

for example. Catholic social *teaching* contains both the doctrines and their application to specific circumstances—judgments about whether or not the principles are being violated and about the efficacy of certain policies in bringing about justice.

Pistone and Hoeffner do not wish to change Catholic social *doctrine*, but they do want to change Catholic social *teaching*, and they take pains to make the distinction clear. They have convinced me that skilled migration is a great benefit to sending countries, but I do not want the Church to start teaching this contingent fact as part of Catholic social teaching.

What Pistone and Hoeffner call Catholic social doctrine—the foundational principles—I would call Catholic social teaching. I am loath to call empirical judgments about the effects of emigration and prudential judgments about government policies toward migration Catholic teaching at all. The church should teach about emigration, welfare reform, and a host of other public policy questions in only the most contingent, qualified way.

Of course, bishops cannot teach the principles of social doctrine without making some gestures toward application. However, Catholics of good will, who are equally committed to Catholic social doctrine, can and will disagree about empirical facts and about the most effective policies. Should their disagreement be cast as disagreement with Catholic teaching? More importantly, bishops and popes can be wrong about the “facts on the ground” of social policy. After all, they were wrong to think that the brain drain was harmful to sending countries, as Pistone and Hoeffner have demonstrated.

The broad construal of Catholic social teaching to include its application implies that the legitimate episcopal charism to teach inspires contestable empirical judgments and prudential implementation. Those who disagree with the bishops on the application may call into question the validity of the Catholic principles themselves. I interpret the message of this book as a caution to bishops on the advisability of branding particular policy positions as Catholic.

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Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible

M. Daniel Carroll R.

Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008 (176 pages)

The author of *Christians at the Border* is an Old Testament scholar who is a bicultural American (born of a Guatemalan mother and American father). His goal is to address the issue of immigration from the perspective of Christian theology. He observes that economic and political ideologies presently dominate the discussion.

Latino immigration to the United States is not a recent phenomenon. The Southwest was Spanish territory until 1848. While there was always movement across the Mexican–U.S. border, a major influx of Latinos occurred after 1882 when the Chinese Exclusion Act

barred migrant labor from that nation. Most immigrants left their native lands in pursuit of jobs. In turn, U.S. immigration policies attempted to establish limits on the number of laborers permitted.

Many Americans see immigrants as a threat. They believe that Hispanics are not assimilating into American culture and are taking away jobs. Carroll addresses these concerns but wants to press on to a theological understanding of the issue.

Turning to the Old Testament, Carroll emphasizes the common human nature of all peoples. He shows that there are numerous examples of immigration in Scripture, some motivated by economic need, others due to deportation, the desire to escape from persecution, or the attempt to return from exile. Carroll finds that the principles behind Old Testament laws that welcomed strangers and sojourners and enabled them to participate in the life of Israel are applicable today. In particular, he notes that in Old Testament times there were many kinds of sojourners who lived in Israel for many reasons and that Israel itself was at one time a sojourner nation. The presence of sojourners in Israel was not a threat to its identity but a reminder of it.

In the New Testament as well as the Old, the virtue of hospitality is praised. The holy family found refuge in Egypt, later returning to Israel. Jesus demonstrated hospitality toward the Samaritan woman at the well and praised the Good Samaritan as a model, even though Jews loathed the “foreign” Samaritans. Carroll asks whether current Hispanic immigrants, most of whom are Catholic, might not be among “the least of these my brethren” referred to in Matthew 25. He notes that in the book of 1 Peter Christians are described as strangers and aliens and suggests that this may refer not only to the fact that our final home is heaven but that Christian culture and morality are alien to contemporary society.

Finally, Carroll addresses the question of legality. For some, the very title *illegal alien* terminates the debate—the illegal should not be. Carroll notes how much immigration laws have changed and questions whether the ones currently in effect match up with the Christian ethic he has just articulated. Carroll finally summons his readers to cross the boundary between faith and immigration, insisting that this movement need occur among all Christians who are playing roles in the debate.

Written in clear, accessible language, this book will help many who wish to relate their faith to the issue of immigration. Hispanic migrants are in fact fellow image bearers of God, and often co-religionists who have a claim on our hospitality. By giving priority to theology over legality, Carroll repositions the matter where it can be held to the light of Scripture rather than descending to the darkness of political or economic power struggles. What Carroll leaves unaddressed are the ways and means by which his theological insights can be handled in the political realm. Nonetheless, by showing that theological assumptions are prior to and of greater importance than political-economic pushing and pulling, he has taken a long step forward in reframing the issue in such a way that it might align with Christian ideals.

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