

HOSPITALITY TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS AND THE BORDER SECURITY CRISIS

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ABSTRACT: Hospitality Towards Immigrants and the Border Security Crisis.

To discuss hospitality towards strangers is a useful and useful exercise if we want a social construction as close as possible to what is happening in contemporary society. There is a temptation for the subject to be used by various players on the social and political scene for their own interests and not for the good of the subjects raised. History has witnessed many situations where people have acted with hidden interests and therefore there is a need for an open and honest dialogue on the subject so that in the end the outcome is translated into useful actions for those in difficult situations. The national interest must not lead to blindness towards those who need help, and this is because the situation can be reversed and at some point the one who was in the situation of being a host may end up needing to be welcomed as a guest. In this context, the biblical saying, 'whatever you would have people do to you, do to them' is highly topical and directly applicable.

Keywords: *hospitality, imigrant, identity, cosmopolitanism, borders.*

Introducere

Society, as it is encountered and seen today, has had, and still has, a path of many turbulences and interactions between different nations and those who came to their land. In this article the subject of hospitality towards the stranger and how it could generate different crises related to the borders of states will be discussed. The topic under consideration is of no small importance when analysing the socio-political context in which today's societies develop and the rise of populist parties in many European Union countries.

This will be done through a remote dialogue between Richard B. Miller and Nigel Biggar, two authors with different approaches to hospitality for immigrants. First, the existence of borders will be analysed, which in both authors starts from the concept of Creator-creation, but which is seen from different angles. Then, the motivation why borders should be open will be discussed, a motivation that must be linked to the manifestation of love, but which each of the two authors sees according to their own perspective. Afterwards, attention will be given to the common good, which one of the authors sees as starting from the general to the particular (the pursuit of the good of all will generate the individual good), while the other author sees it as starting from the particular to the general (the pursuit of the individual good will generate the common good) and accepting the limited capacity to help others, but also multiplying this joint effort. The right to property and how it affects the relationship with the other will then be discussed. On the one hand it is seen as a hindrance to the development of the disadvantaged, and on the other hand it is seen as a vehicle for empowering people to manage what they own. The following will look at loyalty to a community, an attachment which can degenerate into national idolatry and lead to intolerance of what is foreign and different, or which can be seen as the normal and correct reaction of one who has benefited from what has happened in the community to which he belongs. Finally, the argument of colonialism, which often implied forced hospitality and demanded a benevolent attitude on the part of colonised countries, will be seen in history. Yes, history cannot be changed, but many lessons can be learned from it that can be used in approaching discussions about defending national borders.

Hospitality to the stranger a dialogue between Richard B. Miller and Nigel Biggar

The issue of migration is one that has affected and continues to affect many lives since ancient times, and one that has been discussed in various contexts. In the book *Christian Political Ethics*, author John A. Coleman offers the perspectives of various authors on the attitude of hospitality towards strangers and what the basis for this should be. Of these, Richard B. Miller and Nigel Biggar propose two approaches that are in divergent positions.

By questioning the existence of borders and thus the existence of different states, the two start from the same point, the concept of creation, but propose different emphases. Richard Miller, appealing to the Christian tradition, says that „the way Christians evaluate territorial boundaries depends largely on how they conceive of the boundary that distinguishes creation from its Creator... Traditionally, God and creation have been understood as ontologically different, constituting different orders of existence”¹, and Miller does not disagree with this statement, but when he applies it to the concept of boundary he states that „one of the measures of an individual’s relationship to God is how he relates to his neighbor. The love of God and the love of neighbor, though different are not irrelevant to or independent of each other.”² In this way he further emphasizes the immanence of God and tries to show that the way in which love of God can be seen is through its manifestation in relation to one’s neighbor, and that to fail to love one’s neighbor is equivalent to failing to love God, so that the existence of boundaries is not justified by the Creator-creation relationship. On the other hand, Nigel Biggar made the following statement: „Christians should base their view of the nation on their understanding of the human being as a creature. This implies a clear distinction from God’s universal and eternal being and taking his historicity seriously - it implies a limitation in time and space.”³

With this statement, Biggar emphasizes the transcendence of God and the limitation and dependence of man on time and space. It is true that God is different man and this aspect will never change, but God is not absent in creation but involved in it and these things must be kept in balance.

Continuing his argument in this direction of creation, Biggar states that

I would agree that all men share the common status of children of God, who are indebted by the gift of secular existence and who need the gift of forgiveness and eternal life. I would also agree that we were

1 Richard B. Miller, “Christian Attitudes toward Boundaries: Metaphysical and Geographical,” in *Christian Political Ethics*, ed. John A. Coleman, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 67–91.

2 Ibid.

3 Nigel Biggar, “The Value of Limited Loyalty: Christianity, the Nation, and Territorial Boundaries,” in *Christian Political Ethics*, ed. John A. Coleman, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 92–110.

all created in the „image of God” and therefore made worthy by our responsibility to care for the rest of the created world, and that each of us must play a unique place in God’s Great Design to bring the created world to fulfillment⁴

By this he is trying to show that there should be a certain openness to all people as a result of the fact that they were created by God in His image, but he loses sight of the fact that in the strict sense of the phrase not all people are children of God, according to New Testament teaching. The bond of sonship is not naturally by way of the quality of creation, but it is valid at this time for those who enter into this bond through what the Bible calls birth from the new or from above. Then the idea that God’s great plan is to bring the created world to fulfilment is vaguely formulated, and the Bible text has in mind rather a spiritual fulfilment.

In the continuation of the long-distance dialogue between the two authors, the motivation behind a total opening of borders to foreigners is discussed. Related to this Richard Miller writes that “how Christians should view territorial borders is a function of how affection or love is demanded (...)at the same time, Christianity demands a non-discriminatory and unconditional love for others, regardless of political, social or national affiliation.”⁵

Thus, no conditioning can be attached to Christian love, and this motivation should automatically lead to an attitude of rejection of state borders, which create obstacles to expressing love to one’s neighbour far away. No doubt Miller has in mind the principle of love as a motivating force in relating to others, but he seems to ignore the fact that this does not happen in an isolated space, but in one that is based on many connections. Nigel Biggar, on the other hand, disagrees with such an approach and states that

this assertion of a type of national loyalty in terms of the Christian concept of the human being in its creaturely state may at first seem surprising. Doesn’t Christianity therefore teach that people should love each other indiscriminately and unconditionally; and wouldn’t this im-

4 Ibid.

5 Richard B. Miller, “Christian Attitudes toward Boundaries: Metaphysical and Geographical,” in *Christian Political Ethics*, ed. John A. Coleman, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 67–91.

ply a transcendence of all particular forms of “natural” loyalty such as to family, ethnic community and nation:⁶

He agrees that a cursory glance at some texts in the Bible or some theological views on how love is viewed can create the impression that love for a particular group of people is disfavored, but in reality the love that man gives to those to whom he has done good is an undeniable fact. The capacity to love is conditioned by the connections that man has within a community and this cannot be denied or replaced by some connections with strangers, without, however, eliminating the benevolent attitude towards them. For Biggar, love is best manifested in already established relationships rather than ones that could be established. He agrees that love of a natural community is outweighed by love of God, but the latter will only lead to the negation of the former in well-established cases where the principles of life imposed by God are neglected in the community.

In this vein Richard Miller states that

Boundaries in Christianity help define a hierarchy that distinguishes between absolute and relative good. God, the eternal and unchanging good, is the only object of unchanging loyalty. All other relationships must be shaped by an understanding of how temporal, created reality is based on and remains subordinate to the immutable good⁷

In doing so, he tries to oversimplify the complexity of the relationships in which man is caught up and does not take into account that it is God who demands exclusivity, but by introducing relationships to the family, at least, into those that define the relationship with Him, God does not demand the abolition of any kind of boundary and loyalty, but their introduction into the way in which through them loyalty to Him can be seen. Analyzing the views of the two, it can be concluded that man must be loyal to God in the first place, but this will be seen primarily through care for those with whom he is in close relations, without thereby eliminating care for his neighbor.

6 Nigel Biggar, “The Value of Limited Loyalty: Christianity, the Nation, and Territorial Boundaries,” in *Christian Political Ethics*, ed. John A. Coleman, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 92–110.

7 Richard B. Miller, “Christian Attitudes toward Boundaries: Metaphysical and Geographical,” in *Christian Political Ethics*, ed. John A. Coleman, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 67–91.

Another area of discussion is how to achieve what they call the common good. Each of the two authors are concerned with this idea of the common good and the fact that there must be a concern on the part of humanity for it, but they propose different ways of achieving the common good. Richard Miller proposes a general to particular approach, stating that “Christians are sometimes suspicious of worldly goods and are careful to address the substantive issues of just distribution.”⁸ By this he assumes that people should regard the common good above the individual good, and that the right distribution of goods will help to bring about that state of good which is useful to all in that if it is good for all it follows that it is good for each individual. He also proposes that man should have an attitude of suspicion towards the possession of goods in this world, making a direct connection between the possession of goods and the attitude towards them. For his part, Nigel Biggar proposes an individual-to-individual approach and states that “created human beings are bound to serve the common good; but being creatures, their power of service is limited. No human endeavour, individual or collective, has the power to secure the maximum good of all people.”⁹ In saying this he wants to show the limits of man created to be able to deal with all problems, but if each individual can achieve what is good, the common good will be achieved. To this end “each of us must choose to do what we can do, and what we ought to do, to advance certain dimensions of the good of some, trusting that God will co-ordinate our small contributions and guide their unpredictable effects for the common good of all.”¹⁰ Biggar thus points out that man’s limitation in time and space is a conditioning from which he cannot escape, but through God’s way of working, what each individual does where he is can lead to the achievement of the common good. Thus, through the individual good of each person the good of all can be achieved. Looking at the two views expressed one can conclude that the common good is more easily achieved when each person does something, however little, in this direction and relies on God as the one who can arrange all things so that the good of all is achieved.

8 Ibid.

9 Nigel Biggar, “The Value of Limited Loyalty: Christianity, the Nation, and Territorial Boundaries,” in *Christian Political Ethics*, ed. John A. Coleman, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 92–110.

10 Ibid.

Another topic is the right to property, which is directly related to the existence of borders. Often, these borders are not physically materialised by something specific, but are conventions established between neighbours which they undertake to respect. From Richard Miller's perspective the right to property is about how it affects the poor. One who accumulates too much will affect the life of the one who cannot go in the same direction.¹¹ Miller suggests that the right to property was established by boundaries that did not have the common interest of all in mind, but were circumstantially established so that "although boundaries may serve as a general human function, their exact drawing took place in specific social and historical circumstances. Providing a social contour to civic life, boundaries are the fruit of contingency and political constraint, without being devoid of self-interest."¹² Even if the borders have been decided in such conditions, this does not imply that there should be a continuous struggle to abolish them, nor that if they did not exist, those within them would be better off. For Nigel Biggar, the right to property is not an absolute truth, i.e. "it does not give the right to do with resources whatever he likes, but only to manage them responsibly; and where resources exceed needs, he has a duty to provide them for the good of others - for the good of refugees, for example, or as donations to foreign countries."¹³ For Biggar, the right to property is a way of empowering people, not differentiating between them, and should be used for the good of others when it gives people more than they need. So the right to property should not give privileged status to owners, but should empower them on how to use it for the benefit of others.

A final issue is the question of loyalty to a community or nation. Richard Miller puts it this way: 'A critical question for Christians is whether membership in and loyalty to this kind of community becomes an object of ultimate value. Temporary communities demand dedication from

11 For Miller, the command given to the rich young man in the New Testament story to sell all that he has and share it with the poor is not about the young man's attitude to wealth but about his responsibility to the poor.

12 Richard B. Miller, "Christian Attitudes toward Boundaries: Metaphysical and Geographical," in *Christian Political Ethics*, ed. John A. Coleman, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 67–91.

13 Nigel Biggar, "The Value of Limited Loyalty: Christianity, the Nation, and Territorial Boundaries," in *Christian Political Ethics*, ed. John A. Coleman, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 92–110.

their citizens; the danger of idolatry is not remote.”¹⁴ For Miller, loyalty to a community, when ascribed a unit of value, can lead to idolatry because it can gain prominence in the human heart. The danger associated with this is that “idolatry can bring intolerance of differences, an attitude of superiority towards members of another community”¹⁵, but for Miller idolatry is not associated with dedication to God, but with dedication to the stranger and intolerance of other people’s differences. When referring to this issue, Nigel Biggar states, “the Christian concept of the created human being (...) should lead Christians to recognize the validity of natural loyalty to those communities (including nations) into which one was born and raised.”¹⁶ For him this kind of loyalty is the normal attitude of one who has enjoyed the benefits of belonging to such a community, and not a reality that cannot be changed over time, and this is because, in his view, “boundaries should not be regarded as immutable, for they can be as changeable as a national constitution”¹⁷ and this, given the changes in the UK following a national referendum, are not intangible targets, but neither are they ones to be subject to the disposition of whoever is in power.

Before concluding this comparison between Richard Miller and Nigel Biggar, the following should be added. When it comes to the hospitality that a nation shows to strangers, who should set the rules? The visitor or the host? These questions are valid when considering the attitude of colonising countries and the way in which colonisation took place. Both authors bring up the Spanish theologian Francisco de Vitoria who, during the period of the great discoveries, wrote about how the indigenous peoples of South America should receive the Spanish discoverers.

In discussing how Spaniards should be received in American territories, Francisco de Vitoria says that, “among all nations it is considered inhuman to treat strangers and travelers badly, except in special circumstances, people are duty bound to be hospitable to strangers. This is not true if trav-

14 Richard B. Miller, “Christian Attitudes toward Boundaries: Metaphysical and Geographical,” in *Christian Political Ethics*, ed. John A. Coleman, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 67–91.

15 Ibid.

16 Nigel Biggar, “The Value of Limited Loyalty: Christianity, the Nation, and Territorial Boundaries,” in *Christian Political Ethics*, ed. John A. Coleman, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 92–110.

17 Ibid.

elers would do any harm by visiting foreign nations.”¹⁸ What Vitoria says sounds good at first glance, but who determines whether visiting is good or bad? Could the intention of conquest or forced Christianity be seen as something bad? It is easy for the visitor to ask to be welcomed, but does the one being visited have any say? How moral is it for one in a position of authority to set the rules of hospitality? These are pertinent questions that the person who proposes to visit should consider before doing so.

Referring to Vitoria’s writing, Biggar says that „Vitoria’s argument would hold that the natives should adopt a policy of open borders until evil is proved... this assumes that foreigners, traders and immigrants are benevolent and trustworthy”¹⁹, but from the historical course of this region it will be seen that things did not turn out according to Vitoria’s assumption, as Spain’s desire for conquering power was to cause much damage to the civilizations encountered there.

What is interesting to note in some regions of the world is that those who are the descendants of those who immigrated to those territories and wronged those they found in those territories by denying them property rights are now trying to establish rules to prevent those who want to come to their country from doing so, which was not the case for their ancestors.

The arguments put forward by Vitoria are in favour of cosmopolitanism, he suggesting that in the beginning there were no borders of any kind and then no one could raise any objection to the right of Spaniards to enter the new territories in the same way that Spaniards and Frenchmen allow each other to travel through each other’s country.²⁰ What Vitoria seems to forget is that the power relations between France and Spain cannot be likened to those between Spain and the new territories, in the former case relations between Christians with similar levels of power and influence, and in the latter case between Christians and barbarians, as cat-

18 Francisco de Vitoria, *Political Writings*, ed. Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance, Cambridge texts in the history of political thought (Cambridge [England], New York, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 278.

19 Nigel Biggar, “Whatever Happened to the Canaanites? Principles of a Christian Ethic of Mass Immigration,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 35, no. 1 (February 2022), pp. 127–139.

20 Francisco de Vitoria, *Political Writings*, ed. Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance, Cambridge texts in the history of political thought (Cambridge [England], New York, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 278.

egorised by those of the higher civilisation. Even if at the declarative level he does not state this, from what happened later in the history of these relations, things happened in this manner. Miroslav Wolf gives a good insight into this and writes that, „Europe colonized, subjugated and destroyed cultures and imposed its religion, all in the name of its own identity - in the name of its absolute religion and superior civilization.”²¹ This way of acting and relating to other peoples has never been the one required by the Lord Jesus Christ and does no credit to those who present themselves as His followers.

In conclusion, Richard Miller believes that open borders are ideal.

Aspects of cosmopolitanism in Christianity involve opening borders for those seeking refuge from political and economic oppression. Cosmopolitanism also alerts us to the shameful events that often produce mass migration: tyranny, intolerance, famine, hopelessness at home...restricting mobility across borders can reinforce local prejudice and global economic disproportionality²²

Looking at the bigger picture, cosmopolitanism seems to create the best conditions for those who feel unprotected and disadvantaged in their home countries, and surely for those who suffer oppression there must be understanding. But if the borders were open to anyone at any time, would it not create chaos rather than order and jeopardise the development of their own countries, given that many of the educated would seek to leave? This point is made by Paul Collier in the book *Exodus: How Migration is Changing our World*, where he points out that „the migration of the innovative will drain society of the skills it needs to embrace and adapt to modernity”²³ a risk that developing societies cannot afford to take and one that developed societies should be aware of. Moreover, it is possible that a kind of ethnic cleansing may be generated, as „minorities are more likely to migrate than the majority group”²⁴ and it may be that by adopting open

21 Miroslav Wolf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1996, p. 4.

22 Richard B. Miller, “Christian Attitudes toward Boundaries: Metaphysical and Geographical,” in *Christian Political Ethics*, ed. John A. Coleman, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 67–91.

23 Paul Collier, *Exodus: How Migration Is Changing Our World*, Oxford; New York, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 252.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 180.

borders policies,,some governments would like to force minorities to leave, in which case migration would encourage them to adopt discriminatory policies.”²⁵ Colier suggests that open borders policy could be used for ethnic cleansing, but his view may be considered more an extreme hypothesis than an obvious situation.

On the other hand, Nigel Biggar believes that,,the Christian view of the nation implies that its borders must be guarded so that immigration can be controlled, but they must be open under some clear conditions to immigration by foreigners, and therefore they must contain cultural and religious diversity.”²⁶ Biggar proposes a more balanced attitude, in which the host population is prepared to give acceptance and respect to the opinion of the one they receive. But it will be interesting to see who and how will determine the conditions under which someone is allowed to immigrate, and whether abuses might occur under these conditions and some people might be unjustifiably denied entry. David Little suggests adopting a,weaker’ theory of the ethics of pluralism, according to which,in a normative space, room is made, to some extent, for different ethical positions and procedures are proposed for,,living with” or tolerating them”²⁷, an approach that seeks to give each actor the space to express their own freedom of conscience²⁸ without infringing or prohibiting the right of another.²⁹ This model provides sufficient space for each individual to move, but is much more complicated to achieve because of man’s desire to impose his own social and spiritual vision. This can be seen in today’s democratic societies where the right to free expression is allowed to some social groups but denied to others.

25 Coll Paul Collier, *Exodus: How Migration Is Changing Our World*, Oxford; New York, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 252.

26 Ibid.

27 David Little, “Conscientious Individualism: A Christian Perspective on Ethical Pluralism,” in *Christian Political Ethics*, ed. John A. Coleman, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 113–140.

28 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, “Libertatea religioasă – temelie a demnității umane”, in *Religie și libertate. Săptămâna libertății religioase, 9-16 aprilie 2011*, București, Casa de editură “Viață și Sănătate”, 2011, pp.29-36.

29 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, “Religious liberty - a natural human right”, in *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință (JLC)*, Ganoune Diop, Mihnea Costoiu, Liviu-Bogdan Ciucă, Nelu Burcea (coord.), Editio IARSIC, Les Arcs, France, 2015, pp. 595-608.

Conclusions

Looking at what is going on in the world, one can see this tension between a willingness to be hospitable and a reluctance to be a stranger. Are there limits to be kept in terms of opening borders? Are certain restrictions beneficial to control and balance the movement of people? Can certain theological perspectives be helpful to ensure fair treatment of strangers in the country? In what follows, some statements will be made to provide an answer to these questions and to provide a conclusion to the topic brought up in this article.

Christian love, a suitable platform for hospitality towards the stranger. Christian love, whose source is God and which is made available to man through the Holy Spirit, provides a suitable space to approach the stranger entering the country and can generate the right attitudes for hospitality to be seen and felt by the stranger.

An individual, or even a community, is limited in the help it can offer to strangers. Man's ability to do good is limited by many things, so he cannot do all the good that is possible. This reality, however, must not lead to a fatalistic attitude that stops any kind of initiative in this direction. Yes, not all people can be helped by one man or one community, but for some people and at some time, the good they need can be done, even if they are strangers. Hospitality for strangers is limited on a personal level, but this truth should not negate the effort to do what is possible to do in a given context.

Having all people share the same good is unfair and discriminatory. Giving everyone the same kind and amount of good seems desirable, but this approach would negate the responsibility and effort that must be put into achieving good. Obviously, this does not mean not caring for the disadvantaged, but being fair to those who put effort into achieving the good. Nor from the perspective of divine reward is an equal sharing of the reward advocated, but it will be proportional to one's service. In everyday reality it can be seen that good differs from one person to another and is received according to whether it falls within the rigours required to obtain that good.

Borders, a barrier to immigration chaos. Although the existence of borders entails some restrictions on the movement of all people, a lack of borders could lead to chaos and many imbalances in both the destination

and the destination countries. Those living in the destination countries may rightly feel threatened by the presence of foreigners both physically and socially, and the societies from which they leave will be deprived of the contribution that those leaving could have made to the progress of their own countries. This is precisely why the existence of borders provides stability in managing immigration issues.

Cosmopolitanism, an attempt to blur borders. Although cosmopolitanism seems to lead in the direction of interlinking people and freedom of movement, in reality today's social conditions require the existence of these borders and the protection of those who live within them. This does not mean that strangers are unwelcome or that they should be regarded as a threat, but they must be aware of the social reality in which they wish to live, respect it and help to develop it by whatever means are available to them.

The guest can never dictate the conditions under which he is to be received. When in power, it is easy for someone to say what the conditions of reception should be. It is like one standing with a gun to the host's head and asking him with a smile if he is welcome and if he can enter the house. The position of authority should never lead to the destruction of the weak by the strong.

So, using Christian love as the basis of hospitality towards the stranger, a correct attitude towards him can be built. Although borders are often conventions between people. They can be useful in the way situations with strangers are managed. A degree of loyalty to a nation can be useful as long as it does not turn into a doctrine by which other ethnicities are removed from those territories, but it must never exceed loyalty to God and the order instituted by Him. Cosmopolitanism, it seems, is the better option, but when all the implications are considered it would probably generate more chaos than harmony and order.

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