



Long Distance
Christian

Immigration and **Justice**

How local churches can change the
debate on immigration in Britain

Jubilee Centre



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Preface

Jubilee Centre has periodically explored how the Bible's social vision applies to the challenging issue of immigration. This includes Jonathan Burnside's in-depth study, 'The Status and Welfare of Immigrants' in 2001, Nick Spencer's book 'Asylum and Immigration' published by Paternoster in 2004, and more recent articles on the Jubilee Centre website.

However, the rapidly changing patterns of immigration into Britain, and the rising groundswell of public opinion that claims our current immigration policy is not fit for purpose, mean that we need to return to this crucial topic once more.

This brief booklet began in 2012 with some discussions to explore writing a longer book on immigration. However, the lack of a publisher and uncertainty over its scope led to reimagining the project. It became a shorter booklet to help individual Christians and local churches to think through the whole issue of immigration from a biblical perspective, and then to do something about it. A number of people were involved in the process and contributed to the content¹ which, although focused on the UK, reflects principles which can be applied more widely in other countries too.

The public debate goes round in circles between the economic benefits, the social costs and the international obligations surrounding immigration. The Christian church can either be caught up in this dilemma, or can see immigration missionally – as a strategic opportunity to express the Bible's unique vision for society.

May this booklet provide wisdom for people concerned with the debate around immigration and inspire many opportunities to 'spur one another on toward love and good deeds' (Hebrews 10:24).

Jonathan Tame,

Executive Director Jubilee Centre

Introduction

Immigration: An issue that divides the nation

Asked by one journalist whether he would prefer to run as a Somali during the 2012 Olympics, Mo Farah answered, 'Look mate, this is my country. This is where I grew up; this is where I started life. This is my country and when I put on my Great Britain vest I'm proud. I'm very proud.'²

Many British-born UK citizens are less positive in their thinking about immigration. Alternatively, they are simply confused. Natalie Bennett, leader of the Green Party, commented, 'Less than two in ten people in Britain think that immigration is a problem in their local area, but about three quarters are in favour of reducing immigration.'

Immigration is an issue that has divided and perplexed the UK. On the one hand, there are those who see immigrants as a group that creates turmoil in Britain by taking jobs and benefits, causing crime and alienating Britons with unfamiliar cultural practices. On the other hand, there are those who perceive immigrants as a marginalised group in society who are not appreciated for the contributions they make and who do not receive the care they require. In between, there are those who don't know who or what to believe amid all the spin and propaganda.

What these opinions often fail to appreciate is that immigrants are not a homogenous group. People migrate to Britain for many reasons, from those who flee from their home country for protection from persecution, such as the Somali asylum seeker, through to those who come to work for a corporation for a high salary, like the American financier.

Some of us believe that immigration is happening too quickly and needs to be controlled. Others argue that we are restricting immigration too much and demand the free movement of people. Immigration is an issue that has caused conflict between political parties and media establishments that demand different responses to the subject. Public figures have ventured on different quests to resolve this dispute, with some pursuing a vision for a multicultural society and others seeking to maintain Britain's national culture.

As well as prompting national controversy, immigration has affected opinions in the church. It is difficult for Christians to hold opinions about immigration

that are not influenced by secular views. This booklet attempts to resolve this problem by offering Christians a perspective on immigration that is grounded in the Bible. It aims to reveal the reality of immigration in this country and offers guidance towards appropriate responses from the state, the church and Christian individuals.

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This booklet consists of four sections. Part I examines immigration in contemporary Britain. It suggests some useful categories for thinking about immigrants. Moreover, it assesses the extent to which perceived anxieties of immigration are valid and reviews current topics, such as the expansion of

the European Union and the rising popularity of anti-immigration political movements. Part II offers a biblical foundation to the issue of immigration, considering how Israelite society responded to immigration. Part III seeks to apply this biblical knowledge as a Christian framework for contemporary Britain. Part IV features recommendations for the state, the Church and individuals to use as responses to immigration.

Part I: Immigration in the UK

State of the nation

Categories of immigrant

Our national discussion about immigration is shaped by the terms we use. Immigration is a complex area, but all too often we don't distinguish between enough different categories of immigrant – the routes by which people come to the UK, and their reasons. As these vary in their legal framework, the ability and desire of the government to count and control them, and their economic and wider implications, it is worth spelling them out in some detail.

Broadly following the government's approach, we can identify five categories. These are:

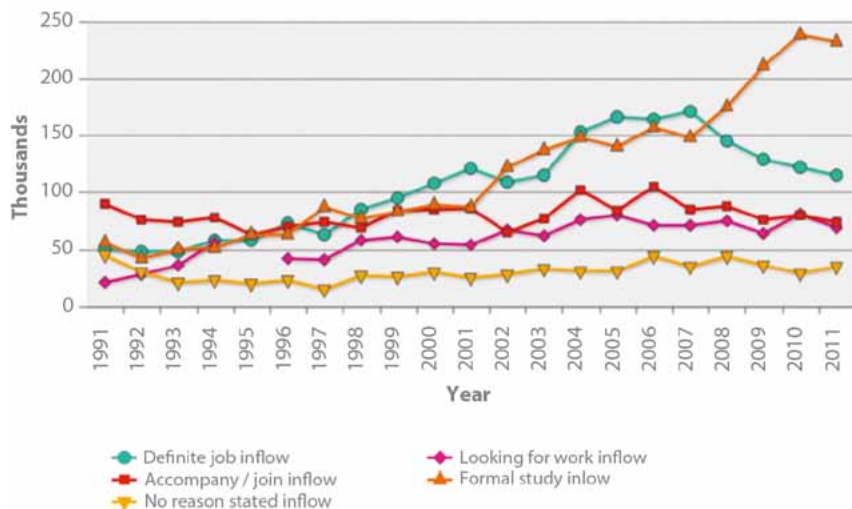
- Students – who enrol in full-time education
- Economic migrants – looking for work or taking up a job offer
- Family members (to accompany or join other migrants)
- Asylum seekers and refugees, and
- 'Irregular' immigrants (mainly illegal immigrants)

The table below shows estimates of some of these categories (based on passenger survey data which distinguishes between looking for work and taking up a definite job).

These groups reflect not only immigrants' reasons for coming to our country, but our own motivations in receiving them. The categories we give them implicitly reflect our values about what we consider important: economic growth (through tuition fees and employment), protection, and maintaining some degree of family cohesion.

Some of these categories represent migrants who will not stay indefinitely, and their entry will be balanced by their exit a few years later – most students and many economic migrants follow this pattern, for example. However, migration implies permanent settlement for many. The official figures do not include those who enter the country on a 'visitor' visa, who are allowed to stay for a maximum of six months but are not permitted to work or collect benefits.

Immigration by reason 1991-2011



Source: Office for National Statistics. Long-Term Interational Migration(LTIM)

A complicating factor is the number of migrants from the EEA,⁴ who are free to move to the UK or any other EEA country under European regulations. For this reason EEA migrants cannot be classified as refugees or irregular immigrants. Their numbers are outside the government’s control. Indeed, numbers are not even counted at entry and have to be estimated from sources such as new National Insurance number applications. Despite this – and perhaps because of the lack of restrictions placed on them – EEA migrants are arguably the immigrant group viewed with the most wariness by the UK public.

Immigration trends

The five categories given above are a simplification, since people can easily move from one to another (coming as a student but later finding work, or overstaying a work visa and becoming an irregular immigrant, for example). There are also those who are trafficked, who do not easily fit within this list.

Adding to the confusion, the landscape of immigration in the UK has changed enormously over the last 20 years, due to changing government policy as

well as wider factors such as global economic developments. However, our assumptions about immigration are often years out of date.

Since the end of 1993, when the Maastricht Treaty establishing the EU came into effect, annual net migration (the number of people immigrating minus the number emigrating) to the UK has consistently been positive. Although the 1992-1997 Conservative government had severely restricted the number of people coming to live in the UK, New Labour's policies (1997-2010) saw net migration rise to around 150,000 per year in their first term, and then to 200,000 per year after they further relaxed the rules. The policy changes were underpinned by a belief that an 'open door' policy for migrants would have both positive economic and cultural effects for the country, reflecting New Labour's ideal of multiculturalism – the policy of encouraging different cultures or cultural identities to co-exist within a unified nation.

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Recent statistics show that net migration rose 39 percent to 243,000 in the year ending March 2014, from 175,000 in the previous 12 months. Two thirds of the increase was accounted for by the immigration of EU citizens.⁵

Cultural blind spots

This policy of multiculturalism (as opposed to the fact that we live in a culturally diverse society) is generally regarded as a failure today by politicians and members of the public, as it failed to strengthen the common values which are essential to social cohesion. Despite the emphasis on diversity and tolerance, a lack of cohesion became evident and in some places extremism flourished. Critics questioned whether the UK economy could support such a large influx of newcomers, especially during a time of economic slowdown – something that led former Prime Minister Gordon Brown to promise 'British jobs for British workers' in 2009. Regulations on the free movement of labour mean that it is not possible to prevent EU migrants from applying for British jobs.

However, the economic issues raised by the UK's open door policy on immigration hide another side to the debate. Free movement within the EU works both ways; Brits are just as able to work abroad as Europeans are to come to the UK.

We don't tend to view these two movements of labour as equal in nature. When Brits move abroad for work or retirement, we call them 'ex-pats'. When people come to the UK – especially people from poorer countries – we call them 'immigrants'. Language and ethnicity also come into play here. Those from English-speaking countries such as America and Australia are less likely

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to be viewed as 'foreign' than those who do not have English as their first language or are not white.

Some 5.5 million British citizens live permanently abroad.⁶ The country with the largest migrant population is Australia (1.3 million Brits), with America and Canada together having a similar number. Looking at Europe, Spain is the most popular destination

(761,000). Another 291,000 live in the Republic of Ireland, and 200,000 in France. These figures rise significantly if those who live abroad part-time are counted. Overall, the figures for Brits living in Europe vs EU citizens living in the UK broadly cancel out.^{7, 8}

The question remains of what we are really concerned about when we talk about immigration. What is it that people are afraid of? There are many possible explanations, ranging from simple racism at one extreme to genuine fear over jobs and livelihoods, competition for housing and public services at the other. The British are more hostile about immigration than many other countries – including those with more immigrants. We also consistently overestimate levels of immigration. Perhaps as a result of our island-nation status or our long history of successive waves of immigration, we are prone to equating 'immigrant' with 'threat'.⁹

Immigration and religion

When it comes to employment and the economy, the concern is chiefly about the numbers of immigrants coming from the EU. Regarding culture and religion, the main worry is around Islamisation: the spread of Islamic extremism under the auspices of an agenda of tolerance and multiculturalism. These fears were provoked first by the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and then by the London bombings on 7 July, 2005 and other incidents in the UK and in Paris in January 2015. These confirmed not just that non-Western extremists were being allowed into Western countries, but that radicalism was being allowed to flourish in 'home grown' terror cells.

The 2011 census found that there were 2.7 million Muslims living in the UK, comprising around 4.8 percent of the total population – nearly 1.2 million more than in 2001.¹⁰ The Sunday Times has claimed that the Muslim population of the UK is rising around 10 times faster than the non-Muslim population.¹¹

Again, though, a focus on one aspect of immigration masks other trends. In the UK, the rate of church attendance has been in steady decline for the last 30 years. In the areas where this is not the case, the increase has been driven by the Black Majority Churches and other immigrant churches. In London, which accounts for around a quarter of all church attendance in England, 24 percent of churchgoers attend a Black Majority Church, and 14 percent of churches use a language other than English. Whilst just 8 percent of the city's white population goes to church on an average Sunday, 16 percent of its Chinese, Korean and Japanese population does and 19 percent of the black population.¹²

The key questions

Framing the debate

The subject of immigration typically raises a number of questions, not all of which are helpful in framing the debate. Foremost amongst these is the effect of migrant workers on the jobs market. The expansion of the EU has opened the door for millions of people to come and work in the UK. In the mid-2000s, hundreds of thousands of Poles and other Eastern Europeans travelled to the UK to find jobs, though many returned during the economic downturn. At the beginning of 2014, the end of restrictions on the kinds of jobs that Bulgarians and Romanians could take raised fears that there would be a new influx of low-skilled workers, which would drive down wages and push native Britons out of work. The high level of youth unemployment has made this a particular concern for younger people.

With net migration averaging around 200,000 annually for the past ten years, there are also questions about the pressure on public services, especially at a time of spending cuts. There are particular worries about areas where language barriers cause additional problems, such as schools with a large number of pupils who do not have English as a first language. *The Telegraph* reported that the NHS spends £23 million a year on translation services which, as well as being an economic concern, raises fears that providing translation for those who don't speak English could encourage segregation rather than integration.¹³

Overall, these fears have led to claims that the UK is becoming overcrowded, with the population set to reach 70 million in the next 15 years. A ‘No to 70 million’ campaign was launched in 2012 and attracted 145,000 responses.¹⁴

Is immigration solely a numbers game?

Although there are issues of language and culture, the national debate on immigration often comes down to numbers. The Conservative-led government that came to power in 2010 stated its commitment to ‘bring annual net migration

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down to the tens of thousands – rather than the hundreds of thousands we saw under Labour – by the end of this Parliament.’¹⁵ Any targets will be difficult to achieve as long as the UK is a member of the EU under current arrangements, as there can be no control over the movement of EU migrants. UKIP argue that the only way to ‘regain control of our

borders and of immigration’ is to leave the EU, an opinion that proved to be popular in the European elections of 2014.¹⁶

What are the questions we *should* be asking?

Absolute numbers are of little help and there is no evidence that 70 million is a valid ceiling figure for UK population.¹⁷ Rather, we should be asking questions about integration: the ways that native Britons and newcomers relate to each other in different communities and circumstances. Migrants come to the UK for a number of different reasons; they bring a wide range of skills, and the communities, local economies and job sectors into which they move are not all the same. A one-size-fits-all approach is unhelpful, and places undue emphasis on numbers rather than relationships. Addressing the numbers alone will not fix the problem of integration.

There are a huge range of factors that affect degrees of integration, from the perspectives of the both the immigrant and the host community.¹⁸ ‘Integration’ itself is a broad term, which covers many different areas of life – language, education, employment, social inclusion (which encompasses factors such as health, housing, and poverty) and active citizenship (voting, volunteering and participation in local organisations,) to name a few.

These are not simply issues that apply to new migrants, either. Integration can be a multi-generational process. Some second-generation migrants can feel less integrated than their parents, and are perhaps treated as such. Particularly after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and 7/7, there was renewed suspicion of Muslims

in certain communities, which itself fuelled greater withdrawal and the strengthening of a separate cultural identity. Integration is an ongoing and intentional challenge, not something that happens through the mere passage of time.

Facilitating migrants' integration into their local communities – and vice versa – is therefore not a simple matter of doing any one thing. It will require a broad range of initiatives at all levels of society, by individuals, churches and other local organisations, and at the public policy level.

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How can Christians respond?

In an often polarised debate surrounding immigration, it can be difficult for Christians to know how, or even if, to respond to such a complex issue. When looking for a biblical solution to a contemporary problem, it can be difficult to listen to both the Word of God and to the world (as John Stott described his model of 'double listening') and not to be distracted by unhelpful ideas – whether political slogans, personal prejudices, or entrenched myths.

What is God's framework for a just society, and how were the Israelites expected to respond to immigrants? Furthermore, how can we apply this biblical wisdom to contemporary Britain, and how can Christians respond with compassion? These are the questions which the rest of the booklet seeks to explore. Parts II and III examine the subject of immigration in the Bible, ultimately showing God's concern for us to have right and just relationships, both with Himself and with others around us, whether natives or newcomers.

Part II: A biblical view of justice in immigration

Introduction

‘Fairness’ has become the watchword of politics. The language of fairness and justice (the two are different, but are often used interchangeably)¹⁹ permeates every area of policy, and behind almost every criticism lies

Wherever we sit on the spectrum of opinion, justice is the framework through which we understand our personal and political beliefs about the many different aspects of this highly complex topic.

the counter-accusation: ‘It’s not fair.’ The economy. Provision of education and health services. Pensions, incapacity and unemployment benefits. Discrimination and employment. And, of course, immigration.

Wherever we sit on the spectrum of opinion, justice is the framework through which we understand our personal and political beliefs about the many different aspects of this highly complex topic. Perceived injustice is

what motivates people to engage. Whether people are fighting for the rights of asylum seekers or campaigning to curb ‘benefit tourism’, our arguments tend to be made in these terms.

Biblical justice

The Hebrew Bible uses two key words in the context of justice, *šedeq* (or *šʿdāqāh*) and *mišpāt*. These often occur together and are usually translated ‘righteousness and justice’. They are closely linked theologically but have different meanings.

Mišpāt comes from a verb meaning to judge or govern; to act as lawgiver; to decide controversy, condemn or punish.²⁰ The noun *mišpāt* can mean several things, including the act of deciding a case; the seat of judgment; process or litigation before judges; a legal sentence or decision; the execution of judgment. The word *šedeq* (righteousness) means what is right, just, normal – whether in speech, government, a legal case, or even the weights and measures described in Deuteronomy 25:15.

In *Generous Justice*, Tim Keller argues that *mišpāt* is ‘rectifying justice’ (referring either to punishment or receiving one’s rights) and *š‘dāqāh* is ‘primary justice’ – the conditions of right relationship that would render rectifying justice unnecessary if widely practised. Together, he says the words have the rough meaning of ‘social justice’. ‘Doing justice includes not only the righting of wrongs but generosity and social concern, especially toward the poor and vulnerable.’²¹

Broadly speaking, then, justice is the action, righteousness is the result. Justice is critically important (it is one of the characteristics of God, after all), but viewing it as a sole or even primary objective for what we hope to achieve in our approach to immigration means excluding broader and more important aims.

Immigration in the Bible

In unpacking this subject, it helps to know a little about the way the Bible views different types of immigrant. Instead of looking primarily at the immigrant’s reason for entering the country, the Bible is more interested in their attitudes and circumstances.

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Categories of biblical migrant

- *‘ezrāh*: the native-born Israelite
- *Gēr*: resident alien, often someone vulnerable who integrates with Israelite society
- *Tôšāb*: similar to the *gēr*, but someone who remains separate
- *Nokrî*: the economically and culturally/religiously independent foreigner
- *Zār*: similar to the *nokrî*

The *‘ezrāh* is the native-born Israelite, though in the light of Exodus 12:38 (which describes the Exodus group as a ‘mixed multitude’, ‘great rabble’ or, in one translation, ‘ethnically diverse crowd’) it seems that this could not have been a purely ethnic distinction. After the entry into Canaan it might refer to someone who was born in the land and into one of the families of Israelites: someone with roots back to the conquest.

One of the major categories of immigrant in the Hebrew Bible is the *gēr*, often translated as ‘[resident] alien’ or, more archaically, ‘sojourner’. This covers a range of immigrants, but all are typically associated with other dependent

groups: the hired man, the poor, widows, orphans and the Levite. These are landless people who are disproportionately vulnerable, and it is no coincidence that language of justice and oppression are often used in the context of the *gēr*:

‘Cursed is anyone who withholds justice (*mišpat*) from the foreigner (*gēr*), the fatherless or the widow.’ (Deuteronomy 27:19)

The *gēr*’s inclusion throughout the Bible with other groups who are vulnerable to economic injustice (the orphan, widow, and poor) supports the chief meaning of ‘oppress’ as ‘extort’.

A *gēr* could either integrate fully, adopting Israelite religion and customs, and presumably language too, or remain separate to some degree. In the priestly literature of the Bible, the term *tôšāb* (‘settler’ or ‘squatter’) is used for the migrant who remains separate.

The *gēr* was quite distinct from the *noḵrî*, who is presented as a ‘true’ foreigner – someone whose loyalties typically lay in their country of origin, who were temporary visitors to Israel and who were generally economically independent. The *noḵrî* appears in a number of different contexts. The word is possibly derived from a Hebrew root meaning to ‘recognise’ or ‘regard’: foreigners are those who are ‘closely watched’. It seems clear that the *noḵrî* was viewed with a degree of suspicion at best – and often with outright hostility. The word is frequently used of foreign gods (e.g. Deuteronomy 31:16) that threaten to ensnare the Israelites throughout their history. In Ezra (e.g. chapter 10), Nehemiah and Proverbs, foreign women are considered a major source of apostasy.

In short, there are few texts in which anything that is *noḵrî* (or *zār*) is presented with anything less than suspicion. The *noḵrî* is assumed to be abusive, exploitative and untrustworthy – even if the reality of the individual cases does not match this, as in the case of Ruth (who describes herself as a *noḵrî* in 2:10). This explains the differences in how they are treated, compared to the *’ezrah* and *gēr*. For example, the only circumstances in which interest could ever be charged was when an Israelite lent money to a *noḵrî* (Deuteronomy 23:19-20).²²

‘Justice-plus’

Justice is not the only characteristic that shapes the native Israelite’s relationship with the immigrant, or wider engagement with the world. Deuteronomy 10:18-19 adds another term to the treatment commanded for the *gēr*: ‘He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves (*’ōhēb*) the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt.’

The love described is not solely an internal emotion, but an active one, outwardly expressed in practical kindness. It is a reflection of God’s love for the *gēr* and the Israelites’ love for God (Deuteronomy 10:12). In the Bible, this provision of justice and love is not a one-way transaction. It is part of the conditions under which God invites and allows the Israelites to live in the land – as emphasised in Jeremiah 7:6-7, where economic oppression of the alien, orphan and widow is linked with shedding innocent blood and worshipping foreign gods.

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After the return from exile, work began on rebuilding the Jerusalem Temple, but questions arose about how the people should best worship God. Zechariah reiterates what God had told them before the exile: ‘Administer true justice (*mišpaṭ* *’met*); show mercy (*hešed*) and compassion (*rah^amîm*) to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.’ (7:9-10)

This also gives a series of terms that enable us to begin nuancing the idea of ‘justice’ better. ‘True justice’ (*mišpaṭ* *’met*) is better translated ‘faithful judgment’ – in a personal context, rather than in the law courts, since this is the theme of the passage (though in 8:16 both legal and personal contexts are mentioned).

‘Mercy’ (*hešed*) is often translated ‘loving-kindness’, and elsewhere in the OT the word again communicates a sense of faithfulness in one or other form of relationship: marriage (Genesis 20:13), friendship (1 Samuel 20:15), diplomacy (2 Samuel 10:2). It is one of the attributes of God and often found paired with other characteristics: ‘He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.’ (Micah 6:8)

‘Compassion’ (*rah^amîm*) is another characteristic of God, signifying gentleness and affection. Exodus 34:6-7 reads, ‘The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate

The Israelites are to treat *gērîm* justly – and moreover with loving-kindness and compassion – because that is how God treats them. Justice alone is not enough.

(*rahûm*) and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love (or loving-kindness, *hesed*) and faithfulness (*'emet*), maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.⁷

The combination of characteristics listed in Zechariah 7:9-10 that the Israelites are to show to each other, including the *gēr*, matches the attributes of God which he reveals to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7. The Israelites are to treat *gērîm* justly – and moreover with loving-kindness and compassion – because that is how God treats them. Justice alone is not enough. Even righteousness, the goal of justice, does not provide an overarching principle for understanding the Old Testament's ethic on the *gēr*, foreigners in general (including the *nokri*), and the Old Testament as a whole.

A higher ethic

Various underlying principles for biblical ethics as a whole have been suggested.²³ Justice and Righteousness are important themes but are not adequate for informing our overall approach, whether to immigration or anything else. Another suggestion is Holiness, but there are a number of problems with this – not least that it is contingent upon other actions and attitudes, and is set within a broader context. A more promising theme is Love.

Jesus summarised the whole Law and Prophets in terms of love for God and neighbour in Matthew 22:34-40, quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 ('Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength') and Leviticus 19:18b ('love your neighbour as yourself'). The word for 'love' used in these Old Testament verses is '*ahabâ*', though like the English word 'love' this is open to misinterpretation. In nuancing it, the word *hesed* is a useful term to understand.²⁴ This 'loving-kindness' or 'covenant loyalty' is a key attribute of God's character and encompasses many of the qualities mentioned above: grace, compassion, faithfulness, love; as well as embodying or bringing about justice, righteousness and holiness.

The New Testament

In the New Testament, Justice appears in a range of notable contexts. Matthew 12:18-21 quotes Isaiah 42:1-4 as a prophecy that was fulfilled in Jesus. Justice is a major theme here. In Matthew 23:23, Jesus mentions it as one of 'the weightier provisions of the law'.

As in the Old Testament, justice alone does not provide an adequate overarching theme. When Jesus speaks about why he has come in Luke 4, he does not mention justice (though it is mentioned later in the passage he quotes, in Isaiah 61:8). ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

There is greater emphasis on grace and mercy, as a reflection of God’s character, than there is on justice. John 3:17 reads, ‘For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn (or ‘judge’, Greek *krinē*) the world, but to save the world through him.’ The repeated call by those suffering and in need of healing is, ‘Son of David, have mercy on us,’ not ‘Give us justice.’ As James 2:13 states, ‘mercy [eleos] triumphs over judgement [krisis]’.

Thus the theme of Covenant love or loving-kindness (*hesed, eleos*) runs through both Old and New Testaments as an overarching characteristic of God and higher aspirational quality of human relationship. Justice (*mišpat*) and righteousness (*š’dāqāh*) are best understood in this context.

The theme of Covenant love or loving-kindness runs through both Old and New Testaments as an overarching characteristic of God and higher aspirational quality of human relationship.

Treatment of the immigrant through biblical history

In the Bible, there is a clear difference in treatment between those who were considered a part of the community of Israel and those who were not. As explored above, the former include:

- The native Israelite who owned and lived on their family plot of land
- The dispossessed native Israelite, who had temporarily sold their land due to hardship
- The non-Israelite immigrant, who integrated but still risked living on the social periphery of the community.

Those who were not considered part of the community include:

- The unassimilated non-Israelite immigrant
- The true ‘foreigner’, whose home and loyalties were outside of Israel.²⁵

This distinction is relevant in the context of religious participation.²⁶ The foreigner (*ben-nēkār*), the non-assimilating migrant (*tôšāb*) and the hired labourer (*sākîr*) were not permitted to celebrate the Passover (Exodus 12:43, 45); the circumcised and integrated *gēr* was, and was considered part of the ‘whole community of Israel’ (Exodus 12:47, 48). The *gēr* also celebrated Firstfruits (Deuteronomy 26:11) and was included in the list of vulnerable groups who received the three-yearly tithe (Deuteronomy 26:12-13). The same was true of participation in the festivals of Weeks and Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 16:10-14). On numerous occasions the Israelites themselves were called *gērîm*, often alongside a call to compassion for the *gēr* because ‘you were aliens in Egypt’.

Under the Law, ‘with a few exceptions, the alien was generally to be treated the same as the native Israelite, or with greater consideration.’²⁷ They could make sacrifices, own property and participate in business under the same rules as Israelites. It seems that full citizen status, including participation in Israel’s festivals, came primarily through association with a native Israelite household – something that brought economic provision/dependence as well as religious identity.

The foreign convert

Scepticism and suspicion characterised Israel’s earlier approach to the foreigner. A rare instance of a more inclusive vision in which the *nokri* is not treated with wariness is 1 Kings 8:41-43. In his prayer to dedicate the new temple, Solomon asks that God will hear the prayer of the *nokri* visitor who comes to faith in YHWH.

This progressive openness to the foreigner who is prepared to accept God’s ways prefigures Paul’s statement in Galatians 3:26-29, ‘So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.’

In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (late 6th and early 5th centuries BC), the suspicion became even more pronounced as the community of returned exiles in Judea struggled to retain its religious identity. However, the same period also saw a greater openness to the foreigner, and an unprecedented welcome to those who were willing to ‘bind themselves to the Lord’ (Isaiah 56:3, 6). The books of Ruth and Jonah, both generally dated to the post-exilic period,

demonstrate this perspective. As well as their interest in and inclusivity of the *nokri*, mercy – loving-kindness – is also a theme of both. God wants to show mercy to the Assyrians, but Jonah wants judgment and is displeased when they repent (4:1). ‘I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God,

slow to anger and abounding in love (*hesed*), a God who relents from sending calamity.' *Hesed* – God's, Ruth's and Boaz's – is also a major theme of the book of Ruth.

This progressive openness to the foreigner who is prepared to accept God's ways prefigures Paul's statement in Galatians 3:26-29, 'So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.'

Part III: Applying a biblical perspective to the challenges of immigration in Britain

The need for a vision

The Israelites had a positive vision of relationship with God and each other, expressed through the Covenant and God's *hesed* or Covenant love. To some degree the immigration system was self-selecting. Those who were attracted by this vision were welcomed. Those who implicitly or explicitly rejected it were treated with caution.

In the UK today we have no consistent, attractive vision to offer: no coherent narrative of who we are, what we stand for, or the role that others from overseas might play in our story.²⁹ From time to time we might hear a positively-stated ideal of the kind of place Britain is (the opening ceremony for the London Olympics was a celebration of British history and culture), but this is just as likely to be undermined by other headlines and points of view. The language used by David Cameron in one key speech, drawing attention to the divisions that multiculturalism had allowed and encouraged, was telling: 'We have *failed to provide a vision of society* to which they feel they want to belong.'³⁰

We cannot have a meaningful policy on immigration without a coherent vision of society – just as it makes no sense to regulate debt or alcohol pricing, or reform education or the NHS, without an overall idea of the kind of society we hope to bring about as a result.

Rather than the 'passive tolerance of recent years', the Prime Minister argued that we need 'much more active, muscular liberalism' which promotes values such as 'Freedom of speech. Freedom of worship. Democracy. The rule of law. Equal rights regardless of race, sex or sexuality.' While most people would agree with these values, they do not go nearly far enough in articulating the kind of place we want the UK to be. They are entry-level principles that lay the groundwork but don't tell us much more. They are also broad criteria that are open to considerable interpretation (at what point does freedom of speech impinge on equal rights; are there limits to freedom of worship; what, exactly, is meant by 'the rule of law?'). For Christians, there may also be tensions between British values and gospel values.

Aside from these occasional, broad statements about our values, there are the more subtle day-to-day messages about what matters most to us. Economic

growth is seldom absent from that picture, along with increasing caution around spending on housing and benefits for those who weren't born here and haven't 'paid their way'. We are highly selective about those we want in the country: immigration must work for us economically. As former Immigration Minister Damian Green said, 'We need to know not just that the right number of people are coming here, but that the right people are coming here. People that will benefit Britain – not just those who will benefit by Britain.'³¹

This is sometimes articulated in terms of 'attracting the brightest and best'; at other times it is more about closing loopholes and preventing people from taking advantage. Not only that, but the picture becomes hopelessly confused when political and economic goals come into conflict: some types of immigration (such as students from outside the EEA) are lucrative for the UK, but these nuances are often lost in the headline statistics and political rhetoric.

So there is the need for a new vision – beyond the short-term economic individualism and reaction to the problems of multiculturalism that shape so much public policy. Without such a vision a coherent immigration policy is impossible.

So there is the need for a new vision – beyond the short-term economic individualism and reaction to the problems of multiculturalism that shape so much public policy.

The positive contribution of migrants

Nowadays when we criticise the level of immigration in the UK, it is usually in terms of the perceived burdens on our economy and the injustices that implicitly result (something for which the biblical 'justice-plus' vision clearly has relevance). The narratives are that migrants take jobs that rightfully belong to Brits, collect benefits they don't deserve, and place undue strain on public services.

Whilst there are a number of individual cases that fuel the popular narratives, the wider reality is more complicated than we often imagine. We rarely hear that the number of EU migrants in the UK is roughly comparable to the number of Brits who have emigrated to live in the EU (around 2.3 million, according to official figures).³² How we think about British emigrants *should* (but clearly does not) influence the way we think about immigrants to Britain.

Then there is the critical role played by migrants in numerous sectors, including healthcare. Without foreign medical staff, the NHS simply would not function. The NHS has always relied on foreign support, and today around 11% of all staff and 26% of doctors are non-British.³³ India and the Philippines are the top contributors to NHS medical staff, after Britain itself. In unpopular specialisms such as A&E, the proportion is considerably higher.

Our consumerist mind-set welcomes those we want without considering those who don't bring the same skills and benefits to our country. Neither do we stop to think that attracting the 'brightest and best' from somewhere else can leave those countries desperately short of qualified professionals. It has been claimed that there are more Malawi-trained nurses in the NHS than there are in Malawi.³⁴

Neither are our assumptions about tax and benefits correct. Taken as a whole group, immigrants pay proportionately more in taxes, take out less in benefits, and place less pressure on key public services than native Brits. One reason for this is that migrants are typically younger, healthier and more likely to be in work than the average Brit. A recent study found that 'newcomers from eastern Europe paid 37 per cent more in taxes than they received in benefits and from public services in 2008-09, while people

As the study summarises, 'recent migrants are not a drain on the welfare state, they are helping to pay for it.'

born in Britain paid in 20 per cent less than they received.' As the study summarises, 'recent migrants are not a drain on the welfare state, they are helping to pay for it.'³⁵

What measure for immigration?

At the very least we need a better-nuanced idea of both prosperity and immigration before we can judge whether immigration is helping or harming the country's economy. However, the examples given above cast doubt on whether economic criteria are adequate at all.

The Conservatives pledged to reduce net immigration to below 100,000 per year, but the requirement for freedom of movement within the EU means we currently have limited legislative control over who comes to the UK from other EU countries, or which jobs they take. Concerns persist about immigrants taking jobs that native Brits would otherwise get, or moving to the UK and collecting benefits at the taxpayer's expense while they look for work.

However, a report published by Ipsos MORI showed that people's acceptance of the national narrative was not matched by fears that their own communities were affected by immigration.³⁶

The principle of subsidiarity is a biblically sound one. It is articulated most fully in Catholic Social Teaching but the idea has been widely taken up (it is supposedly a core principle of the way the EU is organised). Subsidiarity – meaning appropriate centralisation/decentralisation – enables people to take responsibility for the things that matter most in their lives, giving them agency and initiative, whilst ensuring that the aims that only a national (or international) body can achieve are still dealt with at that level.³⁷ This may involve reasserting some control over our own borders and having more of a say in making the decisions that affect us most. At the same time, we may be better placed to look after our own interests on the global stage by remaining within the EU.

Nelson Mandela said,
'A nation should not be
judged by how it treats
its highest citizens, but its
lowest ones.'

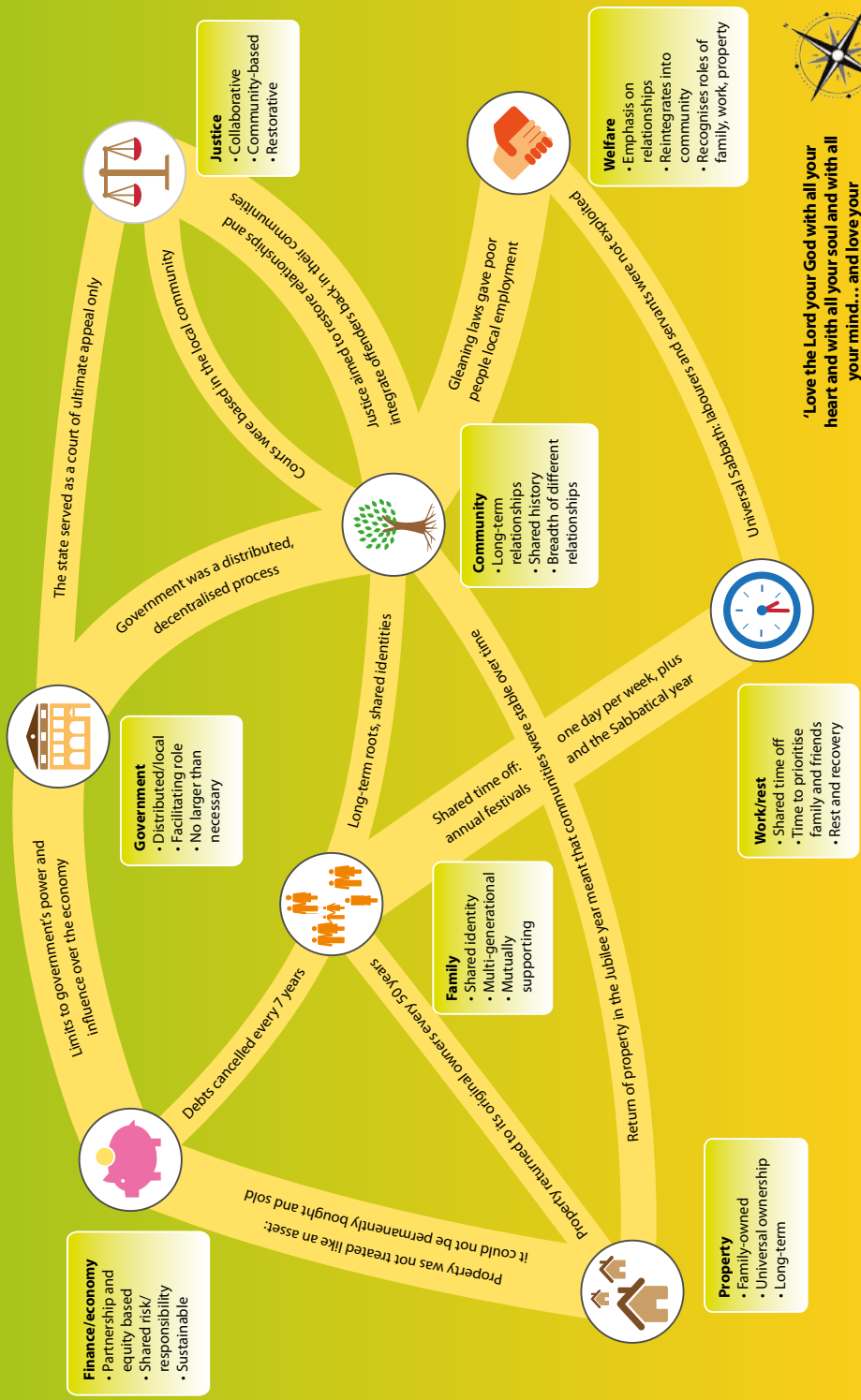
Additionally, the biblical ethic of *hesed* (mercy, loving-kindness) requires that we should look after the vulnerable, particularly the modern-day *gēr* (the asylum seeker, refugee, and perhaps low-paid economic migrant). As Nelson Mandela said, 'A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.' In the Bible, looking after these people was not seen primarily in terms of charity. There was no tension between economic productivity and welcoming the *gēr*: including them in its economic activity was how Israel integrated those from other countries. The Bible does not condemn anyone to being a second-class citizen. If the *gēr* accepts Israelite culture and religion, the welcome is unconditional.

Our own vision of society may not have a clear religious element to it, but there are still implications both for how we set out an attractive vision of 'Britishness', and the conditions we place on those who come to live here.

A Roadmap for integration³⁸

Our society holds up little in the way of coherent positive vision, except in terms of economic growth. The Bible looks at things very differently. The overarching vision is for right relationships – relationships of *hesed* – with God and with each other. This is how Jesus summarised the Law and the Prophets for his listeners in Matthew 22:34–40.³⁹ From Creation to the Crucifixion and

The biblical model: a holistic vision for society



'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... and love your neighbour as yourself:'
 (Matt. 22:37-40)

beyond, through the Covenants with the Patriarchs and Israelites and the New Covenant with the Church, this relational theme provides a comprehensive structure for society, for every law in the Old Testament and for every facet of human behaviour that arose from them.

Central to the structure of the society that God intended was the Jubilee legislation of Leviticus 25. Its guiding principle was that the land belonged to God and that the Israelites were only aliens (*gērîm*) in it (verse 23). They were not allowed to sell the land permanently. Every 50th year it would revert to the family that originally lived on it, promoting economic independence and family and community cohesion. Related laws limited debt and poverty by providing for the periodic cancellation of loans and prohibiting the charging of interest, as well as creating a system of welfare for those who found themselves

This was a society that prioritised healthy relationships before economic growth, but that sought to bring the isolated and marginalised into community and recognised the importance of both relational and economic wellbeing.

in a position of temporary hardship, thereby avoiding the need to move away to find work (verse 36). The chapter provides the kernel of the structure of the society that God intended for them – a holistic, integrated vision of how his people should live. This was also to be a model for other nations to aspire to and emulate.

There are eight major components to this vision, the sections of society to which different elements of biblical law relate:

Government, Community, Family, Finance and the Economy, Property, Work and Rest, Justice, and Welfare. Although other themes are important (such as education or the environment), the significance of these eight strands is indicated by the amount of space they occupy in the Bible. Immigration per se was not considered hugely important. Rather, it is the treatment of the immigrant that is detailed – for example, of the vulnerable *gēr* in the context of welfare provision, the rules governing their employment, or property ownership.

The biblical vision was for a sustainable, integrated society. Its different strands worked in harmony, rather than in tension. Family and community were central; instead of operating independently and for their own ends, the other strands contributed to the strength and stability of these. To encourage engagement and responsibility, as much happened on the local level as possible – including welfare, criminal justice and elements of government.

This was a society that prioritised healthy relationships before economic growth, but that sought to bring the isolated and marginalised into community and recognised the importance of both relational and economic wellbeing, and the connection between them.

Applying some of these ideas to our own circumstances today, we would seek greater integration of public services with local charities, community initiatives, schools and businesses. Governments set public policy, including on immigration. In doing so, they create a set of norms and expectations for society. However, the principle of subsidiarity states that the government should not be responsible for carrying out tasks that are better achieved by more local groups who have a closer and more direct interest in the outcomes. Instead, funding these groups and working with them to provide guidance and accountability would lead to more just outcomes, as those undertaking the work would have better knowledge of the individual circumstances in each case.

Asylum seekers, refugees and family members

This approach would be particularly valuable when it came to working with asylum seekers and refugees. Having endured persecution and even torture in their home countries, many asylum seekers face further injustice in the UK as decisions about their wellbeing are taken by people far away, and with little or no knowledge of their circumstances. Our policy on failed asylum seekers is driven as much (or more) by political expediency as by the needs of those who come to us for help.

Those who work with asylum seekers regularly witness the injustices and inefficiencies of the system, as well as the heavy-handed treatment of those who have already suffered enormously. One clinical therapist working with asylum seekers and refugees writes, 'It has become almost impossible to come "legally" to the UK to seek asylum. Some will plan their escape by obtaining a work or study visa and later claim asylum. However, most are at the mercy of "agents" who require payment of thousands of pounds. The journey may be hazardous, walking for days or being locked in a lorry. Many are exploited along the way. Prior to fleeing many will have experienced or witnessed such atrocities as massacres, rape, pillaging and torture. Upon arrival in

Those who work with asylum seekers regularly witness the injustices and inefficiencies of the system, as well as the heavy-handed treatment of those who have already suffered enormously.

the UK a seeker of asylum may be fortunate to have been briefed by an agent to present themselves to the authorities and request asylum. Others will have been “dumped” on the other side of the border or abandoned in a city somewhere, vulnerable to exploitation or being picked up and criminalised as an “illegal immigrant”.⁴⁰

Once they have presented themselves to the authorities, asylum claimants are often kept in detention centres, sent to temporary accommodation in dispersal areas around Britain, or allowed to stay with family or friends. They have to undergo a lengthy Home Office screening interview, but only 10% of claims are accepted at this stage. There usually follows a lengthy appeals process which can drag on for years.

Our immigration system is also often harmful to family life. As one immigration lawyer points out, ‘There is a public interest in controlling immigration but this often conflicts with the right of individuals to have a private and family life

Immigration generally only occurs because there is global injustice in the first place – whether that means war, persecution, poverty or unemployment.

in accordance with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights... In July 2012 the immigration rules were changed so that if you are sponsoring a foreign national spouse you have to earn a minimum of £18,600 per annum. I have several clients who have genuine marriages but are forced at the moment to live apart. It is also arguably discriminatory in its effect because if the

partner who is living in the UK is an EEA national rather than a British citizen then they only have to show that they are working, not that they are earning a specific sum of money.’⁴¹

The Bible emphasises both justice and mercy, with a concern to protect family life and the vulnerable. Our national approach prioritises economic outcomes; when we do talk about justice, it is most likely to ask whether it is fair that people should come to our country and get ‘something for nothing’. Nevertheless our own economy and public services (particularly the NHS) are supported by migrant workers.

Immigration generally only occurs because there is global injustice in the first place – whether that means war, persecution, poverty or unemployment. The vast majority of immigrants leave their countries looking for a better life in one way or another. Immigration is a reflection that we live in a fallen world. Sadly, our national response is far short of the biblical ideal.

Dual citizenship

The Church should have a natural advantage in understanding issues of immigration. Like the Israelites and the Patriarchs, Christians are 'aliens and strangers in the world' (1 Peter 2:11). We have dual citizenship of both our nation and the Kingdom of God. We live in the world but we are not to conform to its culture; we should not feel entirely at home here.

Likewise, many local churches will celebrate the fact that their members come from different countries, yet their relationship with Christ puts them in the same spiritual family, and they enjoy a unity of love and fellowship which is stronger than the cultural differences that might otherwise separate them.

This should give Christians a natural empathy for those from other countries who come to the UK for any reason, but especially those who are vulnerable: the modern-day *gēr*, who struggles to integrate with society, whether that is because they do not speak the language, do not understand the culture, have little money, or few friends and family members to support them.

Our experience as dual citizens provides a natural advantage in helping people of one culture integrate into another, shared one. The Church is called to be a community for such people. 'I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' (Matthew 25:35-36)

The next section puts forward some of the ways in which the Church can take the lead and demonstrate a positive ethos around immigration. It introduces several projects which can be undertaken by local churches to show God's *hesed* to some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in our society – and encourage the non-immigrant population in their community to play their part in integrating migrants to British society.

Our experience as dual citizens provides a natural advantage in helping people of one culture integrate into another, shared one.

Part IV: Projects for Christians and churches

Responding biblically to immigration

Since the rejection of multiculturalism as a national narrative, no other convincing, overarching vision for immigration has been put forward. In the absence of any governmental initiative here, churches have an important role to play. Churches have opportunities to shape the characters of local and even national communities in a way that few other organisations enjoy.

Like the Israelites, whose identity as a nation of immigrants from Egypt was supposed to inform their own treatment of immigrants to Israel, Christians should be at the forefront of initiatives to engage with the issue of immigration – through their local churches and, where possible, at the level of local and national government, education, media and the arts.

Churches have opportunities to shape the characters of local and even national communities in a way that few other organisations enjoy.

The ways in which Christians might engage with immigrants are no different from how they might engage with anyone in their communities, though there may be issues that are particularly acute for migrants. In the Old Testament, God showed a special concern for

the vulnerable and marginalised in society, and the *gēr* or alien was repeatedly mentioned alongside the orphan and widow (e.g. Deuteronomy 10:18).

Although full acceptance of immigrants was conditional on their willingness to integrate with Israelite society, there was an unconditional mandate to help the poor – and this did not just mean the financially poor. The Bible recognises that economic poverty goes hand-in-hand with relational poverty: it is the most marginalised and vulnerable who lack not only financial means but also support from families, friends and networks of close relationships.

This is worth remembering, since whether they are employed or not, many immigrants will be among the most marginalised in our communities. They will have left some or all of their friends and family behind, and may lack the language skills to get to know people in their host community. They may well be isolated and lonely.

In the Bible, migrants who wanted to be treated the same under Israel's law were expected to show willingness to integrate with Israelite culture. The

flipside of this is that the Israelites were expected to help them to integrate – it was a mutual process. For Christians and their churches today, this may be thought of in three stages:

1) Welcome

The first step is to welcome newcomers, wherever they are from. This may be little more than a simple conversation or an invitation to get together, but it is a prerequisite for further involvement – and many people don't even get this far!

2) Engagement

Those who are on the margins of society by definition find it harder to access and engage with the structures and services that many people take for granted, and that allow them to participate in normal life. The difficulties felt by migrants are often compounded by language issues. Churches have a role to play in facilitating these interactions, whether that means helping people book GP appointments; organising school places; accompanying them to court hearings; assisting with paperwork surrounding asylum, other aspects of immigration or benefits; taking them to a Citizens Advice Bureau; introducing them to people through the church; even showing them around a local area and helping them to orient themselves.

3) Service

Being part of a community – whether that means a church or another group – is about far more than being able to access the right services. Those who are truly integrated give back in a wide range of ways. The nature and extent of their contribution will depend on their own interests and skills, as well as the areas of need in the community. Migrants will bring many unique experiences and talents with them but may need encouragement to find where best to deploy them.

The Project Files

There are many ways in which the Church can support immigrants, both as local church communities and as individuals. The following projects describe some practical ways in which local churches can respond. There is an opportunity for real synergy if a church could develop perhaps three of these projects, growing in skill and experience as they make a joined-up, holistic response to the missional opportunities around immigration. You can find links to all the websites listed in the following project files on our website at www.jubilee-centre.org/immigration-justice



Project 1: Getting the facts straight

Accurate information is vital for a proper understanding of immigration or any other issue (see Luke 1:3). Selective or misleading statistics are all too often used to stir up controversy in the media, especially around immigration. One good place for a church to start taking a more public role in this area is simply to gather the facts.

Taking action

- Undertake research into the statistics and stories concerning the migrant population in your area, and how it has been changing.
- Create some displays to show the information and tell stories of what is happening in the lives of the different types of migrant. These could be displayed in your church venue or published on your website, in your news magazine, or on a separate leaflet.

Information sources

1. You can access the 2011 census data at www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk; enter your postcode, then select 'ward', and you will get a list of possible datasets; choose 'People and Society: Population and Migration' then explore the various tables. Local schools will also have an accurate picture of the ethnic makeup in the immediate area.
2. For labour market statistics (not distinguishing between migrants and locals), see www.nomisweb.co.uk
3. About asylum seekers and refugees: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk
4. About family integration: Google search for 'immigration legal services family reunification' in your local area, and try to meet with one of the lawyers to ask about people affected by restrictions on family reintegration.
5. Generally, The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford (www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk) is a good first port of call, and takes an objective view. Migration Watch UK (www.migrationwatchuk.co.uk) want tight controls on immigration.



Project 2: Engaging with local media

On the basis of the research outlined in the first project, local churches can become reliable sources of information about immigration in their locality, and can draw attention to some of the specific challenges around immigration which affect local people – whether immigrants or indigenous.

Taking action

- Monitor the local newspaper for articles on immigration and its impact, and examine any statistics that are quoted. See if they line up with your own research.
- Start to write letters or offer articles to your local newspaper, which champion the cause of accurately presenting facts surrounding migration.
- Arrange to meet some recent immigrants to your area, and interview them to learn more about their perspective and the challenges they face. Tell their stories.

Information sources

1. The Church and Media Network is a good place to begin, with a range of resources on connecting with the media: www.churchandmedia.net/
2. Evangelical Alliance has some great advice and resources on engaging with the media: www.eauk.org/current-affairs/media/media-resources/
3. Friends of the Earth have a helpful briefing about how and why to raise your voice in the local media: www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/cyw_60_letter_in_paper.pdf



Project 3: Offering English language classes

Most immigrants want to improve their English so they can engage more fully with life in Britain. This can help them access health care or education for their children, or find employment as they integrate into society. Language courses are an effective way of helping those who have come to Britain to make the cultural adjustment and to build relationships and friendships. Churches can also introduce Britain's Christian heritage and values, which are the basis of much that makes Britain an attractive destination for migrants.

According to Building Bridges ministry in Cambridge, 'Women's English classes are welcomed by Muslim leaders, as some Muslim women come to the UK with primary education only. Accustomed to staying within farms in rural Pakistan or Bangladesh, they are nervous at going out.'

Taking Action

- Find out what language classes are available to migrants locally, and explore the idea of setting one up in your church.
- Alternatively, offer to provide conversation practice to students in existing English language schools.

Information sources

1. English Language Courses – Friends International provides a network with plenty of resources and links for people interested in teaching English to speakers of other languages: www.friendsinternational.org.uk
2. SIM's 2:19 project (www.twonineteen.org.uk) is pioneering a replicable model for church-based 'Bridges English Language Schools'.
3. Train to become a language teacher: There are many TEFL training courses; the International Training Network (www.itnuk.com) and Christian TEFL (www.christiantefl.org) have a specifically Christian focus.
4. Courses could look at British culture and in particular draw on our Christian cultural heritage: www.christianityandculture.org.uk



Project 4: Building inter-church relationships

In the UK, most black or multicultural churches (BMCs) are witnessing dramatic growth in church attendance despite a decline of Christian participation in the majority population. Much of this growth is fuelled by migrants as the churches provide a platform for security, belonging, welfare, family life and hope for people moving to Britain.

However, in most cases the relationship between majority white churches and BMCs is limited or non-existent. A number of factors account for this, especially differences in liturgical style, worship and leadership.

Closer relationships would enrich the quality of worship and witness in the church, and also help build understanding between different national and ethnic groups in the same town.

Taking action

Relationships between majority white and BMCs could be strengthened through:

- Joint celebrations and prayer services: these could focus inward on relationships between Christians and outward to some of the common problems in the local area.
- Social engagement: many BMCs have little or no social impact in their communities. Collaboration with majority white churches could help release their energy and resources into tackling social justice issues.
- Community outreach: joint holiday clubs and other outreach activities would encourage members of both church groups to build and form positive social networks.

Information sources

1. The University of Roehampton has published a study on the history of BMCs in the London borough of Southwark: www.roehampton.ac.uk/BeingBuiltTogether/
2. 'Immigrants strengthen Christianity in the UK', an article about Christianity as the predominant religion of immigrants: www.thefirstpint.co.uk/2011/04/17/immigrants-strengthen-christianity-in-the-uk
3. CSR International Projects seek to mobilise BMCs and others to engage in social justice projects internationally and in Britain: www.jesushouse.org.uk/csr-international-projects



Project 5: Setting up an immigration advice service

It can be hard to navigate all the rules and regulations around immigration, and many migrants need advice and help at various points along the journey. Often migrants find themselves in a 'grey area' regarding their immigration status, and end up paying large fees to solicitors for advice which can be given for free by people who understand the system well. Thus local churches could set up immigration help and advice services, which could serve both migrants among church members as well as others in the community.

An individual, not-for-profit organisation or church can set up an immigration help and advice service through the Office of the Immigration Service Commissioner (OISC). An organisation can provide immigration advice and services at three levels authorised by the OISC; level 1 is basic immigration advice, level 2 is more complex casework, and level 3 is appeals.

Level 1 advice can be provided by people without any specialist legal training. Potential immigration help and advice providers must apply to the OISC either for registration, if they charge a fee for their services, or exemption, if they offer their assistance free of charge.

Taking action

- Do some initial research among migrants in your church or neighbourhood to find out how many of them need this kind of help and advice, and where they are currently obtaining it from.

Information sources

1. Read about how other churches have set up immigration advice services: www.citizensuk.org/2012/04/communities-working-together-to-revolutionise-access-to-immigration-advice
2. Browse through the OISC website: www.oisc.homeoffice.gov.uk/how_to_become_a_regulated_immigration_adviser



Project 6: Providing practical support

Many asylum seekers feel traumatised and may struggle with mental health issues. The same can happen to others who fall foul of the immigration system. Christians can show the love of Christ by offering practical and emotional support to those who have nowhere else to turn. This can help those in desperate or challenging situations to become more settled and empowered.

The Home Office has fourteen detention centres which are used to hold asylum seekers waiting for their case to be decided, as well as failed asylum seekers due for deportation.

Taking Action

- Your church community could provide a drop-in for advice and guidance in such areas as accommodation, employment, benefits, education and financial matters (separate from immigration advice – see project 5).
- You could offer support to immigrants and celebrate with them at citizenship ceremonies.
- You could offer help with lifts and transport, for example for hospital visits.

Information sources

1. Christian organisations such as International Care Network (www.icn.org.uk) have a wealth of experience in assisting asylum seekers and refugees.
2. Some organisations provide psychotherapy or advocacy support to those who have suffered persecution in their home countries. For example Solace, (www.solace-uk.org.uk) in the Leeds and Humberside region provides help to those with mental health difficulties as a result of maltreatment and exile.
3. Food banks are another way of expressing practical care (www.trusselltrust.org) and the Besom provides a bridge between those who want to give money, time, skills or gifts, and those who are in need: www.besom.com



Project 7: Extending hospitality

Many immigrants to the UK are students, who study for a few years before returning home. If your church is near a university or college, you might like to support existing work with overseas students or else start up a group yourselves. The number of international students in 2012-13 totalled 425,265 (44% from Asia, and 29% from the EU).

A survey indicated that around 90% of overseas students hoped to be invited to a meal with a British family at least once. Only 10% of them left Britain with their hope fulfilled.

Taking Action

- Find out whether there is an international student café project that you can support, or start one yourself.
- Start a group for international students after an evening service in someone's home, and link up internationals with families within the church for Sunday lunch or other such meals.
- You could offer focused outreach work to women and their families, befriending and building relationships. Many women feel isolated, having moved from large and close extended families to a more individualistic Western culture.

Information sources

1. Friends International (www.friendsinternational.org.uk) offers practical care and hospitality, supporting educational institutions in their care for international students, sharing the Christian faith, nurturing young Christians, and preparing students for the challenge of returning to their home culture. Among their initiatives are internet café projects, Summer cafes, and the Teaching English Network (TEN).
2. Building a welcoming community means not only providing a welcome for outsiders but also helping the host community to adjust to change. Christian leaders can help their congregations to make these adjustments and provide education and resources. More information can be found from Embrace: www.embraceni.org



Project 8: Sharing our faith and values in word and deed

As we go about our daily lives we will likely rub shoulders with those who have migrated to the UK. They are individuals, with their own needs and aspirations, and it is much easier to relate to real people rather than to the abstract idea of immigration. Often immigrants come from cultures that have much to teach us about community and the strength of family bonds, so churches can be encouraged to extend an invitation to join a church family and so share in word and deed the love of Christ and Christian faith.

Taking Action

- Start a 'Friendship First' group in your church using their resource: www.friendshipfirst.org/
- Learn more about the culture of the main ethnic minority groups in your neighbourhood.
- Visiting the country of origin of anyone in your neighbourhood is a great way of gaining understanding and insight to build relationships with those around you.

Information sources

1. Explore opportunities for cross-cultural training:
Redcliffe: www.redcliffe.org
All Nations: www.allnations.ac.uk
Kairos: www.kairoscourse.info
Perspectives: www.perspectives.org
2. Resources for working with those of other faiths include 'Friendship First' (www.friendshipfirst.org) by Steve Bell and Tim Green. This course encourages Christians to develop positive attitudes towards their Muslim neighbour, offers relevant knowledge about Islam and Muslim cultures and provides skills to build friendships and share the good news of Jesus.
3. Many mission organisations are involved in cross-cultural mission where there are immigrant communities in the UK. For example Interserve (www.interserve.org.uk) has a number of workers who have cross-cultural experience and who can be a resource for education and advice.

Conclusion

‘Westerners tend to want to fix a problem,’ notes the leader of one team at a charity offering care to refugees and asylum seekers. ‘When we are unable to do so, we think we have failed and are discouraged. Most non-westerners are, of course, delighted if we can help fix their problem, but for many what matters is not that the problem has been fixed, but that we have walked with them on the way. That is, it is relationship rather than issue that is vital.’

Whatever the public issue in question, our tendency is to focus on justice and fairness – and never is this more the case than with immigration. Between the lines of every argument, overtly or implied, our framework for thinking is, ‘What is fair?’. Even within this framework, though, it’s worth noting that we are biased towards thinking about what is fair for us. It rarely occurs to us, for example, that the only reason immigration exists in the first place is because there is injustice of one form or another in the world. Aside from conflict and persecution, poverty is a major reason for people to uproot themselves, leaving their families and communities, and seek a new life in a different country. Migration is often a failure of our collective efforts to address global inequality.

Though the Bible has a strong concern for justice, it is a partial limited and limiting measure. Justice is important, but it is not the whole of the Law. God’s own nature, and the way we are supposed to act, is characterised by *hesed* – faithfulness, Covenant love, loving-kindness – as well as justice, righteousness and holiness. This alone has the potential to transform the way we approach a difficult and divisive issue.

A biblically-grounded, holistic response to immigration as we are recommending in these pages can have a tremendous impact for good. Not only can it make the world of difference to individual immigrants who struggle with being accepted or integrated into British life, it can lead to a growth in the church and make a significant contribution to how the nation thinks about and responds to the phenomenon of immigration. Thus local churches have an unprecedented opportunity, at a time of heated debate over immigration, to show that in responding to God’s calling they can be part of the solution, and not simply go along with the flow.

Footnotes

- 1 Including Abigail Sykes, Andrew Barber, Andrew Scott, Anne Burghgraef, Chawkat Moucarry, Emily Shurmer, Georgia Snyder, Gordon Matthews, Guy Brandon, James Davies, Jonathan Tame, Kevin Scott, Leo Orobor, Noemi Mena Montes, Oana Romocea, Richard Gunton, Sally Bertlin.
- 2 See <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/politics/2012/08/how-mo-farah-rejected-plastic-brit-charge>
- 3 See <http://greenparty.org.uk/news/2013/07/12/speech-on-immigration-given-to-the-institute-for-cultural-diplomacy/>
- 4 The European Economic Area comprises the EU, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.
- 5 Office for National Statistics, *Migration Statistics Quarterly Report*, August 2014. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/migration-statistics-quarterly-report/august-2014/index.html>
- 6 'Brits Abroad', *BBC*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/brits_abroad/html/default.stm
- 7 'EU migrants moving to UK balanced by Britons living abroad' in the *Financial Times*, February 10, 2014.
- 8 'Two million British people emigrated to EU, figures show', *EU Observer*, 10th February 2014, see <http://euobserver.com/social/123066>
- 9 Mark Easton, Why are we so concerned about immigration? *BBC*, 2011. http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/legacy/reporters/markeaston/2011/02/why_are_we_so_concerned_about_im.html
- 10 Religion in England and Wales 2011, Office For National Statistics, released 11th December 2012.
- 11 'Muslim population "rising 10 times faster than the rest of society"' in *The Sunday Times*, 30th January 2009.
- 12 Peter Brierley, *London's Churches are Growing*, June 2013.
- 13 'NHS spends £23m a year on translators', *The Telegraph*, 6th Feb 2012.
- 14 'No to 70 million' petition, <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/19658>
- 15 'Capping Welfare and Reducing Immigration', Conservatives website, http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Immigration.aspx
- 16 'What We Stand For', UKIP website, <http://www.ukip.org/issues>
- 17 'Implications for stabilising the UK population at or under 70 million', The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/britains-70-million-debate/7-implications-stabilising-uk-population-or-under-70-million>
- 18 'Using EU indicators of immigrant integration', European Commission, March 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/immigration/general/docs/final_report_on_using_eu_indicators_of_immigrant_integration_june_2013_en.pdf
- 19 Fairness and Justice are not synonymous, and much has been written of the differences between the two. Clearer definitions of justice and other key concepts are given when examined from a biblical perspective, below.
- 20 F. Brown, S. Driver, C. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (BDB) (Hendrickson, 3rd printing, 1997). Unless stated otherwise all Hebrew definitions are taken from this lexicon.
- 21 'What is Biblical Justice?' Tim Keller in *Relevant Magazine*, 23rd August 2012. See <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/practical-faith/what-biblical-justice>

- 22 If the *nokri* was not charged interest, he could borrow freely from the Israelites and make money by lending at interest elsewhere. Leviticus 25:35-37 show that the *ger* was to be treated the same as the native Israelite.
- 23 This summary draws on 'Ethics', *Dictionary of the Old Testament I: Pentateuch*, pp. 224-29.
- 24 As *Dictionary of the Old Testament* states, 'Another Hebrew word and concept (*hesed*) may better serve as a context for Jesus' and Paul's reference to love.' (p. 227)
- 25 Cf. table in Jonathan Burnside, *The Status and Welfare of Immigrants* (Jubilee Centre, 2001), p. 21.
- 26 *The Status and Welfare of Immigrants*, pp. 29-33.
- 27 *Dictionary of the Old Testament*, p. 29.
- 29 The book *Life in the United Kingdom: a guide for new residents* attempts such a coherent narrative and must be read by those applying for naturalisation, but contains many facts that native-born Brits would not know.
- 30 <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/02/terrorism-islam-ideology>, italics mine.
- 31 Damian Green speech given on 2nd February 2012, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/making-immigration-work-for-britain--2>
- 32 'Two million British people emigrated to EU, figures show', *EU Observer*, 10th February 2014, see <http://euobserver.com/social/123066>
- 33 'Figures show extent of NHS reliance on foreign nationals', *The Guardian*, 26th February 2014, see <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jan/26/nhs-foreign-nationals-immigration-health-service>
- 34 '£100m UK aid, but Malawi's nurses are still overworked and underpaid', *The Guardian*, 19th August 2007, see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/aug/19/1>
- 35 'Ignore the anti-immigrant hysteria, Britain is not full', Philippe Legrain in *The New Statesman*, 2010, emphasis added. See <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2010/04/britain-population-immigration>
- 36 *Perception and Reality: 10 things we should know about attitudes to immigration in the UK*. IPSOS MORI Social Research Institute, January 2014. See <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Publications/sri-perceptions-and-reality-immigration-report-summary-2013.pdf>
- 37 See Nick Spencer, *Apolitical Animal* (Jubilee Centre, 2003).
- 38 This section refers to the framework and concerns of *The Jubilee Roadmap* (Jubilee Centre, 2012).
- 39 Although the New Testament provides many insights for our culture, it is the Old Testament that is more concerned with the way society as a whole (rather than the community of believers) was supposed to be structured. And, unlike Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God, it builds in the impact of 'hardness of heart', which is necessary when dealing with secular society.
- 40 Anne Burghraef, clinical therapist working with Solace, a Leeds-based organisation that works with asylum seekers and refugees suffering from mental health issues. Personal correspondence.
- 41 Kevin Scott, personal correspondence.

All links are correct as of February 2015

About the Jubilee Centre

Jubilee Centre's mission is to articulate a biblical framework for public life – especially the big issues around the economy, politics and society – and equip Christian leaders to be salt and light in a secular, pluralistic world.

Half a century ago Harry Blamires, student of CS Lewis and author of 'The Christian Mind', began his seminal book with the statement, 'There is no longer a Christian mind' – meaning distinctly Christian thinking about political, social, educational and cultural issues. Instead Blamires argued that the Church had abdicated its intellectual authority in the public square to secularism.

This was one reason why the Jubilee Centre was founded in 1983, to recover a biblical perspective on the big questions of life and society, without departing from the personal challenge of the gospel.

How should Christians exercise public leadership? Is there a biblical alternative to capitalism or socialism? How does the gospel address individualism and consumerism? Grappling with these questions has forged the Jubilee Centre's mission for the past 30 years.

The way we do this is through research and publications, including the widely read Cambridge Papers, events and conferences. Often collaborating with like-minded organisations and churches in Britain and abroad, we seek to present radical, biblical responses to some of society's most pressing challenges, in a winsome and practical way.

We invite readers to explore the wide range of resources on our website, www.jubilee-centre.org, to sign up for our regular mailings, and to follow us on Facebook and Twitter (@JubileeCentre).

About *Immigration and Justice*

Over the last few years, and especially in the run up to the 2015 general election, public opinion has been divided over the impact of immigration on jobs, welfare and social cohesion. Cries of 'It's not fair!' abound on all sides.

Meanwhile, Christians have long been at the forefront of welcoming the stranger, and providing care and advocacy for asylum seekers and refugees. Many people arriving in Britain are Christians too, such that some of the largest churches around the country are made up mainly of immigrants.

However, the effects of multiculturalism and the EU's policy on free movement have led many people to support stricter controls on immigration. How should Christians respond to this, and what is the Church's primary contribution today?

This booklet explains the different categories of migrant, seeks to get to the facts behind the headlines, and sets out a biblical perspective on justice in the context of immigration. It then proposes shifting the emphasis of the debate and outlines a set of projects through which local churches can engage missionally with immigration – by helping shape the debate, meeting real needs and witnessing to God's kingdom.

'The Jubilee Centre is well-known for addressing contemporary issues from a biblical perspective. Issues around immigration are always at the forefront of political discourse – often uninformed, prejudiced and partisan. This booklet should provoke reflection among our churches – and the excellent Projects section at the end may well inspire timely action in our local communities all over the country.'

Rev. James Davies, Churches Refugee Network Steering Group