

The Stranger

A Christian and Constitutional Case for Protecting Those Who Come to America

By Ammon Bundy

From its earliest beginnings, the United States has claimed to be a nation “conceived in liberty.” [a] That promise was never meant to be limited by birthplace. Long before there was a United States, men and women crossed oceans seeking the same things that still move the human heart today—freedom, safety, opportunity, faith, and the hope of belonging. To call such people criminals for lacking official permission is to forget the moral law of God, the historical truth of our own founding, and the Constitutional ideals that continue to define justice.

I. God’s Law and the Unalienable Right to Migrate

Before there were nations, there was the divine command: “*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.*” (Genesis 1:28 [1]). The right to move, to seek peace, and to provide for one’s family is not a privilege granted by people in governments; it is part of the created order and a natural right of mankind.

Scripture teaches that every person is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27 [2]). From that divine image flows the natural right to live and to seek a place where life can flourish. “*The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it*” (Psalm 24:1 [3]). No human boundary can erase that truth. The biblical command is unambiguous: “*Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt*” (Deuteronomy 10:19 [4]). Likewise, God instructs, “*And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself.*” (Leviticus 19:33–34 [3a])

Jesus embodied that command. As an infant He fled violence and became a refugee in Egypt (Matthew 2:13–15 [5]). Joseph and Mary’s permission to flee to Egypt came from an angel of God not Cesare or Pharaoh. In His parables Jesus erased tribal and national distinctions: the Samaritan, not the Levite or Jewish Priest, was the true neighbor (Luke 10:25–37 [6]). **To welcome the stranger is therefore not a political preference but a Christian duty.** The moral law requires only one limit—no one may harm another’s life, liberty, or property (Romans 13:9–10 [7]). Beyond that, movement and residence are matters of conscience and need, not sin or criminality.

II. America's Founders and the Reality of Unauthorized Settlement

The settlers who became America's founders did not wait for permission. The Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth in 1620 had no royal license to settle where they did, and certainly none from the Native nations whose territory they occupied [8]. Thousands of other Europeans crossed the Atlantic on their own initiative, paying for passage and settling wherever they found opportunity [9]. Religious refugees—Puritans, Quakers, Baptists, Huguenots—often left secretly because their faiths were banned. For them, “illegal” travel was the only path to liberty [10].

One of the earliest and most poignant examples appears in Charles Carleton Coffin's *The Story of Liberty*. In 1607 a congregation of English Separatists sought to escape the king's persecution and sail for Holland. The men secretly boarded a vessel, planning for their wives and children to follow. But royal officers arrived before the women could embark. Hoping to trap the men, **the officers seized the women and children, holding them as hostages to force the men to return.** Coffin recounts that “*seeing they could do no more, the magistrates at last let the poor women go.*” [11] Those families—once criminalized for trying to leave their native country—later became the Pilgrims who crossed the Atlantic. Their defiance of unjust authority planted one of the first seeds of American liberty.

Even after colonies formed, the British crown's orders were routinely ignored. The Proclamation of 1763 forbade settlement west of the Appalachians; **colonists went anyway** [12]. Those “illegal settlers” became the revolutionaries who declared that liberty and the pursuit of happiness were rights given by God, not favors from a monarch [13]. In short, the United States was built by people who migrated and settled **without permission** [14].

III. The Constitution's Protection of Persons, Not Papers

When the Constitution was written, **it contained no clause giving government authority to stop peaceful migration** [15]. The Naturalization Clause in Article I empowers Congress only to set rules for citizenship, not to close the nation's doors [16]. The notion of federal “sovereign” power to exclude foreigners arose much later, through nineteenth-century court decisions such as *Chae Chan Ping v. United States*, 130 U.S. 581 (1889)—an interpretation born of fear during the Chinese Exclusion era, not of the founders' text [17].

By contrast, the Constitution's express protections are universal. The **Fifth Amendment** forbids depriving any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law [18]. The **Fourteenth Amendment** guarantees equal protection to all persons within U.S. jurisdiction [19]. In *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*, 118 U.S. 356 (1886), the Supreme Court confirmed that these words apply “*to all persons within the territorial jurisdiction, without regard to differences of race, of*

color, or of nationality” [20]. The law therefore recognizes what Christian faith already teaches: an individuals’ rights and identity do not depend on documentation [21].

IV. Learning from America’s Moral Failures

History shows that when law forgets its purpose—to protect rather than to persecute—it becomes a weapon of injustice. The **Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882** was the first federal statute to bar immigration on the basis of race or nationality [22]. It arose not from war but from domestic fear and resentment in the American West. Labor Unions, blaming Chinese workers for low wages, demanded exclusion, and Congress complied [23]. The law forbade nearly all immigration from China and denied Chinese residents the possibility of citizenship. It stood for more than sixty years [24].

That same mindset—seeing people of a different background as outsiders unworthy of equal protection—reappeared repeatedly throughout American history. In the 1840s, **Irish immigrants** fleeing famine were branded as criminals and papists, attacked in the streets, and denied jobs under signs that read “No Irish Need Apply” [25]. In the 1850s, the Know-Nothing Party arose, calling for longer naturalization periods and seeking to bar **Catholics** from office, claiming their faith made them disloyal [26].

At the same time, **Latter-day Saints (Mormons)**, many being European immigrants, were driven from Missouri and Illinois by armed mobs and state militias under official decrees that branded them “enemies.” Governor Lilburn Boggs’s 1838 “Extermination Order” made it lawful to kill them or drive them out of the state—an act of open, state-sanctioned religious persecution [27]. The survivors fled west and built new lives in the desert, proving again that liberty often survives only where permission is denied [28].

Italian immigrants were often portrayed as dangerous, uneducated, and incapable of assimilation. Newspapers called them “dagos” and “mafiosi.” Employers refused to hire them. Politicians claimed they brought crime and disease. Even churches and charities sometimes turned them away, saying they were “too foreign” or “too Catholic” [29].

Yet, like every persecuted group before them, the Italian immigrants answered hatred with hard work and perseverance. They built railroads, mined coal, farmed barren land, and filled the ranks of the factories that powered America’s growth [30]. Their children fought in America’s wars, prayed in her churches, and helped build the very cities that once despised them [31].

Then came the **Japanese-American internment** during World War II. After Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, fear and suspicion swept the country. Under **Executive Order 9066**, more

than 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of them U.S. citizens, were forced from their homes and confined in camps surrounded by barbed wire [32]. No charges, no trials—only ancestry was required for imprisonment.

Four decades later, Congress and the President of the United States formally apologized, recognizing the internment as a “grave injustice” born of “wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership” [33]. But the damage—to families, property, and trust—could never be fully undone [34].

Each generation’s unjust laws were framed as “necessary for order,” but time revealed their true nature: **they were acts of fear disguised as law**. Whether against Catholics, Mormons, Irish, Asians, Italians, or Mexicans, the pattern is the same:

1. Identify a new group as the cause of society’s troubles.
2. Write laws to restrict or punish them.
3. Call those laws “protection.”
4. Regret them later when history exposes their injustice [35].

Calling peaceful migrants “criminals” for crossing from one human jurisdiction to another repeats this same moral failure—confusing regulation with righteousness, and fear with justice [36]. **True crime is the deliberate injury of another’s rights. Peaceful existence is not a crime.** When law punishes presence rather than harm, it ceases to serve justice and instead becomes an offender to it [37].

V. The True Solution: Punish Harm, Protect Liberty

The moral and Constitutional solution to the immigration question is not greater punishment for presence but equal punishment for harm [38]. Whether a man was born in Texas or across the border, his moral standing before the law should be measured by one standard: **Has he violated the rights of another person?**

1. **Equal accountability** — Those who steal, defraud, assault, or destroy must face swift and impartial justice, immigrant or not. Crime is not nationality or race; it is conduct [39].
2. **Equal liberty** — Those who live peaceably, labor honestly, and respect their neighbors’ life and property should be free from persecution, suspicion, legal jeopardy or arbitrary control. Liberty is the natural state of man; restraint is justified only in defense. [40].
3. **Limited government power** — The purpose of law is to defend rights, not create victims. [41] When law punishes a person for existing rather than for injuring another, it has turned away from both justice and its constitutional purpose [42].

Under both Scripture and the Constitution, liberty ends only where another’s rights begin [43]. This principle preserves public safety without sacrificing freedom. It honors God’s command—“*Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law*” (Romans 13:10 [44])—and fulfills the Constitution’s promise that no person shall be deprived of life or liberty without due process [45].

VI. Faith and the Founding Creed in Harmony

The Declaration of Independence declares that all people are “created equal” and “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights” [46]. That statement, echoing Scripture, locates an individual’s rights in God, not government [47]. Both the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the founding creed teach that authority must exist for the sake of justice, not exclusion. Governments are ordained to punish wrongdoing and protect the innocent (Romans 13:3–4 [48]), not to deny shelter, work or residency to those who seek peace [49].

A nation faithful to both the Constitution and the Gospel of Jesus Christ will therefore protect life, liberty, and property for all who live within its reach [50]. It will enforce its laws against those who harm others, but it will not criminalize honest labor or peaceful presence [51]. Borders may serve the purposes of order and protection, yet order and safety must always yield to justice and divine law; for when they do not, both safety and order perish [52].

VII. The Consequences of Forgetting Justice and Mercy

When a nation ceases to protect all people equally, it begins to corrode the very foundations that sustain it. The moral cost is immediate, and the social decay soon follows.

1. Moral Consequences. Scripture warns that injustice invites judgment: “*Woe to those who make unjust laws, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed;*” (Isaiah 10:1–2 [53]). When law is used to oppress rather than to defend, it turns the strength of government into sin. God rebuked Israel for oppressing “*the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow*” (Jeremiah 7:5–7 [54]). A people that close their hearts to justice and charity close their doors to divine blessing. Christ declared that the nations will be judged by how they treat the least of these: “*I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not*” (Matthew 25:43 [55]). To refuse refuge is not merely unkind—it is disobedience to the very command that defines Christian faith and its condition for salvation. [56].

2. Social Consequences. History confirms the pattern. Societies that divide people by origin or status sow distrust and violence within their own borders [57]. Empires that enslaved or excluded

foreign peoples eventually collapsed under rebellion and moral exhaustion [58]. In America, every era of exclusion—Native removals, slavery, segregation, religious bigotry and race-based immigration bans—left wounds that were difficult to heal [59]. Each produced social conflict, economic loss, and a stain on national conscience. Denying refuge does not secure peace; it multiplies suffering. The refusal to shelter Jewish refugees in the 1930s stands as one of the darkest moral failures of the modern world [60]. Fear and prejudice may preserve comfort for a moment, but they destroy moral credibility for centuries [61].

3. The Withering of Freedom. When a government decides that some persons are less entitled to protection, the precedent never stops at the border. Injustice toward the outsider becomes permission to oppress the insider. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote from Birmingham Jail, *“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”* [62]. A nation that denies refuge will soon find its own citizens unsafe, for it has taught itself to ignore the higher laws [63].

4. Restoring the Blessing. Scripture promises renewal to the people who repent of hardness and return to mercy: *“If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke ... and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry; and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity; and thy darkness be as noonday”* (Isaiah 58:9-10 [64]). Equal protection is not only a legal principle but an act of worship—the nation’s acknowledgment that every human being bears God’s image [65]. To protect all who dwell within its reach is therefore both moral obedience and civic wisdom. It heals division, strengthens trust, and invites divine blessing [66]. The refusal to do so leads to the opposite: fear, decay, withdrawal of God’s blessings and eventual ruin [67].

VIII. Conclusion, A Call to America

From the first settlers who crossed the Atlantic to the families arriving today, the same hope has guided human movement: to live free under God [68]. The United States honors both its faith and its founding when it treats newcomers not as trespassers but as neighbors [69]. Every person who comes seeking peace carries the same image of the Creator that the Pilgrims claimed for themselves (Genesis 1:27 [70]).

To protect such people is not weakness; it is fidelity—to the Gospel of Jesus Christ that commands love of the stranger, to the Constitution that protects every person’s liberty, and to the American story itself [71]. As the Apostle Paul wrote, *“You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of His household”* (Ephesians 2:19 [72]). When America lives by that truth—punishing harm and protecting the peaceful—it remains what it was meant to be: a refuge of freedom under God, a nation where law and mercy walk together [73].

Notes – Introduction

- a. National Archives, Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address* (1863).

Section I

1. *Holy Bible*, King James Version (KJV), Genesis 1:28 — “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” Public Domain, Bible Gateway or King James Bible Online.
2. *Holy Bible*, King James Version (KJV), Genesis 1:26–27 — “Let us make man in our image...”
3. *Holy Bible*, KJV, Psalm 24:1 — “The earth is the LORD’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”
- 3a. *Holy Bible*, King James Version, Leviticus 19:33–34. “And if a stranger sojourn with the in your land, yes shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself...”
4. *Holy Bible*, KJV, Deuteronomy 10:19 — “Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.”
5. *Holy Bible*, KJV, Matthew 2:13–15 — The flight of Joseph and Mary with the Christ child into Egypt.
6. *Holy Bible*, KJV, Luke 10:25–37 — Parable of the Good Samaritan.
7. *Holy Bible*, KJV, Romans 13:9–10 — “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Section II

8. Library of Congress, “The Mayflower and the Pilgrims,” overview of the 1620 voyage and settlement.
9. Britannica, “European Colonization of North America (16th–17th centuries).”
10. History.com, “Puritans,” explaining religious persecution and migration motives.
11. Charles Carleton Coffin, *The Story of Liberty* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1879), pp. 322–324, ch. XXXII “The Pilgrims.”
12. National Archives, “The Proclamation of 1763,” British attempt to halt westward expansion.
13. National Archives, *The Declaration of Independence* (1776).
14. Library of Congress, “Colonial Settlement in America,” showing unlicensed expansion and migration patterns.

Section III

15. National Archives, “The Constitution of the United States: Overview.”

16. U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 8, Clause 4 (Naturalization Clause); Library of Congress, *Constitution Annotated*.
17. *Chae Chan Ping v. United States* (1889), official opinion, U.S. Supreme Court.
18. U.S. Constitution, Amendment V, “Due Process Clause.”
19. U.S. Constitution, Amendment XIV, “Equal Protection Clause.”
20. *Yick Wo v. Hopkins* (1886), official opinion, U.S. Supreme Court.
21. Britannica, “Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.”

Section IV

22. History.com, “Chinese Exclusion Act (1882).”
23. Bill of Rights Institution, “The Chinese Exclusion Act.”
24. Britannica, “Chinese Exclusion Act, United States [1882–1943].”
25. Library of Congress, “Irish Immigration to America.”
26. History.com, “Know-Nothing Party.”
27. Missouri State Archives, “Executive Order 44 — The Mormon Extermination Order (1838).”
28. Britannica, “Mormon Trail,” describing the migration of Latter-day Saints westward from Illinois to Utah (1846–1869) following persecution and expulsion from Missouri and Illinois.
29. History.com, “Italian Immigrants in America.”
30. Britannica, “Italian Americans and the Labor Movement.”
31. Library of Congress, “Italian American Experience in the United States.”
32. National Archives, “Executive Order 9066 (1942).”
33. U.S. Civil Liberties Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-383); National Archives summary.
34. History.com, “Japanese Internment Camps.”
35. Smithsonian Magazine, “Recurring Nativism in American History.”
36. Britannica, “Immigration Policy of the United States — Historical Overview.”
37. Romans 13:10 (KJV) and Isaiah 10:1–2 (KJV), — “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law confirming scriptural definition of justice and harm.” — “Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed;”

Section V

38. Britannica, “Criminal Law — Harm Principle.”
39. U.S. Department of Justice, “Equal Justice Under Law: Mission Statement.”
40. National Archives, “Bill of Rights (1791),” explaining limitations of government power.
41. Bastiat, Frédéric. *The Law*. Translated by Dean Russell, Foundation for Economic Education, 1950.
42. Library of Congress, *Constitution Annotated*, “Due Process and Equal Protection.”

43. History.com, “Philosophies of Liberty and the Social Contract in the American Founding.”
44. *Holy Bible*, King James Version, Romans 13:10. —“Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law”.
45. U.S. Constitution, Amendment V, “Due Process Clause.”

Section VI

46. National Archives, *The Declaration of Independence* (1776).
47. Library of Congress, “Religion and the Founding of the American Republic.”
48. *Holy Bible*, King James Version, Romans 13:3–4 — “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.”
49. History.com, “Biblical Influences on America’s Founding Fathers.”
50. Britannica, “United States Constitution and Individual Rights.”
51. Library of Congress, “Equal Protection of the Laws.”
52. The Papers of Benjamin Franklin (Yale University’s Franklin Papers) “Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety.”
53. Isaiah 1:17 (KJV) — “Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”

Section VII

53. *Holy Bible*, KJV, Isaiah 10:1-2. 1 — “Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; 2 To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless!”
54. *Holy Bible*, KJV, Jeremiah 7:5-7. 5 — “5 For if ye throughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye throughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour. 6 If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: 7 Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.”
55. *Holy Bible*, KJV, Matthew 25:43 — “I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.”
56. History.com, “Religion in Early America — Faith and Morality.”
57. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum — “The Rwandan Genocide.”
58. Britannica, “Empires and Their Decline — Social and Moral Factors.”
59. Library of Congress, “Segregation and the Civil Rights Movement.”
60. History.com, “The Voyage of the St. Louis and U.S. Refusal of Jewish Refugees.”
61. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, “America and the Holocaust.”
62. Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail* (1963).
63. National Archives, “Civil Rights and Civil Liberties in America.”

64. *Holy Bible*, KJV, Isaiah 58:9-10. — “Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; 10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:”
65. Genesis 1:27 (KJV) — “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”
66. Proverbs 14:34 (KJV) — “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.”
67. History.com, “Social Consequences of Discrimination in American History.”

Section VIII

68. Library of Congress, “Colonial Settlement and Immigration to America.”
69. Smithsonian National Museum of American History, “Immigration and the American Identity.”
70. *Holy Bible*, KJV, Genesis 1:27. — “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”
71. National Archives, “The U.S. Constitution and the Promise of Liberty.”
72. *Holy Bible*, KJV, Ephesians 2:19. — “You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of His household”
73. Proverbs 21:3 (KJV) — “To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.”