small, the apparently insignificant, the vulnerable, and the poor,” an emphasis rooted in the hospitality practiced by Jesus. “If hospitality is our participation in

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-66.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-67.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-69.

God's own giving and receiving, then as scripture testifies, this gift and reception is always particular, concrete, and seemingly insignificant."<sup>114</sup>

Newman draws upon the practice of hospitality in the L'Arche communities, which serve persons with mental handicaps, and the insights of founder Jean Vanier. Newman emphasizes that as Christians "we are not called to be 'normal' but to be holy."<sup>115</sup> "Hospitality, faithfully practiced, challenges our assumptions about what it means to be normal."<sup>116</sup> Our culture makes it seem normal "to succeed by competing with others," "to be the sole determinant of our identity," and "to seek security through demanding our rights," along with an excessive "emphasis on power and strength."<sup>117</sup> Those L'Arche serves cannot fit such definitions of "normal." Instead, Vanier emphasizes an alternative set of values such as friendship, belonging, community, love, service, and the awakening and sharing of each one's gifts.<sup>118</sup>

Now Vanier is advocating a different politics, one that does not rest on the assumption that we are individuals essentially in conflict with each other, pursuing our self-interest. Rather, Vanier zeroes in on *friendship* centered on a shared good: love of God, service, and discernment of gifts. Such friendship . . . is itself a kind of politics as it enables us to live toward our common end: to love and enjoy God. Vanier notes that 'L'Arche is founded on the gospel. For people with handicaps, even more important than 'normalization' is their growth in love, openness, service and holiness, which is the ultimate purpose of each human person.' The alternative to 'normality' is not transcending difference or acting as if it did not matter . . . but living lives of faithfulness around a shared good, namely love of God.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 178-79. Emphasis is the author's.

A lesson from the hospitality practiced by L'Arche is that hospitality is not necessarily "about doing something and getting certain results" but involves what some may consider "wasting time," as it "is not so much focused on efficiency and results as on simply being present to others."<sup>120</sup> More important than "doing for" is "being with," and hospitality is not only "giving to" but "receiving from" the other, "learning to see the other as a gift."<sup>121</sup> One gift to be received from hospitality toward persons with mental handicaps is that, contrary to the dictates of our society, we do not have to "hide our vulnerability and weaknesses."<sup>122</sup> Rather, such persons invite us to discover our own poverty.

. . . it is precisely their vulnerability that is their great gift to the church and the world. In their vulnerability and poverty, they can teach all of us not to hide our own weaknesses but rather to see these as places of grace, where we see our *need* for others and for the grace of God.<sup>123</sup>

In Vanier's account, the discovery of our poverty and brokenness enables us to rely not on our own strength and efforts but on the healing and forgiving grace of God. The realization of need . . . draws Vanier into deeper communion with God and others.<sup>124</sup>

This discovery of our own poverty comes as a conversion and as the gift of communion, enabling us to "see that the challenge is not 'moral perfection,' a notion that typically turns the focus to individual effort", but is instead "to learn to live with your imperfections" and know that we are "loved despite our faults and failures."<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis is the author's.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

That we are limited and weak means we *need* others; we depend on others in order to receive, discover, and be the healing presence of Christ in the world.<sup>126</sup>

It takes time and patience for us to see that we are part of something much larger than ourselves.<sup>127</sup>

Paul Wadell, in *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice, and the Practice of Christian Friendship*,<sup>128</sup> does not use the language of “hospitality” as such but nonetheless describes how worship forms us in Christian practices that extend the life of God into the world in a receptivity to others that certainly resembles hospitality as it has been elaborated herein. He develops a theme set forth by Thomas Aquinas, that charity (love, *caritas*) is a life of friendship with God. (Aquinas, in *Summa Theologica* II.II, Question 23, sees charity as a movement in the soul caused by the presence of the Holy Spirit therein and as friendship toward God, directing the soul toward its chief end and ultimate and principal good of enjoyment of God. As such, charity is the greatest of the virtues, the form of the virtues, and the virtue without which other true virtues are not possible.<sup>129</sup>) This friendship with God moves us to faithfully embody the ways of God in the world. The church is the community of friends of God, and its worship initiates us into friendship with God and forms us as friends of God, such that worship and ethics are indissolubly linked for Christians, as “it is through the rituals and practices of Christian worship that we discern the shape of the Christian life and begin to acquire the virtues and dispositions

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>128</sup> Paul J. Wadell, *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice, and the Practice of Christian Friendship* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2002).

<sup>129</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, ed. Sandra K. Perry, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Perrysburg, Ohio: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1947), II.II, Question 23, 1865-75.

that are essential to that life.”<sup>130</sup> Becoming that community of friends of God impacts every dimension of our lives and all of our relationships. “There are many ways the church is called to continue the mission and ministry of Jesus, but one of the most urgent today is to be a community that embodies in its life together the virtues, dispositions, and practices displayed by Jesus in the gospel.”<sup>131</sup>

Of course, the connection between Christian worship and this life of friendship with God that forms us in virtue is undermined when worship is domesticated from true worship into sham worship, designed to comfort us, massage our egos, or entertain us, making us believe everything in our lives is alright, rather than to provoke, challenge, and change us—worship under our control rather than worship in which we relinquish control over our lives to God and are formed by the stories and narratives of God.

In true Christian worship, we learn “to see ourselves not as consumers and not as self-interested individuals but as *a people, a community* formed and centered around the self-giving God who calls us to friendship through Christ and the Spirit.”<sup>132</sup> We also “learn the language of God that comes to us in Christ”; then in Christian discipleship we “strive to embody and witness it continually to the world.”<sup>133</sup> “Learning the language of God implicates us in an ongoing transformation of how we think about everything.”<sup>134</sup> The language of God is not the language

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<sup>130</sup> Wadell, 11.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-21. Emphasis is the author's.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

of competition, rivalry, self-interest, and power but is the language of love, peace, and belonging.

In Jesus, God speaks a different language, a wonderfully hopeful one because it is a language that affirms trust instead of betrayal, a language that seeks community instead of rivalry and division, a language that works for generosity instead of selfishness and domination, a language that values service more than privilege and gentleness more than self-promotion, and a language that practices forgiveness and peace because it knows the futility of vindictiveness and violence.<sup>135</sup>

In true worship we experience “the total reconstruction of the self from the deadly and ultimately futile ways of sin to the life-giving ways of God,” as we “submit ourselves to being disciplined in the surprising and often confounding ways of God that come to us in Christ.”<sup>136</sup>

“We encounter those ways in worship and liturgy when we listen to the Word of God, open our lives to receive it, and learn from one another what it means to live that Word faithfully.”<sup>137</sup>

In worship we learn and are shaped by God’s story— “[t]he saga of creation, fall, covenant, incarnation, redemption and restoration” as a narrative that is not only in the distant past but that shapes and remakes our world as we “want to embody its viewpoints and perspectives” and “wish its values and its visions to be our own.”<sup>138</sup>

It is through the constant rehearsal of the stories of God in worship that we learn to love and to live the language of God that is Jesus and therefore are gradually transformed in our new identity as the community of the friends of God. . . . More specifically, in Christian worship we pledge to live our lives in memory of Jesus, but that remembering is no abstract intellectual exercise. To remember Jesus in worship is to make Jesus the one in whom and through whom we want to live now. What makes such worship poignant is that it releases Jesus from the

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

confinement of the past so that he can live in and with us now—calling us from sin, challenging us and teaching us, leading us, and each day making us something new.<sup>139</sup>

Thomas Aquinas described the Eucharist as consuming Christ as our spiritual food, being nourished by his life, “absorbing everything about him into our ordinary lives . . . his attitudes, his outlook, his values, his example . . . it is to allow Christ to affect every dimension of who we are.”<sup>140</sup> “Worship is central to a life of friendship with God because it works to achieve in us exactly the radical, total conformity of the self to Christ that is the perfection of friendship with God.”<sup>141</sup>

Worship is integrally related to mission. Worship begins the life of friendship with God, while that life is completed in mission.<sup>142</sup> “The worship and prayer of the church forms us into a special kind of community, but that community exists not for its own sake. It exists to share in and further the mission and ministry of Jesus. The friends of God are entrusted with the daunting mission of witnessing to the reign of God by striving to live according to it now.”<sup>143</sup> “[T]he worship and prayer of the church form it into a ‘diacritical community’” rather than a merely critical community.<sup>144</sup> The church is not called to merely be critical of the values and

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 25-26.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 29.

practices of society but to point toward something better. True worship calls the church to be daring, creative, and imaginative rather than small-minded, timid, cautious, and defensive.<sup>145</sup>

Two of the most essential ways for the church's worship to nurture its mission as a community of friends of God include "nurturing and practicing the fruit of the Spirit that is love and nurturing and practicing the fruit of the Spirit that is peace."<sup>146</sup> If neighbor-love is to be an embodiment of Jesus' costly love, it cannot be reduced to "safe neighbor love" that tries to control who the neighbor to be loved is, accepting some but rejecting and excluding others. Christ's love is risky and radical, as Jesus excludes no one, and we are called in worship to a love that never excludes, which is dangerous in a world that is built on principles of exclusion.<sup>147</sup> Christian neighbor love is powerful, as it gifts the other with identity and significance, becoming a mirror through which others see themselves as beautiful and loved by God.<sup>148</sup> To nurture peace is to participate in God's ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-20), joining Christ in breaking down all the walls that divide people (Ephesians 2:13-22) and imitating God as one who forgives and befriends and makes peace (Ephesians 4:31-32).<sup>149</sup> "Christian worship should make us a *peacemaking people of a peacemaking God*."<sup>150</sup>

Worship that is true to the God of biblical faith, the God revealed in Christ, will also form us as people who embody, live, and proclaim God's justice that takes sides with the poor and

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 32-34.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 35-37.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 35. Emphasis is the author's.

oppressed and seeks to liberate them from injustice.<sup>151</sup> To be formed in worship as friends of this God will entail a strong commitment to God's justice and to wielding a costly and dangerous prophetic witness against injustice in all forms. "Any worship that does not fire our imaginations with God's vision of justice for the whole of creation is a sham, a shameful affront to the God in whose ways we claim to be walking."<sup>152</sup> "In the Eucharist we are fed so that we might feed others. In the Eucharist we are nurtured and cared for by God so that we might show to others, especially the least fortunate, the love and care God has extended to us."<sup>153</sup> "The Christ who comes to us in the Eucharist is the same Christ who challenges us to see him in all members of the family of God , especially those excluded and forgotten ones we are most accustomed not to see at all (Matt. 25:31-46)."<sup>154</sup>

Then finally, through Christian worship we are formed as the community of the forgiven who pass on to the world around us the forgiveness we have received from God,<sup>155</sup> "not letting hurt have the final word"<sup>156</sup> and not passing on the hurts we have received from others.<sup>157</sup> "The church should be a sacrament of God's forgiveness in our world. It should be the people

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 139-58.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 159-80.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 37.

who, standing at the foot of the cross, see in God, the wounded healer, a mercy that always triumphs over judgment.”<sup>158</sup>

In summing up some key insights from Newman and Wadell, Christian worship can be seen as our participation in God's hospitality toward us, graciously including us in God's triune life, whose nature is love. Grounded in and conditioned by that divine hospitality, we extend and reflect the same through our demonstration of hospitality toward others (particularly toward the "other," even as God welcomes us in our otherness), including them as participants in our life of loving fellowship with God and one another. Worship also forms us in the language and the stories of God, which shape our response toward the other, even as we are guided by God's response toward us in our otherness.

Reinhard Hütter, in “Hospitality and Truth: The Disclosure of Practices in Worship and Doctrine,”<sup>159</sup> describes the practices of hospitality and of honoring the truth as interrelated, with both grounded in God’s practice of truthful hospitality. Using an allegorical story about heaven and hell from C. S. Lewis’ *The Great Divorce* as a parable, Hütter explains how truth and hospitality are intertwined, in that one must acknowledge the truth about oneself, one’s own life, in order to become real enough to enter into authentic relations with others and open oneself to them in genuine hospitality. Otherwise one remains bound up in self-deception and either rejects others or uses them for one’s own self-affirmation by pleasing them and being liked by them. Truthful hospitality, however, begins with acknowledgment of who and whose one is, that one’s life is a gift and not a personal achievement, and that one has need both to

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 179-80.

<sup>159</sup> Reinhard Hütter, "Hospitality and Truth: The Disclosure of Practices in Worship and Doctrine," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002).

receive and to offer forgiveness. One can receive the truth about oneself as a gift by receiving God's forgiveness, which removes any need for self-justification and self-deception and opens up the possibilities of relationship and hospitality.<sup>160</sup> Self-righteousness is a barrier to both truth and hospitality.<sup>161</sup> Another barrier to hospitality is to substitute superficial nicety and "entertaining" in which we do not give ourselves truly as persons.<sup>162</sup>

Hospitality is grounded in the hospitality of God's triune life as a community of love among three divine persons, which love God shares with humanity, the threshold of which is the death and resurrection of Christ as God's ultimate act of self-giving love and hospitality toward humanity, overcoming the estrangement caused by humanity's betrayal of God's truth and hospitality in God's act of forgiveness.<sup>163</sup> We receive the truth of God's hospitality in Christ through worship and through Christian doctrine, forming us in God's loving hospitality and expressing the truth of the Gospel, though the task of theology is to continually re-appropriate, reinterpret, and re-communicate the truth of that Gospel.<sup>164</sup> Christians do fail in their truth and hospitality, while non-Christians demonstrate truth and hospitality, which reveals three things: (1) "that there is a knowledge of created goods dispersed among all humanity;" (2) that worship and doctrine do not mechanically operate to automatically create this way of life; and

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 207-14.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 214-15.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 207, 219-20.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 220-26.

(3) “how utterly serious a matter it is and how deeply the reality claims of the Gospel are called into question when Christians fail to practice hospitality and to honor the truth.”<sup>165</sup>

Henri Nouwen, in *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*,<sup>166</sup> describes the life of hospitality as creating an empty space for the stranger, not so that the stranger will be led to the way of the host but so that the stranger can find her or his own way. Our society is filled with anxious, fearful people, occupied and preoccupied with predetermined ideas about life and people and an unwillingness to allow those ideas to be upset by the other, who is perceived as a threat, especially if she or he is of a “different color,” dresses different, speaks another language, or has different customs.<sup>167</sup> In order to create space for the other, we must be at home in our own house, by converting our loneliness into solitude, so that our lives are centered, and we do not use the other to fulfill our own needs in our loneliness. A good host offers the guest poverty—poverty of mind and poverty of heart, releasing preconceived ideas and determination of the encounter by our own experiences, in the realization that life is more than my life, that experience is more than my experience, that God is more than my God.<sup>168</sup>

Hospitality also offers guests both receptivity and “confrontation,” the receptivity of being open to who the stranger is, on her or his own terms, and allowing them to be themselves and to reveal their gifts, rather than imposing upon them our expectations, while at

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>166</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Image Books, 1986).

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 65-77.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 101-09.

the same time offering the “confrontation” of sharing openly who we are and our convictions and faith in an invitation to dialogue, rather than hiding behind a bland neutrality.<sup>169</sup>

When we want to be really hospitable we not only have to receive strangers but also to confront them by an unambiguous presence, not hiding ourselves behind neutrality but showing our ideas, opinions and life style clearly and distinctly. No real dialogue is possible between somebody and a nobody. We can enter into communication with the other only when our own life choices, attitudes and viewpoints offer the boundaries that challenge strangers to become aware of their own position and to explore it critically.<sup>170</sup>

True hospitality both allows the guest the freedom to share the gift of who she or he is and extends to the guest the gift of who we are. Receptivity without confrontation fails to offer who we are. Confrontation without receptivity fails to allow the guest to offer who she or he is.

Receptivity and confrontation are the two inseparable sides of Christian witness. They have to remain in careful balance. Receptivity without confrontation leads to a bland neutrality that serves nobody. Confrontation without receptivity leads to an oppressive aggression which hurts everybody.<sup>171</sup>

It is important to note that by "confrontation," Nouwen means that true hospitality shares our own faith and perspective rather than attacking the guest's, while also being open to the faith and perspective of the guest, so that the relationship becomes a dialogue, a conversation, and a possible opportunity for mutual transformation.

### **Virtues Theory and Character Formation as a Ground for an Ethic of Hospitality:**

But how does this narrative of hospitality to the stranger move from being a fine theoretical concept to a transformative practice? How does it motivate the will in order to be implemented in a practice of hospitality? At this point, an understanding of virtues theory and

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 97-100.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

character formation in the moral agent, conceptualizing hospitality as not merely an ideal but as a defining virtue, may prove helpful.

Many mistakenly believe virtue ethics is an escape from the responsibilities and complexities of social and political issues into a reduction of the ethical life to one of being a “good person” who demonstrates admirable moral qualities and is relatively harmless but somewhat less than a prophetic witness in denouncing social injustices, and who abandons the role of shaping society and the larger world in order to focus on the individual life and/or some form of community, under the assumption that the whole of human society can only be changed one individual at a time or through the alternative witness embodied in the life of a given moral community. Indeed, there are some expressions of virtue ethics that may be suggestive of these approaches to ethics, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Yet, I would argue that virtue ethics is not *inherently* bound to such reductions of the ethical life but, in fact, offers resources for a more expansive and critical approach to social ethics, and Christian social ethics particularly.

For virtue ethics is not merely about being a good person, however that is defined, but also and most fundamentally asserts that how we address not only personal ethical issues but also social and political issues is grounded in and shaped by our character as moral agents formed by communities of moral discourse. As Stanley Hauerwas would say it, a just society cannot be established without just people formed by *A Community of Character*.<sup>172</sup> As Miroslav Volf says it in *Exclusion and Embrace*, social arrangements (how a society is structured) are formed by social agents, and the social ethical task of Christian theologians is primarily to

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<sup>172</sup> Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*.

concern themselves with the formation of social agents and only secondarily, in cooperation with Christian economists, political scientists, social philosophers, and others, to address the question of social arrangements.<sup>173</sup>

...theologians should concentrate less on social arrangements and more on *fostering the kind of social agents capable of envisioning and creating just, truthful, and peaceful societies, and on shaping a cultural climate in which such agents will thrive.*<sup>174</sup>

Social arrangements condition social agents; and social agents fashion social arrangements.<sup>175</sup>

In other words, *who we are* shapes both *what we do* and *what we think* about ethical issues and decisions at all levels, whether personal, interpersonal, or societal. Of course, our actions and our thoughts also have a shaping influence on our character, with all these dimensions of human life interwoven in complex ways. However, the important insight of virtue ethics is that the formation of moral agents and communities of moral discourse cannot be ignored, neglected, or taken for granted, as if moral decisions could be approached independently by “autonomous individuals” as blank tablets engaging in moral reasoning from a set of universal moral principles, an analysis of consequences, or some combination thereof, without regard to the values, assumptions, interests, and other shaping influences upon the maker(s) of moral decisions. The formation of the moral/ social agent is thus the *primary* but not the *exclusive* focus of virtue ethics. Moral agents are formed in their character and in the virtues, who in turn shape societies, but it is important that individual moral formation be seen as the *starting point* and not the *stopping point* for ethics.

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<sup>173</sup> Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*, 20-22.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 21. Emphasis is the author's.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

Alasdair MacIntyre, in his book *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*,<sup>176</sup> describes the fragmentation of moral discourse in the modern period, after the dissolution of the Aristotelian-Thomistic ethical tradition focused on the virtues. What remains are fragments of moral arguments taken from diverse historical contexts, with their meaning altered through the loss of their historical context.<sup>177</sup> The attempts at moral judgment that remain “are linguistic survivals from the practices of classical theism which have lost the context provided by these practices.”<sup>178</sup> A combination of Protestant reformers’ distrust of the power of reason in theology, the assertion within 17<sup>th</sup> century philosophy and science that reason does not discern ends but only means, and 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment thinking, typified by David Hume and Immanuel Kant, that sought freedom from the tutelage of theistic conceptions and of Aristotelian teleology, led to the breakdown of the medieval theological-ethical synthesis as formulated by Thomas Aquinas.<sup>179</sup>

Henceforth, Enlightenment thinkers attempted to ground morality on some other foundation<sup>180</sup>—for Hume, on moral sentiments, and for Kant, on universal moral principles of duty derived from reason alone. However, these efforts ultimately failed to stand up under close scrutiny, leading to Soren Kierkegaard’s depiction of the moral life as an absolute and individual choice between the aesthetic life of carefree enjoyment and the ethical life of adherence to moral requirements. An attempt to ground moral judgment on a consequentialist

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<sup>176</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-55.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-50.

or utilitarian foundation (Bentham and Mill) has also failed, due to basing it on happiness, which is polymorphous rather than unitary.<sup>181</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche finally pointed out the failure of Enlightenment morality altogether, as he called for replacement of moral systems with values the individual chooses for oneself.<sup>182</sup> Other moral theories that have come to predominance include “emotivism”,<sup>183</sup> which reduces evaluative judgments to expressions of preference, attitude, or feeling, which—unlike facts—are neither true nor false, and “intuitionism”,<sup>184</sup> which sees moral judgments as *perceived* intuitively but beyond explanation, at least as to their ground. MacIntyre states that emotivism, which many would consider moral relativism, “has become embodied in our culture” as the prevailing view.<sup>185</sup>

Concomitant with and related to this loss of a moral ground was the invention of the modern self—the autonomous individual who lives by personal choices and is self-defining, self-directing, and self-interested.<sup>186</sup> The modern self is conceptualized independently of a social context or social norms, roles, and practices. Moral agency is in the autonomous self passing judgment “from a purely universal and abstract point of view that is totally detached from all social particularity,”<sup>187</sup> resulting in a pluralism in the domain of morals, as differentiated from the unitary nature of the domain of facts. Within this individualism, society is not conceived as

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<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 62-64.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-14.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-34, 61.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

a community bound together by a shared vision of human good but as an arena within which competing self-interested individuals seek to fulfill their desires.<sup>188</sup>

In confronting this moral fragmentation and the incommensurability of moral arguments within such a context, MacIntyre seeks a firmer foundation for moral discourse through a recovery of the Aristotelian tradition of the moral virtues—not in the sense of adopting Aristotle’s system wholesale but instead as an evolving and adaptable tradition that is nonetheless solidly grounded. He sees such a recovery of teleological and virtue-based ethics as essentially the only real alternative to a Nietzschean pluralism of self-chosen values.<sup>189</sup> The real foundation of Aristotelian virtue theory is its teleological orientation within a “threefold structure of untutored human-nature-as-it-happens-to-be, human-nature-as-it-could-be-if-it-realized-its-*telos*, and the precepts of rational ethics as the means for the transition from one to the other.”<sup>190</sup> For Aristotle, humans, like all things animate or inanimate, have a *telos*—an end, a function, or a purpose toward which they are directed. For Aristotle, that *telos* is the life of happiness that is the outcome of virtue as an excellence of the soul. Thomas Aquinas adapted the same threefold structure to a different *telos*, the eternal love and enjoyment of God. MacIntyre sees the necessity of envisioning some *telos* for the whole of human life, a unity of purpose directed toward *the* Good that orders all goods, though he does not identify what that Good is but instead sees the unity of life in community as driven by a shared vision of or search for that Good.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 236, 250.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 117-19, 257-59.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 53.

Virtues are directed toward specific ends, and supremely toward the final end or *telos* of humanity, whatever it may be, as both Aristotle and Aquinas viewed the human being as a “functional concept,” in which a good *x* is an *x* that fulfills its function well. Thus moral virtue lies in fulfilling humanity’s function well, so that moral imperatives can be rightly regarded as susceptible to truth or falsity as measured by whether they lead to the fulfillment of that function. Only a modern individualistic view of humanity results in humanity no longer being a functional concept.<sup>192</sup> Instead, the modern worldview imposes its own theoretical interpretation of human life, a mechanistic explanation of human action and causality based on law-like generalizations or “universals,” i.e., “universal laws” analogous to the laws of physics.<sup>193</sup>

MacIntyre argues forcefully the illusory nature of modern Western individualism in attempting to define the self in isolation from its social context, roles and responsibilities, etc., insisting that the self is in reality socially defined. The individual is constituted within various communities and social roles. Moreover, the self’s identity is defined within a narrative framework delineating social roles, expectations, and interactions. Otherwise, the notion of “self” is a mere abstraction that lacks context and content.<sup>194</sup> The virtues are also defined and formed by communities, which share a vision of the good and a bond of agreement on the virtues leading to the good, with friendship as the bond that forms the community itself.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 202-03.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 58-60.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 81-84.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 33-34, 172-73, 216-21.

Working through a discussion of the relation of virtues to practices, the goods internal to practices, standards of excellence, authority, and the narrative nature of human life as unified by a personal narrative shaped within larger social and historical narratives, MacIntyre arrives at an understanding of the moral life as a quest—a search for *the Good* which orders all goods, while also providing self-knowledge, as the good life is a life spent seeking for the good life for the whole of humanity.<sup>196</sup> Virtues, then, are those dispositions that sustain people, households, and political communities in which people can seek for the good together.<sup>197</sup>

The virtues therefore are to be understood as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good. The catalogue of the virtues will therefore include the virtues required to sustain the kind of households and the kind of political communities in which men and women can seek for the good together and the virtues necessary for philosophical enquiry about the character of the good. We have then arrived at a provisional conclusion about the good life for man: the good life for man is the life spent in seeking for the good life for man, and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand what more and what else the good life for man is.<sup>198</sup>

Stanley Hauerwas builds on MacIntyre's insights on community, narrative formation, and the virtues as the basis for moral discourse, rather than isolated individuals making moral decisions, in *A Community of Character*<sup>199</sup> and *Christians Among the Virtues* (co-authored with

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 155-56.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 186-219.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*.

Charles Pinches).<sup>200</sup> In Christian ethics, as contrasted with ethics as defined by modernity and its autonomous individual, the moral life is defined by character rather than isolated choices.<sup>201</sup> Hauerwas insists that the primary social ethical task for Christians is to form and be formed by a community of character that is the church.<sup>202</sup> The church must call into question the idolatrous claims and assumptions of the “liberal polity,” including the notion that humans are fundamentally a collection of self-interested, competing individuals bound together only by a social contract that allows them to pursue their mutual self-interest (Hobbes, Locke, and John Rawls, among others), as well as the idolatrous claims of nation-states.<sup>203</sup> The politics of the church cannot be a participation in liberal democracy *on its terms*, without critiquing its foundational assumptions. The primary polity of the church is to be formed as a community by God’s story and to form people of character, equipped with the virtues that enable them then to contribute to the transformation of the larger society on God’s terms.<sup>204</sup>

Any community and polity is known and should be judged by the kind of people it develops. The truest politics, therefore, is that concerned with the development of virtue.<sup>205</sup>

But if, as I contend, the church is a truthful polity, the most important social task of Christians is to be nothing less than a community capable of forming people with virtues sufficient to witness to God’s truth in the world.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Robert Pinches, *Christians among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>202</sup> Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*, 1-3.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-83, 109-10.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-74.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

The first social task of the church is to provide the space and time necessary for developing skills of interpretation and discrimination sufficient to help us recognize the possibilities and limits of our society. . . . Theologically, the challenge of Christian social ethics in our secular polity is no different than in any time or place—it is always the Christian social task to form a society that is built on truth rather than fear. For the Christian, therefore, the church is always the primary polity through which we gain the experience to negotiate and make positive contributions to whatever society in which we may find ourselves.<sup>207</sup>

Hauerwas seeks to describe a distinctively Christian social ethic as grounded, not in abstract moral principles or in a legalistic application of biblical injunctions to individual and social life, but in a community shaped by God’s story as witnessed through the life of Israel and the life of Jesus of Nazareth—a community that in turn forms people of character who live the truth of the Christian story. The Christian community is formed by the story of Jesus, which is the story of the Kingdom—not the abstract Christology of metaphysical speculation on the nature of deity and of Christ but the Gospels’ narrative of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>208</sup> Jesus’ story is a social ethic rather than merely teachings about ethics or a moral example.<sup>209</sup> We learn to follow Jesus as disciples by allowing our story to be shaped by his story, as in the incarnation God breaks through our definitions of what it means to be human and gives a new definition of the human in Jesus.<sup>210</sup> Jesus’ power is truth and love rather than force and violence, a different order than the powers of this world that seek to be “in control.” The cross, as both the outcome of a moral clash with the ruling powers and a simultaneous renunciation of their ways

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 1, 36-52, 66.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 40-44.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 48-49.

of wielding power, defines the kingdom, relationships, and human life.<sup>211</sup> God's rule as revealed in Jesus, especially through the cross, is a new social order characterized by love and service rather than fear and control.<sup>212</sup>

Yet, this story of Jesus allows for diversity in how we live it. There is no one right way, though there are a number of wrong ways.

The social ethical task of the church, therefore, is to be the kind of community that tells and tells rightly the story of Jesus. But it can never forget that Jesus' story is a many-sided tale. We do not have just one story of Jesus, but four. To learn to tell and live the story truthfully does not mean that we must be able to reconstruct 'what really happened' from the four. Rather it means that we, like the early Christians, must learn that understanding Jesus' life is inseparable from learning how to live our own. And that there are various ways to do this is clear by the diversity of the Gospels.<sup>213</sup>

The moral authority of scripture is not in providing a set of rules or principles for living but in establishing a tradition and a community formed by that tradition, which lives by remembering, interpreting, and reinterpreting the tradition. There is diversity even in the Bible itself. There is a conversation that begins in the Bible and continues in the Christian community—a conversation about how to live God's story. Scripture helps nurture and reform the community's self-identity and the character of its members. It shapes a community to be the bearer of its world by being true to the character of God. The authority of scripture is that it shapes the life of the community, as Christians attempt to live faithful to the truth in the biblical witness to the God known through the stories of Israel and Jesus.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 46-49.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 53-71.

The scripture functions as an authority for Christians precisely because by trying to live, think, and feel faithful to its witness they find they are more nearly able to live faithful to the truth. For the scripture forms a society and sets an agenda for its life that requires nothing less than trusting its existence to the God found through the stories of Israel and Jesus. The moral use of scripture, therefore, lies precisely in its power to help us remember the stories of God for the continual guidance of our community and individual lives. To be a community which lives by remembering is a genuine achievement, as too often we assume that we can insure our existence only by freeing ourselves from the past.<sup>215</sup>

The community orders its existence appropriate to its stories. (As Allen Verhey states it, the Christian community gathers and remembers Jesus, discusses reasons, and deliberates over what is the right thing to do consistent with the memory of Jesus.<sup>216</sup>) The church lives as a community of forgiveness, in contrast with a world that lives by power and violence.<sup>217</sup>

Hauerwas offers much to the conversation of how virtue ethics, as defined by Christian tradition rather than adopted wholesale from Aristotle (with his virtue theory shaped by the nature of the ancient Greek *polis*), shapes a response to the other. He describes how the church is a “contrast model” to its surrounding cultures and to the kingdoms of this world that are driven by power and coercion, amidst feelings of insecurity and perceptions of the other as a threat to the self.<sup>218</sup> Christians are instead formed as those who can trust in the God who in Christ demonstrated the power of love and truth rather than of coercion and violence, and from whom we receive life as a gift, so that we do not feel the necessity of securing our lives at all costs but can receive the other as a gift rather than a threat. Christians are formed to live

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>216</sup> Allen Verhey, *Remembering Jesus: Christian Community, Scripture, and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002).

<sup>217</sup> Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*, 68-69.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 84-86.

by trust rather than fear. When Christians live by trust, rather than by fear, the gifts of the stranger can be received, and the self can be enlarged and enriched, rather than threatened, by the presence of the other.<sup>219</sup>

Trust is impossible in communities that always regard the other as a challenge and threat to their existence. One of the profoundest commitments of a community, therefore, is providing a context that encourages us to trust and depend on one another. Particularly significant is a community's determination to be open to new life that is destined to challenge as well as carry on the story.<sup>220</sup>

Liberal polity attempts to forge a society rooted in distrust rather than trust, which then requires extreme measures for protection from one another and results in the loneliness of viewing one another as strangers rather than friends. We call our loneliness "autonomy" and yet find ourselves desperately searching for some form of community.<sup>221</sup> The church, as an alternative polity formed under the lordship of Yahweh, "can provide the experience and skills necessary for me to recognize the difference of my neighbor not as a threat but as essential for my very life."<sup>222</sup> The church recognizes the dividedness of the world, the differences among its peoples, and the diversity of gifts the other has to offer.

The ability of the church to interpret and provide alternatives to the narrow loyalties of the world results from the story—a particular story, to be sure—that teaches us the significance of lives different from our own, within and without our community. . . . If we are to trust in the truthfulness of the stories of God, we must also trust that the other's life, as threatening as it may first appear, is necessary for our own.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 11, 49, 81, 84-86.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 92-93.

In other words, the story by which Christians live is a story in which strangers bring their various gifts and thereby add to and help sustain, rather than being destructive of, our existence.

Hauerwas and Pinches describe how hospitality to the stranger expands our narrow worlds and is therefore essential to our growth. The authors contrast Aristotle's view of friendship as limited to people who are similar and not open to the other, with Christian community and friendship which is not only open to the stranger but grows by receiving the stranger's divergent gifts, which supply something lacking. The God who shares our fragile humanity calls us into a fellowship that is open to the stranger.<sup>224</sup>

As they worship this fragile God, Christians will be challenged to sustain and nourish their friendship in the midst of a community that does not protect them from the stranger. At the very least, they have learned their friendship from Christ, who welcomed children, prostitutes, and Samaritans, and who commands them to do likewise.<sup>225</sup>

The church is not to mirror any one culture as over against other cultures but is instead to learn from different cultures and test what is and is not essential to our life together. It provides a real alternative that critiques all cultures and is co-opted by none of them. The church learns and grows through encounters with the other in different cultures, but without merely reducing diversity to a relativism that accepts all options as valid. It is not a "self-deceptive tolerance" that involves a "melding all differences" but is a universal community of unity in diversity, while giving and receiving mutual critique and offering its own convictions about God and human life under one Lord.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Hauerwas and Pinches, *Christians among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics*, 83-84.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

Moreover, through initiation into such a story I learn to regard others and their difference from me as a gift. Only through their existence do I learn what I am, can, or should be. To be sure, the other's very existence necessarily is a threat to me, reminding me that I could have been different than I am. The truthfulness of the adventure tale is thus partly tested by how it helps me negotiate the existence of the other both as a threat and a gift for the existence of my own story. The necessary existence of the other for my own self is but a reminder that the self is not something we create, but is a gift. Thus we become who we are through the embodiment of the story in the communities in which we are born.<sup>227</sup>

A people of virtue such as Hauerwas describes "are not characterized by an oppressive uniformity. Rather the mark of a truthful community is partly seen in how it enables the diversity of gifts and virtues to flourish."<sup>228</sup> A common assumption is that tradition means conservatism and that the only alternative to yielding to the status quo is "to find a rational basis for social organization which is tradition-free," but a living tradition is open to new possibilities and transformation and is open to strangers and their gifts.<sup>229</sup>

"In Jesus we have met the one who has the authority and power to forgive our fevered search to gain security through deception, coercion, and violence."<sup>230</sup> Following Jesus means learning to accept forgiveness, acknowledging our sin and our vulnerability, which opens us to a receptivity toward the otherness of the other.

But by learning to be forgiven we are enabled to view other lives not as threats but as gifts. Thus in contrast to all societies built on shared resentments and fears, Christian community is formed by a story that enables its members to trust

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<sup>226</sup> Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*, 105-06.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-49.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-27.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

the otherness of the other as the very sign of the forgiving character of God's Kingdom.<sup>231</sup>

Because of a community formed by the story of Christ the world can know what it means to be a society committed to the growth of individual gifts and differences. In a community that has no fear of the truth, the otherness of the other can be welcomed as a gift rather than a threat.<sup>232</sup>

"The most striking social ethical fact about the church is that the story of Jesus provides the basis to break down arbitrary and false boundaries between people."<sup>233</sup> The church's universal, international character is rooted in the fact that "we have a story that teaches us to regard the other as a fellow member of God's Kingdom" and "to see one another as God's people."<sup>234</sup> This is not based on any doctrine of tolerance or equality but on a theological perspective that trains us to "see and condemn the narrow loyalties that create 'the world.'"<sup>235</sup>

#### *Summary on Virtues Theory:*

Virtues theory, for the most part, does not focus on hospitality in particular as a virtue, but what it does offer is an explanation of how the ethical life, ethical decisions, and ethical actions are grounded in the formation of a moral agent embedded in and shaped by a community of social and moral discourse. The notion of an isolated, lone autonomous individual making ethical decisions is an illusion. Individuals are shaped and formed by the communities in which they are embedded, even if sometimes in reaction to the values of those

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

communities. They do not live or make moral decisions in a vacuum. With the possible exception of infants, they are not a *tabula rasa* and cannot really make decisions based on reason alone, as Kant attempted to do. All start from a social location that impacts the framework within which reason operates.

The virtues tradition focuses upon how the moral agent that reasons, decides, and acts in ethical contexts has been and is being shaped and formed. Ethical decisions are made by moral agents who either have or have not been formed in the virtues. Only a just *person* is capable of making just decisions, taking just actions, and forming a just society. This is not to deny that there are social forces and social structures that transcend the actions of individuals and can perpetuate injustice even apart from individual acts of injustice. Nevertheless, it is to join with Stanley Hauerwas in questioning the “assumption that a just polity is possible without the people being just.”<sup>236</sup> In other words, we might say that the formation of just persons is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the creation of a just society, which will additionally require a rigorous and critical social analysis of the causes of injustice. By extension, we might then say, in relation to the question of hospitality to the stranger, the formation of individual persons in the virtue of hospitality is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the creation of a society that is welcoming of strangers—of the immigrant other, which will likewise require a rigorous and critical social analysis, though this can only be undertaken adequately (i.e., in a manner consistent with Christian faith) by persons formed in hospitality as a virtue.

In relation to the theme of this dissertation, Hauerwas (building on MacIntyre’s insights into the narrative formation of identity) adds a consideration of how the moral agent’s

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<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

response to the other is shaped by a story-formed community, and how the narratives of the Christian faith particularly form a more open response to perceive the other as a gift rather than a threat. Yet, MacIntyre would remind us that we are not only formed by our narratives but also by our practices, remembering Aristotle's insight that the virtues are shaped by habit, i.e., by habitual practice of the virtue in question. This converges with the focus of this chapter upon hospitality as a *virtue*. It is not only a question of *demonstrating* hospitality in one's response to the other, offering a welcome to the stranger and receiving that stranger as a gift-bearing equal in whom God is present to us in a transforming way. It is also a question of how the *practice* of hospitality in its biblical and transformational configuration forms moral agents who *do* respond to the other with openness and receptivity. It is through our practices that habits and virtues are formed. Perhaps the formative practice of biblical hospitality can help bridge the disconnect between Christian ideals like love, kindness, mercy, compassion, and indeed the welcome of Jesus in the stranger, on the one hand, and Christian behavior that is often inconsistent with and contradictory of these ideals, on the other.

Indeed, the reconfiguration of the meaning of hospitality in modernity, and its historical distortions—not the least of which is Luther's use of guest-host language as a backdrop for the exclusion of the Jews—render it problematic as a framework for understanding our relationship with the other. Yet, perhaps hospitality as a formative practice and an inculcated virtue can shape in substantive and positive ways our response *to* the other.

### **Formed in the Virtue and through the Practice of Hospitality:**

Perhaps, then, the capacity to welcome the stranger—the immigrant other—requires a moral agent who has been formed in the virtue and through the practice of hospitality in its

ancient and biblical sense (as opposed to its modern distortions). Both Jews and Christians have a biblical and historical heritage of teachings that include the command of God to welcome the stranger—and for Christians the additional teachings and practice of Jesus himself, who insisted that in welcoming the stranger we are welcoming him (Matthew 25:35). (Muslims have a similar heritage of teachings in the Quran, as well as a long history of the practice of hospitality in its Ancient Near Eastern sense within Muslim communities. One can also find parallel teachings and practices in the Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian faith traditions, though built upon different theological, historical, and soteriological foundations.)

However, we have witnessed the devolution of the practice of hospitality in Christian history, beginning with the medieval period; its modern distortion into a friendly but not transformational practice of welcoming friends and others perceived to be like me or to be able to benefit me, as opposed to welcoming the vulnerable and marginalized stranger—the other; and the contradiction between the biblical call to welcome the stranger and the frequent hostility of even Christian people toward the other—the one perceived to be different in some way. Given these realities, it would appear here as in other instances that mere theological and ethical affirmations and principles are insufficient for the task of actually motivating the behavior commanded. They do not adequately orient the mind or direct the will. Likewise, it cannot be assumed that the mere existence of and participation in a Christian community automatically forms Christian virtues, consistent with Christian theological and ethical understanding and proclamation. A primary theological task is to question whether it does in particular cases, places, and contexts and if not, why not.

It has become a cliché to point out the difference between “talking the talk” and “walking the walk” in Christian faith—in other words, the disconnect between the affirmation of Christian moral ideals and actually living them in practice. The virtues tradition would suggest that this disconnect can and must be overcome by being formed in the Christian virtues, supremely in the theological virtue of love. Yet, love of the stranger—of the other, like love of the enemy, is a particular kind or dimension of that virtue that comes with more difficulty than love of family, friends, and those believed to be like oneself. It does not appear to be an infused virtue, as many otherwise very loving Christians have difficulty extending that same love toward the other but instead respond to the other with fear, suspicion, rejection, and often even outright hostility (something that has always bewildered me in my practice of pastoral ministry). Thus, perhaps this kind of love is a virtue that is not infused but requires its own formation process through the cultivation of habit, shaped by faith narratives that embody and communicate this virtue as a truth integral to the Christian life, and formed within a community for which it is an integral practice. In other words, perhaps an openness and receptivity to the other requires a prior formation in the virtue of hospitality. Again, here I am proposing hospitality not necessarily as model for relations between “native” and immigrant, etc., but as a practice that forms a virtue disposing the moral agent toward a particular way of seeing and being and acting in relation to the other.

Christine Pohl, in *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, sees hospitality as a practice that requires developing a lifelong disposition and habit,<sup>237</sup> consistent with the nature of a virtue within the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition. In order to make room

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<sup>237</sup> Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, 172, 75-77.

physically for the stranger, one must make room in one's heart and room for relationship, which requires nurturing habits of hospitality.<sup>238</sup>

Because hospitality is a way of life, it must be cultivated over a lifetime. . . We do not become good at hospitality in an instant; we learn it in small increments of daily faithfulness. . . People for whom hospitality is a disposition and a habit are less afraid of the risks associated with caring for strangers than they are of the possibility of cutting themselves off from the needs of strangers.<sup>239</sup>

"A habit of hospitality is fundamental to our identity as Christians. Our primary call is to live out the gospel; a life-style of hospitality is part of that call."<sup>240</sup> Attitudes of hospitality, while important, do not stand alone but require the formative and transformative influence of actual practices of hospitality in opening one's life, home, family, and church to the other.

Abstract theological reflections on hospitality and welcoming the 'other' are presently popular in some academic and pastoral circles. It is crucial that these discussions include making a physical place in our lives, families, churches, and communities for people who might appear to have little to offer. Hospitable attitudes, even a principled commitment to hospitality, do not challenge us or transform our loyalties in the way that actual hospitality to particular strangers does. Hospitality in the abstract lacks the mundane, troublesome, yet rich dimensions of a profound human practice.<sup>241</sup>

Hospitality, in order to be sustainable, must recognize limits. There are limits to the resources, time, energy, and ability available to address needs. It may not be possible to address all needs. So there is a need for boundaries but at the same time to live in the tension of recognizing boundaries while being as available and responsive as possible.<sup>242</sup> More

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 150-52.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 127-49.

fundamental and important than making space physically for the stranger is making room in our hearts, so that the focus of hospitality is more on relationships than on physical location.<sup>243</sup>

“But hospitality requires both personal and communal commitment, and settings which combine aspects of public and private life.”<sup>244</sup> In other words, hospitality is not the lone act of an autonomous individual but is the act of communities of hospitality surrounding, embracing, and supporting individual practices. Essential practices of hospitality include communicating welcome, offering food and drink, giving guests one’s full and focused attention, offering time to talk and to listen, receiving each person as a human being and not as an embodied need or interruption, reevaluating our priorities, showing people they are valued, a willingness to create time and space for people, allowing guests to share their gifts and insights, celebration, accepting risk to our possessions, showing respect,<sup>245</sup> and orienting guests to a new place.

In summary, a moral virtue is a competence, skill, ability, and character trait cultivated over a lifetime through practice and habit, within a community of social and moral discourse which values that virtue as integral to its life and seeks to inculcate it within its members. The biblical injunction to, and the ancient Jewish and Christian practice of, hospitality toward the stranger—the other—seems to fit the definition of a Judeo-Christian virtue. Christians specifically are formed in this virtue of hospitality through exposure to the *biblical witness* to God’s hospitality and God’s command of hospitality within the covenant community, including Jesus’ teachings and practice; through a *self-identity as strangers* and aliens (Israel as strangers in Egypt and then sojourners in a land that belongs to God/ the Church as strangers and aliens

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 150-52.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 177-82.

sojourning in this world—Hebrews 11:13-16) welcoming other strangers, in acknowledgement of our own need and dependence upon God; through *formative worship* that allows us to experience and participate in God’s greater hospitality and triune life; through the *witness of stories and communities of hospitality*; through being part of a *community of hospitality*—not merely a purportedly Christian community but specifically a community that embodies the practice of hospitality as integral to its life; and through engaging repeatedly in the *practice of hospitality*, including face-to-face, personal contact that transforms both host and guest, shared meals, understanding, acceptance, respect, dignity, the transcending of social boundaries, and recognition of the other as a gift-bearing equal who can teach me as well as learn from me and in whom I mysteriously encounter the God revealed in Scripture and in Christ. Through these means, Christians can be formed in the practice and virtue of hospitality and therefore shaped as moral agents who are able to receive the other as a gift rather than a threat.

One final insight I would mention is that of Luke Bretherton in *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity*. Bretherton describes how the Christian practice of hospitality, grounded in the biblical witness and a long history of Christian tradition, is the best model for how Christians can relate to non-Christians and approach moral issues and disagreements—not conceding our core convictions but at the same time living in a welcoming and hospitable community with non-Christians that, at the level of moral practices, will be mutually transformational. Faithfulness to Christ is the standard and measure for a Christian approach to moral issues, a standard of evaluation that cannot be compromised or accommodated by negotiating truth-claims with non-Christians.

At the same time, at the level of social and moral practice, there will be points of convergence and divergence with the practices of the Church's neighbors, so that there is not a simple rivalry or dualism—no clear moral dividing line between Christians and non-Christians. The Christian criteria of moral evaluation is faithfulness to Christ, but Christians may at times find that the practices of non-Christians are more faithful to Christ, while at other times being able to invite non-Christians to join in our own practices. Just as the ancient Christian practice of hospitality transformed both host and guest, and just as Peter and Cornelius were both transformed through their encounter in Acts 10, so through a Christian approach to moral diversity in their relations with non-Christians on the model of hospitality, they will find that Christians and non-Christians are both transformed in terms of moral practices.<sup>246</sup>

Tolerance is the prevailing approach to moral and religious differences in modern Western democratic societies. Yet, tolerance as a mode of dealing with difference is very limited in its minimal standard of peace-keeping, is fundamentally a commitment to individual autonomy as the supreme good, and does not motivate concern for and engagement in the life of others but leads to silence and inaction, incapacitating social change since it does not admit challenges to others' thinking or actions. An approach to differences that is both more just and more rooted in Christian tradition and theology is the Christian practice of hospitality.<sup>247</sup> Rather than a mere tolerance of diversity, Christ breaks down barriers between races and

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<sup>246</sup> Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity*, 121-51, 96-98.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 147-50.

nations, and the Church preserves a unity that is not based on language or race but is instead “the eschatological unity given by the Spirit at Pentecost.”<sup>248</sup>

Christ’s demand is for hospitality towards the stranger and not, as the principle of toleration allows, mere acceptance or ‘peaceful coexistence.’ Christian hospitality requires the active welcome and making a place for immigrants (whether these immigrants accept Christianity or not) and this hospitality includes the support of public policies that echo Christ’s imperative to make a place for the stranger.<sup>249</sup>

Christians welcome the stranger as representing Christ and as a “witness to the Christ-event, especially the hospitality each sinner receives from God in and through Christ.”<sup>250</sup>

As Bretherton claims, it is faithfulness to Christ that drives the relations not only between Christians and non-Christians but also among Christians of various races, nations, and cultures, shaping how we will receive the other, whether Christian or non-Christian.

Faithfulness to Christ breaks through what Hauerwas would call the idolatrous claims of nations and specific cultures, as none of these can lay claim to ultimacy for Christians, since God in Christ alone can make that claim to be the ultimate and final object of our devotion and commitment. Thus, for Christians, it is faithfulness to Christ (rather than commitment to a culture), including his demand of hospitality to the stranger—to the other, that determines to what extent we will assimilate the immigrant other into our own ways and practices, customs and culture, and to what extent we will accommodate our ways and practices, customs and culture to those of the immigrant other, who comes to us as a gift rather than a threat and comes to teach as well as to learn.

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 148-49.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

## EPILOGUE: THE IMMIGRANT OTHER: A THREAT OR A GIFT?

A primarily theological work such as this one cannot offer *the* answer to the immigration issue or provide a detailed list of policy proposals. Public policy decisions will require a systematic analysis of facts, social and economic ramifications, and other logistical considerations along with theoretical insights. Nonetheless, what is offered here is a framework for discussion, deliberation, and the shaping of a general policy direction that is informed by a biblically-shaped theological perspective on God's purpose for human living and how that purpose should form and inform the mindset and attitudes of Christian people grappling with this issue.

There is near universal agreement that our immigration system is deeply deficient (usually referred to as "broken"), though substantially less agreement about how to fix it. There are obviously real problems related to undocumented migration. Moreover, there are legitimate concerns and disagreements over the details of existing immigration policy and of the various reforms that have been proposed, and there is need for substantive debates over policy directions and details. At the same time, these concerns will be more fruitfully addressed within a framework of, first of all, understanding the context of immigration and what factors drive human migration, and secondly, examining our attitudes toward the "other" and the narratives that guide our response to the other.

Ultimately this issue will not be resolved on a practical, legal, or economic level until it is resolved on a deeper socio-cultural, theological, philosophical, and anthropological level of understandings, attitudes, and values concerning who we are as a people and how we look at human life before God. We cannot, as a society, really get to the practical, "nuts and bolts"

issues raised by immigration, its volume and poverty, legal issues about the undocumented and the rule of law, etc., as long as the discussion is driven by the language of "invasion" and threat to who we are as Americans and to Western civilization. The cultural and yes, racial issues are drowning out the debate over the more pragmatic concerns.

Immigration of persons from the less economically developed to the more economically developed countries is a reality driven by the forces of globalization and the integration of markets in free trade agreements. It will not stop until there is a relative equity in economic development, job opportunities, wages, etc., among all the nations. These trends cannot be controlled or stopped by border security measures, at least not without spending *massive* amounts of tax dollars on personnel to patrol every inch of the border, and the reality is that with a huge national debt and no national inclination to significantly raise additional tax revenue, the money to do so is not there. A comprehensive approach to immigration policy that does not focus on border security only might be able to bring some order and stability to the flow of immigrants into the United States, but we will not realistically be able to cut that flow off altogether, or even reduce it significantly, until economic realities in both the United States and Latin American countries change, not to mention the violence in some of these countries that forces people to migrate.

The presence of the immigrant other is a given. The question is, how do we respond to that other? What narratives shape and form our beliefs, attitudes, and actions toward the strangers sojourning in our midst? Is our response to the other driven by a narrative of threat, invasion, doom, and destruction—a narrative that sees at stake the end of the United States and of Western civilization as we know them? Or is our collective life shaped by different

narratives—narratives that do not see the otherness of the other as a threat to our own identity? I have proposed a number of narratives from the Christian faith that run counter to the narratives of threat and dissolution and open us up to a different response to the other. All of these narratives are expressions and embodiments of God's *agape*—God's self-giving, sacrificial, unconditional love that seeks the total well-being (*shalom*) of all of God's creation, not the least of which includes the whole of humanity as beings created in the image of God.

One of these narratives is that of God's purpose of reconciling the whole world. God is at work to restore all people to a right relationship not only with God but also with one another and with the creation. As God reconciles us, God also gives us the message and the ministry of reconciliation, so that we are to likewise be about the work of restoring all human relationships to a state of harmony. God seeks to restore harmony and wholeness to the entire created order, breaking down dividing walls of hostility and creating one new humanity. This is a narrative of inclusion rather than exclusion, of harmony rather than division.

Another narrative is that of a God who takes sides with the poor and the marginalized, who are the privileged locus for knowing and relating to the God proclaimed by the Hebrew prophets and revealed in Jesus of Nazareth. In the face of the poor we see the face of Christ. We come to know God through God's self-revelation especially among the poor. The immigrant other, to a substantial degree, is certainly among the poor and the marginalized and thus grants us access to the God revealed in Scripture. To cut ourselves off from the immigrant other is to cut ourselves off from God. To welcome the stranger is to welcome Jesus.

That, then, leads us to the familiar narrative of the biblical call and commandment to welcome the stranger. This is a theme that runs throughout the Bible, and there has been a

longstanding history of Christians' practice and virtue of hospitality (though hospitality, in the medieval and especially the modern period, has substantially been corrupted into something other than its historic nature and practice). With hospitality in its biblical and early Christian expressions, in the relationship between host and guest, both are changed, God is made present, and the gifts the other brings are received. The formative practice of hospitality, as originally conceived, can open us to the other and create a climate of welcome rather than exclusion.

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So where do we go from here? How might we implement a more constructive dialogue about immigration that is not driven by a narrative of "threat" and "invasion," and what might that dialogue look like in practice? One point that needs to be made is that changing from an old narrative of threat to a new narrative of gift and promise will not happen on the strength of arguments alone. I have sought to make my contribution here in argumentation and reconceptualization of the immigrant as "other," but certainly any meaningful progress in breaking down barriers and breaking through the narrative of immigrants as a threat to our identity will require bringing immigrants and non-immigrants together in positive, face-to-face encounters.

This could include various kinds of church and community events that bring immigrants and non-immigrants together, both educational events and opportunities to simply have fun together. It could also include, on the one hand, organizing mission projects by non-immigrants in immigrant communities, and on the other hand, organizing community service projects by immigrants in non-immigrant communities. Recalling that the actual practice of biblical and

early Christian hospitality is transformational for both host and guest and is most effective at the point of intersection between public and private spheres, church and community events where social roles and distinctions are relativized, such as, for example, community meals that bring immigrants and non-immigrants together around the same table on a regular basis, including reversing the roles of host and guest by alternating which group prepares and hosts the meal, would provide additional opportunities for barrier-breaking as well as cultural enrichment.

Of course, some educating needs to take place. There is a need for educational events about immigrants themselves and about the realities of the immigration process. Many who are concerned about immigrants entering the country illegally rather than following the legal process have no awareness of the long and convoluted processes involved in immigrating to the United States, which can take up to twenty years or more, or the fact that most who do come illegally do not qualify at all for any legal avenue of immigrating. Also beneficial would be moderated forums like one in which I participated at Auburn University several years ago, wherein people with a diversity of perspectives on and involvement with immigration issues are brought together for a respectful and civil conversation about these issues rather than a shouting match of hostile rhetoric. Such conversations are especially needed in border communities, where many of the problems and the negative side of immigration are experienced most intensely. And there is a need for two-way conversations between the immigrant and non-immigrant communities. This could include "town hall meetings" where immigrants and non-immigrants can talk to each other and listen to each other's concerns, with

the presence of bilingual interpreters and with strong ground rules about respectful conversation.

In terms of the more practical matters of debating immigration policy, it would be most helpful to start by eliminating inflammatory language of "invasion" and such from these debates, in order to refocus on substantive issues. It would also be helpful to include immigrants themselves in the policy debates--to give them the political voice that they currently do not have. I would certainly advocate a comprehensive approach to immigration reform that includes not only issues of border security and unlawful presence but also opening up more legal avenues for unskilled or low-skilled workers to immigrate, commensurate with the realities of the job market and our economy's need for their labor, and a path to earned legalization (including eventual permanent residency and citizenship) for the undocumented who have been in the United States for several years without getting into any legal trouble other than their unlawful presence itself, among other issues. And given the counterproductive nature and the excessive cost of substantially increasing the militarization of the border, as discussed in Chapter 1, along with the injustice of penalizing the immigrants who are merely trying to earn a living but not the employers who hire them, to say nothing of the cost and impracticality of attempting to deport 11 or 12 million undocumented immigrants, perhaps a more effective and just way to reduce the number of immigrants here unlawfully is to put the onus on the employers who hire persons without legal work authorization rather than on the immigrants themselves, since it is job opportunities (and even active recruitment by industries) that draw undocumented immigrants to the United States in the first place. Unfortunately,

undocumented immigrants who have no political voice are a much easier target politically than are employers who both vote and contribute to political campaigns.

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Is the immigrant other a threat—a threat to our national unity and identity—a threat to the survival of the United States and Western civilization? Or is that other a gift that enlarges who we are rather than diminishing or destroying our identity—expanding our horizons, enabling us to see possibilities we never saw before, enabling us to see God more clearly, enabling us to see ourselves more truly? Until we answer that fundamental question, we are “spinning our wheels in the mud” trying to shape a coherent immigration policy within a context that is hostile to the very process.

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