

# Consensus

---

Volume 42  
Issue 2 *Living through COVID-19, looking  
beyond COVID-19*

Article 16

---

7-25-2021

## At this also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place

Cláudio Carvalhaes

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Carvalhaes, Cláudio (2021) "At this also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place," *Consensus*: Vol. 42 : Iss. 2 , Article 16.

Available at: <https://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol42/iss2/16>

This Sermons is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Consensus by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact [scholarscommons@wlu.ca](mailto:scholarscommons@wlu.ca).

## At this also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place

Cláudio Carvalhaes<sup>1</sup>

**Text: Job 37: 1-13**

*“At this... also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place.”*

When walls are seeing as ways of resolve the complexities of global humanitarian crisis

*“At this... also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place.”*

When walls become the major distraction that engulfs the whole nation, hiding the reasons of suffering, with rich congress people rule for their own class and capitalism keeps devouring the earth and stealing people’s lives by taking away their rights, their dignity, their ability to move and to live.

*“At this... also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place.”*

When private prisons are business locking and shaming and making profit our of precious human beings.

*“At this... also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place.”*

When children are placed in cages in order to scare people and placed for adoption. When 14,000 children are in cages in this country.

*“At this... my heart is caged and trembles. My heart is caged and leaps out of its place.”*

They are my children! They are my children! And I am this close to going mad! When mothers and a bunch of nobodies, fathers and mothers, abuelitos y abuelitas, children of all ages are received at the border with military might, anger and tear gas.

*“At this... also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place.”*

When we are so confused that fear and hatred are the main political feelings of our time. When the suffering of our precious children is naturalized and to see somebody else suffer becomes a national perverse pleasure.

*“At this... also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place.”*

---

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Dr. Cláudio Carvalhaes is Associate Professor of Worship at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. This sermon was preached at the *Migration and Border Crossings* Conference at Columbia Theological Seminary in February 2019.

When xenophobia and chanting “build the wall” become the ways to protect ourselves.

*“At this... also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place.”*

When the wonders of God seem to be have been surpassed by the human made disasters.

*“At this... also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place.”*

When we see the existence of the earth coming to its end.

*“At this... also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place.”*

When was it that we settled for the idea that citizenship is the way of authorizing someone to belong to a place? Or when official papers became what authenticate somebody's worthiness? Or when was it that we start to assume that we even have the right to citizenship in a country?

As Christians, we must be ready to get involved and respond to this situation. As Christians, we should be perplexed to see the state of this nation and how our faith has helped built a state dominated by xenophobic white patriarchal supremacists. As Christians, we should mourn and be ashamed of the massacre of indigenous people and the stealing of their lands which are now, by law, our private land that we claim is ours. As Christians, we should never settle for notions of citizenship or be faithful to any country or flag. For our citizenship is not here but elsewhere and since it is not here, the here we have now should belong to anyone who comes and knocks at our door. That is the impossibility of the Christian gospel. An impossibility that Christian liberals tend to take too lightly.

Kumbaia my lord! We say! Come everyone! But we are not ready to think that the arrival of other people will challenge what is in place. If we defend immigrants coming to US, we should know that they will “disrupt” our lives. And also know that this will be a good thing. For the challenge of liberals are not only to issue the welcome to immigrants but to pay attention to its challenges so we can create conditions of possibilities for people to arrive and live well. It is our responsibility to get involved. So we must learn as much as possible and see the challenged and help create expansive policies for immigrants and refugees.

We have to know that people move because of their needs and their sufferings. I was a pastor of an undocumented community in Massachusetts for 5 years and I can tell you this: 99% of our community were made of people coming to US because they had lost their possibilities of living in their countries and they were scared. People go where the money is.

I have been an immigrant. Now I consider myself an “immigrant citizen.” Citizen because of a document I got, but fundamentally an immigrant, because of my real nature, and mostly because of my faith. I felt like an immigrant in Brazil, I feel like an immigrant here and anywhere I go. “Immigrant” is what defines my citizenship. For my home is not in any country but in the heart of my family, in the heart of my community, in the hearts of those who embrace me. And my everlasting home is in the shalom of God. Yes, that's my home: the shalom of God!

This time asks us to aware! The movement of people around the globe happens because of global ecological disasters and geo-economic decisions made by rich countries.

- the neoliberal economical vortex consuming the whole world;
- The political arena taken my millionaires and billionaires;
- the rise of wars, military power and nationalist states;
- the shrinking of the number of jobs;
- the expulsion of people from rural areas;
- the mechanization of jobs and the precariousness of work;
- the outsourcing of social resources from the people to few billionaires;
- many forms of extractivism growing ecological crises with growing global warming;
- uncontrollable privatization of desires;
- Making it impossible for people and for the earth to breath.

*“At this... also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place.”*

The crisis at our borders with Mexico have its specificities. People from Central America are fleeing gang violence, extreme poverty, organized crime and systemic corruption, due to the region’s cold war conflicts and US deep influence.

Another major driving force of this and all of the other caravans that will certainly come to US is climate change. Robert Albro says that people are moving mostly because of some version of food insecurity. In fact, people are moving is because they don’t have anything to eat. This has a strong link to climate change – we are seeing tremendous climate instability that is radically changing food security in the region.” In the coming decades, climate change is likely to push millions more people north towards the US.”

*“At this... also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place.”*

As a response, the nationalist rhetoric in the United States pivots away from brownness to construct a reality of pan-criminalization for all racialized brown bodied people. Today in the US, to be brown bodied is to be a Muslim-Hindu-Christian-immigrant-mexican-central-american-terrorist-rapist-low-skilled-poor-drug-dealer-illegal-dependent-animal.

Slowly this genocide of brown bodied people has grown through the expansion of immigration detention, mass raids, and deportations. A white nationalist government continues to attack people of color from its inception.

*“At this... also my heart trembles, and leaps out of its place.”*

The wall is but an indicator/outcome of this process. Because the desire for the wall is the desire of something else. The wall is the desire of some people to get back their ability to control the country the way they think they use to control it. White folks are feeling pressured because they cannot live the way they used to live.

- They cannot make racist jokes the way they did;
- They cannot grab women’s private parts without being held accountable;
- They cannot have the best jobs so easily for they have to compete with minorities;

- They cannot have their wives being submissive to them the way they used to;
- They cannot walk on the streets and feel safe the way they did;
- They cannot go around and look only for people who look like them;
- They cannot have their Christian religion to make them safe because now, their Jesus is threatened by the gods of the people of color: Mohamad, Ganesh, Buddha, the Orixas and so on.

The desires that wants the wall comes because black and brown and yellow and red people have taken the front seat of this nation and we can't stand that. The wall is about the fear of movement, the fear of freedom. People cannot be free for they will come take away our movement and our freedom!

Make America Great Again means: bring us the illusion that the wall will get rid of these fears. As we see, the wall around immigration is but a symptom. A symptom of an array of capitalist, patriarchal, white supremacy fears of weakness and desires of control and dominance.

As Christians, we must learn what is at stake with these symptoms and continue to call this wall a wall of shame, a wall of sin, a wall of embarrassment, a wall of violence. The wall between Mexico and US can be compared to the walls of shame and ethical cleansing between Israel and Palestine. The Palestinian people, a precious people to the eyes of God.

At every wall there is the ideology of the powerful to protect themselves and dominate. As Jane Bennett, in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*<sup>2</sup> says we need two movements: "relentless approach toward demystification" and the creation of "positive formulations." In other words: relentless truth-telling and proposing positive alternatives.

We must keep calling on the Jesus of the marginalized and side with those suffering. We must keep calling on the freedom of the gospel, the freedom that Jesus has called us to live fully and don't give up on it. This freedom we must exercise every day and realize that we can only be free when we are bound to one another.

Our work as Christians is to change the narratives of fake security, of fear, of threatening. Our work as Christians is to move away from the pan-criminalization of brownness. Our work as Christians is to break the ideology of white patriarchal nationalism and denounce the building of walls. The walls that build fear, the walls that limits movement, the walls that try to prevent imagination, and make us think that we are enough.

To do all of this will require us to engage into a counter vision, one that is provided by the gospel of Jesus Christ whereby a racialized caravan is converted into a caravan of very important guests arriving! They are God's gift to us. Just like the Mexican president is doing right now welcoming to Mexico all of the folks from the Central American caravan.

We have to strengthen ourselves in prayer and loving kindness. We have to claim the name of God to cast away fear. Fear doesn't belong in our hearts. And by the gospel of freedom of Jesus Christ we will keep on moving! As Christians, we are always **transvaluing** the moral system of our society.

When they say "these people are animals and filled with diseases," we say *they are precious!* When they say "this country is in danger with the approaching of this people" we

---

<sup>2</sup> Jane Bennett, in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press, 2009).

say *this country is in danger because of its political leaders*. When they say “the wall is the way out” we say *the wall is not even an option*.

We will keep saying that this wall will not decrease violence, it will destroy the ecological life of the region and will make people suffer. We will say too that receiving people will be good for our souls, for our communities, for our life together. Our response to the cry to “build that wall” will be to chant: *bring down that wall*. But let me open parentheses here about walls. We must be aware that we also need to have walls and borders! We need walls to protect the most vulnerable! We must build borders to shield our children from cages! We must build walls and laws that guarantee people’s abilities to search for a dignified life.

As Christians, we are already prepared to response to this wall. **First**, our baptismal vows demand for us to care deeply for all of these Christian children of God. **Second**, our love to God demands us to love our neighbors no matter their faith. There are no fences in God’s grace. No walls! No separation! As Martin Luther King Jr. preached in east Berlin before the wall that divided Europe:

“It is indeed an honor to be in this city, which stands as a symbol of the divisions of men on the face of the earth. For here on either side of the wall are God’s children and no man-made barrier can obliterate that fact. Whether it be East or West, men and women search for meaning, hope for fulfillment, yearn for faith in something beyond themselves, and cry desperately for love and community to support them in this pilgrim journey.”<sup>3</sup>

And today, this wall doesn’t exist. Alleluia! Who would ever imagine that at that time? It is with this hope that we fight against this wall. For this wall will come crumbling down one day! Thank God, the borders are filled with Christians doing a fantastic work everywhere living out the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not only here but elsewhere. In the Netherlands, Bethel Church in The Hague celebrated 96 days of uninterrupted worship service with more than 500 pastors from across traditions to support a family of Arminian Refugees and they received permission to stay.

This is what the church does! That is the good news we offer: praise and compassion! If we do the work of real people of faith, listening to each side and fighting for the voiceless, we will turn our hearts to the right place. Instead of having *our heart tremble, and leap out of its place* for disasters and powerlessness and fear, we will have *our heart tremble in joy, and leap out of its place*, out of place of anger, out of place of fear and into the place of God’s own heart, into the place of God’s grace.

Listen, listen to the thunder of God’s voice and the rumbling that comes from God’s mouth.

My heart is lifted up to God!

Under the whole heaven God lets it loose, and God’s lightning to the corners of the earth.

My heart is lifted up to God!

*May our heart tremble and leap out of its place*  
because of the joy of having one other,

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://time.com/5504826/martin-luther-king-wall-history/>

because we find strength in one other  
because our citizenship is in God's shalom.  
because we have space for everyone  
because of the wonder of God's grace  
because of God's love to us all.

*Build down that wall. In the name of Jesus Christ, build down that wall.*