

M. Daniel Carroll R.

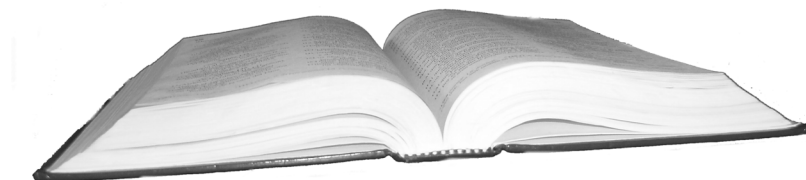
is the Earl S. Kalland Chair of Old Testament at Denver Seminary and is an adjunct professor at SETECA in Guatemala. He and his wife have two sons. This paper was originally presented in the panel "A Brave New World? The Politics of Biblical Authority and Individual Human Rights in the 21st Century" at the 2006 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, in Washington, DC.



The Bible, the Church, and Human Rights in Contemporary Debates about Hispanic Immigration in the United States

Introduction

Hispanic immigration into the United States is a specific human rights challenge that is of supreme relevance today in terms of economic realities, legislation, health care, and education. Here I have attempted to articulate the importance and role of the Bible in relation to this issue.



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The set of problems related to Hispanic immigration is of personal interest to me for several reasons. First of all, I am half-Guatemalan (my mother is Guatemalan). My mother married a US American, but we were raised bilingual and bicultural. Growing up, I spent a lot of time south of the border. Part of my wrestling with this issue is comparing my experiences with what I see happening now. For thirteen years before coming to Denver Seminary I taught at a seminary in Guatemala City, where I continue as an adjunct professor. The topics that I have had to address in the classroom down there have been shifting over the last decade, from focusing on nation-building after the end of the conflicts on the isthmus to the pressures and changes arising from economic globalization and, yes, immigration—immigration within Central America, not just to the United States. Immigration of Guatemalans to the United States, however, is affecting familial, cultural, legal, and economic realities in particular ways. Such effects are obvious even to the casual observer, but they were brought home to me in a more formal manner this summer when I read a study by a team from FLACSO, a Latin American social studies think tank, with the fascinating title: *Después de Nuestro Señor, Estados Unidos*.¹ This book presents case studies that trace the impact of immigration to the United States on national life, and it argues for changing the starting point for reflecting on immigration from considerations of national security (and they are not talking only about US security) to questions about human rights. US American concerns

¹ Silvia Irene Palma ed., *Después de Nuestro Señor, Estados Unidos: Perspectivas de análisis del comportamiento e implicaciones de la migración internacional en Guatemala* (Guatemala: FLACSO, 2004). See *Latin American Theology: A Christian Perspective from the Latino South* 1, no. 2, pp. 151-156 for a book review of this title.