

Stand Up and Bless the Lord*James Montgomery (1771–1854)*

Stand up and bless the Lord,
ye people of His choice;
stand up and bless the Lord your God
with heart and soul and voice.

Though high above all praise,
above all blessing high,
who would not fear His holy name
and laud and magnify?

O for the living flame
from His own altar brought,
to touch our lips, our minds inspire,
and wing to heav'n our thought!

There, with benign regard,
our hymns He deigns to hear;
tho' unrevealed to mortal sense,
the spirit feels Him near.

God is our strength and song,
and His salvation ours;
then be His love in Christ proclaimed
with all our ransomed pow'rs.

Stand up and bless the Lord;
the Lord your God adore;
stand up and bless His glorious name
henceforth and evermore.



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ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***Thinking About Immigration***Kevin T. Bauder*

The immigration policies and procedures of the United States are a mess. Anyone who has had to deal with the department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement knows that this agency is unpredictable to the point of seeming arbitrary. It sometimes feels like a Third World agency, except that bribery cannot solve the problems. Legal visitors and immigrants face inexplicable obstacles, while we simultaneously face an illegal immigrant population of somewhere north of ten million people.

When Democrats are in office, Republicans like to blame them for the “immigration crisis.” The fact is, however, that Republicans have done no better than Democrats at solving this problem. I suspect that it cannot be solved without an overall reconstruction of ICE, its policies, and its procedures.

The problem is exacerbated, however, by those on the Left who appear to favor completely open borders. Armed with silly slogans like, “No human is illegal,” these folk appear to want the USA simply to capitulate to anyone who cares to cross the border. Such a philosophy, however, would prove highly destructive.

The USA has an interest in keeping terrorists and criminals on the other side of the border. There have been constant rumors of some countries emptying their jails and sending their convicts onto American soil. Certainly we have seen horrifying instances of illegal immigrants committing horrifying crimes.

This is not to say that all immigrants are criminals—far from it! Nevertheless, by definition, those who enter the USA in violation of immigration laws are guilty of a misdemeanor under the criminal code. Those who simply outstay their visas or remain for other reasons are also in violation of the law, but the penalties are civil rather than criminal in nature.

Too Left Evangelicals assume that the Old Testament required Israel to welcome all immigrants and to treat them on an equal basis. This is not true. The law and prophets recognize a distinction between a *ger* (a resident alien who obtains permission to live in the land) and a *nekhlar* or *zar*, who are foreigners who simply show up, not really intending to put down roots. These

categories are treated differently, with different privileges and protections. All are required to submit to Israel's law while in the land. But Israel did not welcome the Philistines when they showed up as unwelcome invaders, nor did Israel welcome invasion from other groups. It is not unreasonable to suggest that an illegal immigrant is really an invader.

There is no easy solution to the problem of burgeoning and often illegal immigration, but several changes might help to redefine this problem. First, we should recognize that immigration is not the problem. Indeed, as the USA approaches a demographic cliff, immigration is part of the solution to other problems. We ought to welcome immigrants who are qualified to contribute to our society, and we should also be committed to helping others reach a point at which they can contribute. Let me say it again: immigration in itself is not a problem—it is a solution. Republicans in particular ought to push for ways to expand the number of qualified, legal immigrants who enter the country.

Second, to open the door to these legal immigrants, we need to revise the culture and procedures of ICE. There need to be more officials who hear immigration cases, and they should be trained in a welcoming perspective. Granted, background checks still need to be done—but these are being done already. Yet in some cases it takes years before an immigrant (whether legal or illegal) can actually get a hearing, and the amount of red tape to enter the country legally is truly appalling.

Third, we need structures to help integrate immigrants into American civilization. Citizenship should be a goal for all immigrants, and one of the duties of immigrants should be to complete courses in American civics (and I don't mean the kind of courses that Critical Theorists would like to offer). There may be room for voluntary organizations to take over some of this task. We need to look actively for ways to prevent immigrants from simply reproducing the cultures of their home countries within the USA. It's fine if they want to keep their language and customs, but they must at least be willing to contribute to the larger orbit of the civilization around them.

Fourth, while holding the door wide open for legal immigration, we need to slam it shut on the illegal variety. The Border Patrol should be enhanced, and state and local law enforcement should be empowered to enforce immigration laws. I can understand why an immigrant would become frustrated with the present situation, and why that person might try to circumvent an arbitrary and unwieldy process. If we streamline the process, however, we may rightly insist that only legal immigrants will be allowed to stay, unto the third and fourth generations.

I recognize that the foregoing is not a developed, careful policy recommendation. It is not meant to be. It is intended as a series of generalized ideas to try to move us past the present crisis. Both parties—all American citizens—

have an interest in solving the problem of immigration. If you don't think that these proposals will work, feel free to suggest your own. But we have reached the point at which we need to do more than simply complain about the problem.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
