History of the Integration of Religion and Society

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March 10, 2025

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**Semaj, you provide a nice thesis at the end of your opening paragraph to guide your essay: “This essay explores the biblical and theological foundations for a compassionate approach to immigration, traces its historical evolution alongside Christianity’s social impact, presents examples of faith‐based advocacy, and concludes with timeless principles for applying these values in today’s policy debates.”**

**Note a few suggestions by section....**

**Biblical Worldview and Theological Foundations: Augustine makes a good point “the history of Exodus and the wandering in the wilderness establish migration as both a physical journey and a metaphor for spiritual transformation.” Summarize a little more of Augustine’s argument to provide more support an clarity for your case.**

**Historical Development and Social Impact: This section would be an important section to at least acknowledge the opposing position that reacts to illegal immigration or even legal immigration for reasons that can be countered. This will strengthen your case.**

**Examples of Religion and Society Integration: Consider expanding the discussion of historical figures beyond one sentence to develop your illustrations and better substantiate your argument. Consider adding additional details to help frame the issue and contextualize it to the topic of immigration advocacy. Consider multiple perspectives, both additive and variant, to help develop the idea a bit more. Here is a good sentence at the end of the section providing specific actions that express the advocacy you are making a case for, “By offering tangible support, ranging from legal aid and community integration programs to public protests and policy advocacy, these leaders remind society that immigration reform is not solely a legal matter but a moral imperative rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition.”**

**This nice 3 ½ page essay could use more development into a 5-page essay with more elaboration of its argument in its middle sections. Your topic is a good controversial topic for the COM 822 Persuasive Communication course in Sub-Term B of Core 2. You don’t present until Core 4, and it turns into a 10-page paper to be read before a faculty panel and receive feedback. If you develop this topic into a persuasive essay for COM 822, consider balancing pro-immigration sources with at least enough opposing sources to fairly present both sides of the debate. Then you will need to provide a rebuttal of the position you disagree with, but that's just persuasive papers are for, to teach making a case for causes to change the world!**

**Timeless Principles and Contemporary Applications: The final section on principles is nicely written to summarize your case and clearly lists principles in an easy to identify sequence: first, second, third….**

**Nice ending with a personal contextualization of how the research has inspired your sense of mission to integrate religion and society through advocating immigration policies that reflect enduring faith-based values.**

**Note the APA corrections to your Works Cited formatting. Here are a few principles: Article titles are to be in sentence case and Journal Titles and Volume #s are italicized. When citing an online web article, like the one from sharedjustice.org, make sure to identify the correct author name and article title in the Works Cited list.**

**Include a Works Cited reference for the translation of the Bible which you were citing, for example, English Standard Version Bible (2001). Crossway Publishers. Then include it in your in-text citations: (English Standard Version Bible, 2001, Matthew 25:35).**

**Good job, Semaj. -- Dr. David Ward**

**Immigration Reform and the Judeo–Christian Tradition: Biblical Foundations, Historical Impact, and Contemporary Application**

Immigration remains one of the most persistent social challenges in the United States. While political debates often focus on legal and economic dimensions, a review of the Judeo–Christian tradition reveals a deep, historically rooted commitment to welcoming the stranger. Biblical narratives, from the command in Leviticus, to “love the stranger” (Leviticus 19:33–34) to Jesus’s identification with the migrant (Matthew 25:35) provide a robust ethical framework. This essay explores the biblical and theological foundations for a compassionate approach to immigration, traces its historical evolution alongside Christianity’s social impact, presents examples of faith‐based advocacy, and concludes with timeless principles for applying these values in today’s policy debates.

**Biblical Worldview and Theological Foundations**

The biblical mandate to welcome foreigners is a core Jewish and Christian scripture tenet. Leviticus 19:33–34 instructs the Israelites to treat the resident alien with the same care as a native, reminding them of their migrant history (McCormick, 2005). In the New Testament, Jesus’s words in Matthew 25:35, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” further reinforce that care for the migrant is tantamount to serving Christ himself (Augustine, 2012). The principle of imago Dei, the idea that every human being is created in God’s image, undergirds this ethical vision by asserting that all people deserve dignity and respect regardless of their national origin (Blandon, 2020).

In addition, biblical narratives frame migration as integral to the human story. Augustine (2012) argues that the history of Exodus and the wandering in the wilderness establish migration as both a physical journey and a metaphor for spiritual transformation. This theological perspective challenges exclusionary practices by urging communities to mirror the inclusive, transformative love that the scriptures command. As such, contemporary faith leaders are called to shape public policy in ways that echo these timeless biblical values (Kerwin, 2020).

**Historical Development and Social Impact**

Historically, Christianity has actively engaged with immigration issues. The 1980s witnessed the rise of the Sanctuary Movement, a faith‐based initiative that provided refuge to Central American refugees fleeing civil conflict. Brewster (2021) documents how congregations used biblical imperatives to challenge restrictive federal policies, thereby influencing the passage of significant reform legislation such as the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. This movement underscored the church’s role not only as a provider of immediate humanitarian relief but also as an advocate for systemic change (Litman, 2021).

Over time, the church’s involvement with immigration has continued to evolve. Tal (2023) notes that during periods of rapid demographic change, religious communities have both supported and critiqued federal policies, demonstrating that the Judeo-Christian tradition offers a dual mandate of compassion and justice. Such historical engagement has paved the way for contemporary debates in which faith‐based organizations call for policies that secure legal pathways to citizenship while also protecting the dignity of immigrants (Litman, 2021).

**Examples of Religion and Society Integration**

Faith leaders have often exemplified the integration of religious principles with social activism. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, for instance, emerged in the 1900s as a key figure by providing direct support, lifelong pacifism, and legal advocacy to refugees (Van Ham, 2009). More recently, leaders such as Rev. Deborah Lee in the Bay Area has continued this legacy by organizing interfaith sanctuary efforts and opposing policies they deem dehumanizing (Haede, 2018). These examples illustrate how religious communities have not only offered shelter to those in need but have also worked to transform public discourse by linking biblical teachings with contemporary social justice imperatives (Kerwin, 2020).

Such leadership is critical in countering exclusionary narratives. As Blandon (2020) explains, when religious leaders ground their advocacy in the call to “love the stranger,” they provide communities with a vision of inclusion that transcends political partisanship. By offering tangible support, ranging from legal aid and community integration programs to public protests and policy advocacy, these leaders remind society that immigration reform is not solely a legal matter but a moral imperative rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

**Timeless Principles and Contemporary Applications**

From the synthesis of biblical teaching and historical experience emerge several enduring principles. First, the scriptural call to “love the stranger” mandates that societies honor the dignity of all persons. This principle compels policymakers to design immigration systems that ensure humane treatment and facilitate integration (Blandon, 2020). Second, the transformative narrative of migration, viewed as both a physical journey and a spiritual odyssey suggests that welcoming immigrants enriches society by diversifying its cultural and intellectual life (Augustine, 2012). Third, the church’s historical role as an advocate for the marginalized underscores the necessity for faith communities to engage actively in the public sphere, ensuring that policies align with both moral imperatives and legal justice (Litman, 2021).

Contemporary debates on immigration reform reflect these principles. Progressive religious organizations are increasingly advocating for policies that provide legal pathways to citizenship, protect refugee rights, and allocate resources to integrate immigrants (Tal, 2023). By mobilizing community support and leveraging interfaith partnerships, these organizations work to counter restrictive policies that often ignore the humanitarian and ethical dimensions of immigration. In doing so, they echo the biblical injunction to treat every stranger with dignity, a vision that can potentially transform public policy and community life (Ben-Dan, 2023).

**Conclusion**

The Judeo–Christian tradition offers a profound ethical framework for addressing contemporary immigration challenges. Biblical mandates to love and welcome the stranger, along with a historical legacy of faith‐based advocacy, underscore that immigration reform is not merely a political issue but a moral and theological imperative. By drawing on authentic scriptural and historical sources, faith leaders and communities continue to demonstrate that true integration arises when societies honor the inherent dignity of every human being. This research deepens the writer’s commitment to challenging exclusionary practices and reinforces a personal calling to advocate for policies that reflect the enduring values of compassion, justice, and inclusion.

**Works Cited**

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